

GERDIEN MARGREETH GROOTENS

Leadership of peripheral places:
a comparative study of leadership processes
in Estonian and Dutch peripheral places



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Faculty of Social Sciences, School of Economics and Business Administration,
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Supervisors: Professor Maaja Vadi (PhD), Faculty of Social Sciences, School of
Economics and Business Administration, University of Tartu,
Estonia

Adjunct Professor in Socio-Spatial Planning, Lummina Horlings
(PhD, ius promovendi), Faculty of Spatial Sciences, Planning
Department, University of Groningen, The Netherlands

Associate Professor Garri Raagmaa (PhD), Faculty of Science and
Technology, Department of Geography, University of Tartu,
Estonia

Opponents: Professor Markku Sotarauta (PhD), Faculty of Management and
Business, Tampere University, Finland

Dr. Riin Savi, (PhD), Research fellow, Ragnar Nurkse School of
Innovation and Governance, Tallinn University of Technology,
Estonia

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List of Author's publications and Conference presentations

Journal articles

- Grootens, Martiene, and Lummina Horlings. 2016. 'Leading (in) Peripheries.' *Regions: The Newsletter of the Regional Studies Association*, 302(2):21–22
- Grootens, Martiene. 2018. 'Leading on the Map, Opening up Leadership Practices in Two Estonian Peripheral Places'. *Administrative Culture* Vol 18 (2) (Territoriality and Governance in the Globalizing European Eastern Peripheries): 203–21.

Book Chapters

- Plüschke-Altof, Bianka, and Martiene Grootens. 2019. 'Leading Through Image Making? On the Limits of Emphasising Agency in Structurally Disadvantaged Rural Places'. In *Regional and Local Development in Times of Polarisation: Re-Thinking Spatial Policies in Europe*, edited by Thilo Lang and Franziska Görmär, 319–41. New Geographies of Europe. Singapore: Springer Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-1190-1_13.

Conference presentations

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- RegPol² Final Training in Békéscsaba, Hungary, 24–28 April 2017.
- RegPol² Work Package Meeting, Cluj Napoca, Romania, 24–26 January 2017.

2016

- Tartu planning conference, organisation of session and presentation, 3–4 November 2016.
- RSA event Leadership in urban and regional development, Aix en Provence, France, 20–21st October 2016.
- 3rd RegPol² School in Bratislava. "Beyond disparities: strategies towards a balanced spatial development", 19–23 September 2016.
- PUPOL conference, international conference in Public and Political Leadership, Nijmegen, the Netherlands, 7–8 April 2016.

2015

- RSA International Research Network Seminar – "Exploring Leadership Varieties in Urban and Regional Development". Presentation and participation in Seminar, 12–13 November 2015.

2nd RegPol² School, Leipzig. Presentation of Research work and participation in trainings, 25–30 October 2015.

Eugeo congress on the geography of Europe: “Convergences and divergences of geography in Europe. Presentation and attendance of conference, August 30 – 2 September 2015.

RSA Annual Conference, Piacenza “Global Growth Agendas: Regions, Institutions and Sustainability”. 20–27 May 2015.

RegPol² training event for complementary methodological skills, Leipzig, 18–21 May 2015.

1st RegPol² School, Tartu: “Scientific concepts of and policy approaches towards polarisation processes in Central and Eastern Europe”, 2–6 February 2015.

2014

RegPol² Introductory Event, Bratislava: “Basic Understanding on core-periphery relations in Central and Eastern Europe: Implications for research and methodology” 3–7 Nov. 2014.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Motivation of the study

Increasing socio-economic disparities between core and peripheral areas can be increasingly witnessed in Central and Eastern European countries (PoSCoPP Research Group 2015). Despite a closing of the gap between old and new member states of the European Union in terms of overall development indicators, this process goes hand in hand with an increase in disparities within countries (Lang 2011). In this thesis the focus is on places affected by these peripheralisation processes. A process-based approach is used which moves beyond the study of peripheries as static localities, but looks at the production of peripheries “through social relations and their spatial implications” (Kühn 2015, 368). In this approach, peripheralisation is intrinsically linked to processes of centralisation and this process has both material and discursive elements. In this relational conceptualisation, the region is constantly being produced and reproduced by various actors and at different scales. As a consequence, instead of seeing peripherality as a consequence of only structural circumstances over which actors have no control, the agency of actors can be acknowledged in places dealing with processes of peripheralisation (Lang 2013; Kühn 2015).

In regional development studies too, authors have aimed to find reasons for the uneven development of regions and the role of agency herein. This has resulted in attention towards a so-called place-based approach in regional development, which has grown in recent decades. European policy emphasis has also been placed on place-based development in order “to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, based on their specific characteristics and dynamics” (Horlings et al. 2018, 246). The place-based approach is seen in such policy as the optimal way to utilize the potential of certain places, while simultaneously reducing persistent social exclusion (Barca 2009). In order to achieve this place-based development, place leadership is seen as an essential element in understanding how this is realized at the local level (Beer 2014). In the arena of place-based regional development, place leadership can be seen as a driving force in the development of regions and places. As noted by Rodríguez-Pose (2013), leadership is said to be the missing link in regional development. While many current topics in regional development focus on knowledge creation, and while innovation clusters and regional resilience are useful in understanding varieties of sub-national development, the concept of place leadership has the potential to cut through all of these topics, using the “agential lens” of leadership (Sotarauta et al. 2017).

This research therefore brings together the two seemingly contrasting concepts of peripheralisation and place leadership. While peripheral places are often linked to a lack of innovation, poverty and powerlessness (Kühn 2015), place leadership is a concept that is ultimately connected to change, possibilities and development. By placing the promising concept of place leadership in a context

of peripheralisation, this study contributes to the further contextualization of place leadership beyond beneficial contexts only. Furthermore, by taking an actor-oriented approach to peripheralisation, it also moves beyond structural explanations and analyses of peripheralisation, in which the agency of actors in peripheral places has little or no room for change. This study thus answers the point made by Sotarauta and Beer (2017) that a more balanced approach to place leadership is needed: one that recognizes structural forces, but also has eye for the possibilities created by leadership.

1.2 Research aim

This research provides a study of leadership processes in peripheral places in Estonia and the Netherlands. In peripheral contexts where human agency has often been neglected, this study analyses the role of leading actors in (co)shaping “peripheral” places. In this way it provides an explorative study of what still exists of the promise of leadership, when taken from the resourceful and well-off contexts in which the concept of leadership is often developed. This research takes a critical approach to locate leadership and it uses both qualitative and grounded theory methods in order to fulfil the following research aim:

“to develop a critical approach and understanding of place leadership in peripheral places of Estonia and the Netherlands”.

This research aim consists of three main elements. The first is the critical approach to leadership, which uses the concept of leadership reflexively and thus challenges taken for granted frames of leadership (Alvesson and Spicer 2012; Tourish 2014). This approach opens up an understanding of leadership that moves beyond successful leadership only. The second element focuses on the context of peripheral places and is based on a relational approach to uneven development and follows the so-called “peripheralisation framework”. The third element of this research aim is the comparison of a Central Eastern European and Western European country. While this study does not provide a full institutional comparison between the two, it does compare place leadership processes in different institutional environments.

Regarding studies on place leadership, the significant scientific emphasis on successful case studies does not aid in understanding the role of leadership as a process in regional development and merely results in a confirmation of what is assumed to be successful leadership (Beer and Clower 2013). Therefore, in this research I move beyond identifying the “stars” of regional development and point attention towards the role of place leadership, embedded in (various) institutional environments, and to the role of these actors in (co)shaping “peripheral” places. Thereby, I move away from a normative way of ranking leadership experiences or regional performance, but closely analyse the practices and relations of these leaders in the process of peripheralisation. In this way, rather than being seen as powerless and economically marginal, I assume that actors in places can be seen

as co-producers in the process of peripheralisation, a process to which both (actors in) the core regions as (actors in) peripheral places contribute.

Secondly, this research into place leadership is positioned in the context of processes of peripheralisation. Witnessing these developments, I take a relational approach, in which the starting point is not to analyse the peripheries as such, but to study the process of peripheralisation, which goes beyond studying peripheries as static end-stations. (PoSCoPP Research Group 2015; Lang 2013). Peripheralisation is linked to centralisation and can be seen as socially produced by different actors on different scales (in core areas as well as in the peripheries). The emphasis is placed on how places are constructed by actors and, in this thesis, I point specifically at the role of the leadership. This is not to assume that they alone have a role in these processes, but merely to point to a role which might give insights into the complex relationships of power and networks in processes of peripheralisation. Often, structural economic dimensions of peripheralisation are studied while more social and political dimensions are neglected. Therefore, this dissertation aims to bring attention to the political and social dimensions of peripheralisation processes by focusing on practices and relations of place leaders in processes of peripheralisation.

Although places are often understood taken from a spatial, bounded approach (for example in discussions on the construction of local identities), in this research, place is understood in a relational sense, as a networked space, resulting from place-shaping processes which stretch beyond geographical administrative boundaries (Amin 2004; Massey 2004). Particularly when zooming in on the activities of more (territorially) bound local leaders does this create a tension between leaders being, on the one hand, embedded in administrative territorial areas and on the other in peripheralisation processes, where their practices stretch beyond geographical scales and boundaries. This research analyses the process of leadership which is analysed as a territorial, as well as relational, process of peripheralisation. While relationality is often emphasised in literature, as Hudson (2007) notes when conceptualising regions as “necessarily open and linked to other regions” (p. 1158), the territoriality of places is also needed and is necessary to understand uneven development in places (Agnew 2013). Using both territorial and relational notions of place making in this thesis, I will come closer to an understanding of the life world of place leaders. Moreover, looking beyond a merely territorial approach helps to understand processes of peripheralisation, where places are ultimately linked to one another.

The third main element of this thesis is concerned with the concept of context. While context can be interpreted more broadly than merely an institutional or country context, the country context is often used as a differentiating contextual factor. This institutional context is acknowledged to be of importance for local leadership (Horlings et al. 2018; Sotarauta and Beer 2017). In the place leadership literature, the contexts of peripheral places and the Central and Eastern European context remain under-researched until now. Most studies on place leadership have been performed in a Western European or Anglo-Saxon context and do not consider the specificities of the Central or Eastern European context and their

institutions. Geddes and Sullivan (2011) show that, in different continents of the world, leadership has different foci, from “Big Society” debates in the UK to radical new modes of local leadership closer to social movements in South America. Within Central and Eastern Europe too, a very mixed image appears in which leadership is seen as both strengthening and weakening the scope for local action. Further, for smaller states, the lack of human resources at the local level is seen as a serious constraint (Geddes and Sullivan 2011). Additionally, the thin institutional environments of peripheral regions of Europe (such as in Estonia), combined with tendencies towards centralisation by their national governments, create a very different environment for the role of leaders than the more institutionally dense and lesser centralised countries of Europe (e.g. the Netherlands) (Beer and Clower 2013). Beyond these more basic distinctions, the rapid institutional changes from post-socialist societies to radical neoliberal thinking (whose policies even further increase the already existing disparities within Central and Eastern European countries), and also elements of contingency from the socialist past, make an enquiry into its leadership an interesting and valuable exercise. A more extensive description of the two country contexts can be found in Chapter 4.

While this study is not an attempt for a full comparison of country contexts, it addresses the concerns by Stenning and Hörschelmann (2008) regarding the tendency to marginalise experiences of the non-Western contexts, and sees this context as the prime focus. Increasing regional polarisation is not only reserved for Central and Eastern European countries, and therefore in this study the context is broadened and compared to peripheral areas in the context of a Western European country (The Netherlands). In the Netherlands, peripheral regions also struggle with a decline in households, consequential pressures on socio-economic vitality and rural marginalisation (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties 2016; Bock 2016). The research thus goes beyond opposing these two contexts, but proposes to take seriously similarities between these contexts as well (Thelen 2011). Stenning and Hörschelmann (2008) note the importance of conceptualising geographical difference (between and among non-western and western European countries) as well as the importance of the past, while not necessarily falling into the trap of determinism or historicism (Stenning and Hörschelmann 2008). The example of Estonia’s transition clearly shows how a rapid transition from state socialism has shifted to a process of neoliberalisation. This shows clearly how contexts are also changing quickly and thus essentialised and static labels attached to certain regions of the world are unhelpful in understanding geographical difference.

In sum, this research shows how we can better understand processes of place leadership in the context of peripheralisation. By using a critical approach to leadership processes in the shaping of peripheral places, this study explores what is left of the promised potential of leadership when placed in a context of peripheralisation and uneven development. By combining the concepts of peripheralisation and a critical approach to place leadership, the latter can be critically examined in seemingly structurally defined processes of peripheralisation.

1.3 Description of the research problem

When looking at the challenges ahead for peripheral places, leadership could be seen as a promising avenue for development (Beer and Clower 2013). A focus on processes of leadership can give a deeper understanding of how peripheralisation processes take shape in these places and which role human agency plays in them. The main question to be answered is:

What role does leadership play in Estonian and Dutch peripheral places?

The starting point in this question is the concept of place leadership. This is understood in this thesis as “a multi-actor process of place-making” (Mabey and Freeman 2010, 509). It is thus seen as a process in which multiple actors make places. In this thesis, the starting point is local place leadership processes and therefore the research questions are also close to the life worlds of the local actors. Following a relational view on space and place, three important propositions, first developed by Massey (2005), are central here. First, spaces are the product of interrelations, in which place can be seen as a meeting point between these relations. Leadership, in this sense can be seen as the agency managing these relations. Secondly, space is the ultimate example of multiple trajectories for one place, spatiality presupposing multiplicity and vice versa. Leadership can in this sense be seen as the negotiating of juxtaposition. This also comes close to what Amin (2004) calls the sharing of the same turf. Thirdly, space is always under construction and can be seen as stories “so far” and of which the next chapter is yet to be written. In other words, leadership has everything to do with negotiation over the future of place, which is open, and therefore the negotiation over this future is inherently political. Openness to the future is crucial here, since only real politics are possible with an open future: “for the future to be open, space must be open too” (Massey 2005, 12).

In this study I prefer to speak of place leadership and not space leadership. Differences between the concepts of place and space have been mostly ascribed to their meaningfulness. While space is seen as something abstract, place is seen as the more concrete form to which meaning is ascribed in the local context (Carter et al. 1993). Therefore, since this thesis focuses on interpretation and meaning making, in the following parts of this thesis, the concept of place is used.

While the focus on leadership in specific places seems very territorially oriented on first glance, (since place is also territorial), on the other hand, a relational approach can open up an understanding of leadership which has eye for negotiation, juxtaposition and the politics behind leadership of place. Places are constructed, open, heterogeneous and dynamic and leadership is seen as a process which influences the relations that shape places. These three propositions can help in understanding a relational approach to place leadership and are also used to further divide the research question into sub-questions:

- How is leadership enacted?
 - What is happening in these places? How is leadership enacted?
 - Who is/are leading in these peripheral places?
- How do they lead in the relations that make places?
- How do they lead in dealing with inherent multiplicity of places
- How is this done differently in different places? (Comparing all cases)

The first three questions will look into what leadership is about, who is involved in leadership and how leadership is enacted. The final research question focuses more on the comparison between the different cases. By answering these questions, case by case, and later comparing and contrasting them, this study aims to fulfil its above-mentioned aim “to develop a critical approach and understanding of place leadership in peripheral places of Estonia and the Netherlands”. By taking an open and less normative approach to place leadership, emphasising a more value-neutral process of place-making, this thesis comes closer to an understanding of place leadership, and goes beyond a testing of leadership hypotheses.

This research compares a total of four cases in both Estonia and the Netherlands. An expected outcome of this research is that leadership shapes places in varied ways, creating ‘territories of difference’ (Escobar 2008). While some might develop strategies that intensify the relationships from the periphery to the core and from the periphery to the periphery, others might look for, as Pickerill and Chatterton (2006) call it, “alternative geographies”.

This thesis provides an overview of the literature in chapter two which results in a conceptual framework for studying leadership processes in peripheral places. In Chapter 3, the methodological approach and methods are presented and explained. Chapter 4 focuses on the different institutional environments of Estonia and the Netherlands. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 answer the research questions. Then, in Chapter 8, I present the conclusions and a discussion based on the findings and theoretical and policy implications of the research. An overview of the structure of the thesis can be found in the figure below.

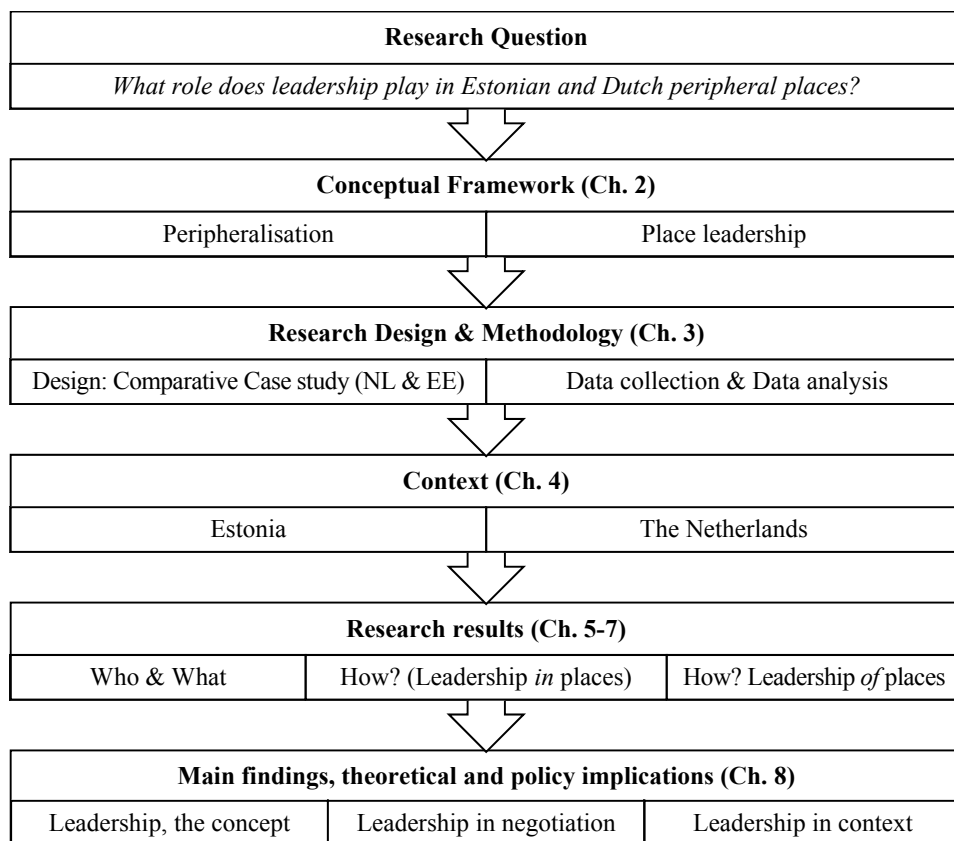


Figure 1: Overview of the structure of the thesis
Illustration by the author

1.4 Theoretical and societal relevance

This thesis critically examines how processes of leadership can be understood when analysing place leadership in peripheral contexts. As an interdisciplinary study, it combines useful elements of place leadership literature, that on peripheralisation, as well as critical leadership studies. Starting with the potential of place leadership for regional development (place leadership literature), it critically examines the ontological and epistemological assumptions behind the concept of leadership (critical leadership studies) and also further contextualises it (peripheralisation literature). The coming together of these three strands adds to a broader and deeper understanding of processes of leadership in peripheral places.

Furthermore, this study is also relevant for practitioners in the field. While policies aimed towards more even development in countries (in CEE and WE countries) tend to use “big” concepts as leadership in attempts to develop regions

and places, a lack of making explicit what leadership is, and the consequences this has for different people, only further distances people from policies meant to improve their livelihoods. In an increasingly polarising world, an attempt to bridge this distance must start with common ground on what is meant by the concept we use.

Furthermore, seeing leadership as a process which might lead to positive change, but not necessarily assuming this as positive change, also opens up the exploration of the real-life experiences of how leading in places can be done. Experiences are not necessarily outcome oriented and thus this approach comes closer to a local understanding of how leadership processes take place. In this understanding that moves beyond leadership as success only, an understanding of leadership can come closer to an understanding of human agency in peripheral places. An understanding that has room for contestation and negotiation and thus presents a more realistic picture of leadership. Beyond a recognition of the difficulties, on the other hand, this study also emancipates the concept of leadership from only measurable functionalistic and perhaps economic outcomes and goes beyond these. This leads to a more open understanding of leadership, without preconceived ideas on what is valued in this leadership. Furthermore, the further contextualisation of leadership to peripheral contexts too, also recognises the potential for leadership in less beneficial contexts. In this sense, this study recognises the difficulties that exist in less beneficial contexts and signals the difficulties that arise when a successfully framed concept such as leadership is applied to such less favourable contexts.

1.5 Acknowledgements

The journey of the PhD has been an interesting, inspiring, yet challenging endeavour, in which many people have played crucial roles. Therefore, I would like to take the opportunity to thank the people mentioned below for helping me complete this journey.

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2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In the following chapter I will explore the theoretical debates and issues concerning peripheralisation (2.1) and (place) leadership (2.2). These debates will result in an analytical framework to understand the role of leadership in peripheral places (2.3). This framework guides the empirical phase of the research.

2.1 Processes of peripheralisation and room for place leadership

Peripheralisation is an analytical concept which aims to facilitate process-based and relational understandings. It departs from the main assumption that places or regions are not out there and given, but constructed (Paasi 2010). This focus on the constructedness of places adds a novel view into the more structural literature already available on spatially uneven development, such as polarisation, neoliberalisation, new economic geography, dependency theory (for an overview see of theories on peripheralisation and polarisation see PoSCoPP Research Group (2015)). One of the basic elements of this approach is its multi-leveledness. The division of space into peripheries and cores is practiced on many levels: from the global level to the local neighbourhood level, some spaces are valued more than others. Secondly, the process of peripheralisation automatically implies processes of centralisation; these processes are linked. As a final core element in the concept of peripheralisation is its discursive nature; the “making” of cores and peripheries has everything to do with placing value on some places and not on others (PoSCoPP Research Group 2015).

Kühn (2015) notes the fuzziness of the concept of peripheralisation due to the many different elements it entails; seeing peripheralisation as relational, process-centred, multidimensional, multi-scalar and temporal does not make it an easy process to analyse and understand. In this study, however, I will mainly focus on the political and social dimension of peripheralisation processes and the actors involved in these processes. With the move from analysing peripheries as static localities, defined by their population figures, distance to the centre etc. to studying the process of peripheralisation, attention is drawn back to the actors in the process. In particular, the actors in the midst of these processes, the “place leaders”, can become an interesting entry point into understanding this process of peripheralisation.

Taking a socio-political view on peripheralisation processes goes beyond structural economic approaches towards development and opens up the perspective of agency. In this view power is unevenly distributed, which inevitably leads to exclusion as a result of networks and unevenly distributed resources. From a socio-political perspective, processes of peripheralisation and marginalisation are mainly associated with power in decision making processes and control over agenda setting. Kühn (2015) notes the possible conflicts between central and

peripheral elites, the exclusion from resources of power and the overall insufficient possibilities, abilities or willingness to create counter-power. In this regard, the space for negotiation is seen as limited and peripheries are seen as powerlessness and the core is seen as powerful. There is, on the other hand, perhaps, also another perspective possible, in which power can be exercised by peripheral actors. This question whether peripheral elites actually have power to resist, as referred to by Kühn (2015) is one that needs to be analysed empirically. The possibility of this resistance to peripheralisation processes is what this study aims to analyse.

Furthermore, Herrschel (2011) marks the divide between spatial and social-communicative peripherality and writes in this sense about peripheries as characterised by a certain “inbetweenness”. This peripherality is then based on exclusion from networks, instead of being excluded on the basis of territory only. As a consequence, in his opinion, new peripheries result from communicative distance to core networks, and not primarily from spatial distance between core and peripheral areas. In the selection of cases, these different forms of peripherality are considered (see Chapter 3.1)

A consequence of emphasising these social relations as conditional on the development of spatially peripheral regions is again an interest in the actors making up these networks, and also the power of the so-called “peripheral elites” (Kühn 2015) or place leaders in peripheralisation processes. These actors, as potential nodes in networks, can be seen as crucial development actors. Overall, this study therefore connects the literature on peripheralisation to the more actor-oriented literature (Long 2001), in order to approach peripheralisation as a process which is a far-away process, but is constructed by actors on different levels.

Relational approach to place and space

Similar to the peripheralisation approach, the debate on more process-centred and relational approaches has also been notably present in the wider human geography literature. The debate between relational and territorial approaches has been particularly relevant for the study of regions and places. Conceptions of the region have changed considerably throughout the years. While in the 1980s a constructionist view on human agency in regions was popular, in the 90s regions were additionally viewed in a relational way, and in the new millennium new combinations of different means of conceptualising regions were used (Allen and Cochrane 2007; Jones and Paasi 2013).

The aforementioned debate focused on the extent to which places and regions should be analysed relationally or territorially, labelled by Legendijk and Varró (2013) as the “radical versus moderate relationists” debate. Although most scholars agree that relations matter for regions and that they are relationally constructed, they do not agree on how far this relationality stretches. While the radicals see places as meeting points of which the relationships within and beyond the place are crucial in understanding the place (Amin 2004; Massey 1991; 2004), the more moderate relationists do acknowledge that relations are important in the construction of the region (Hudson 2007; Jonas 2012). However, as a result, they

do not deny the importance of the territorial perspective. Goodwin (2013, 1183) mentions, in a similar vein, that it remains the case that “a lot of practical politics continues to be conducted in, through and against a set of institutions whose jurisdiction is precisely territorially defined” – especially for politicians, held accountable through territorially defined elections. Further, Jones (2009) mentions that relationalists should not fall in the trap of basing their theories on “unique” cases, such as London (as done by Massey [2004]). Authors in this line of thinking acknowledge the importance of relations in strategies, but also see the very territorial basis of local developments in the present world as relevant. Therefore he (and others) favour research on regions to be done in both traditions: looking at relationships in the region, beyond the region and also looking at the power dynamics that play inside the region. Hudson also proposes to look beyond either a relational or a territorial view on regions by saying that:

“Depending on the circumstances and the specific situation of particular regions, policy and politics may be informed by a bounded territorial and hierarchical conception or by a relational conception that emphasises a flat ontology of networked connections as the more appropriate perspective from which to view the region.” (Hudson 2007, 1156)

This dual nature of a region as simultaneously relational and territorial is well illustrated by Allen and Cochrane (2007) when describing the development of South-East England. In their article, they understand territoriality as a language used by an assemblage of regional actors, a language which is mobilised through networks rather than through hierarchical arrangements. They mention, for example, the construction of a “coherent” region as a result of mobilisations by political or professional actors. Actors thus seem to play a role here mainly in the construction of regions by mobilising interests, enrolling, translating, brokering and bridging, all in a regional assemblage. In our contemporary interconnected world, strengthening regional development is much more about “exercising nodal power and aligning networks at large in one’s own interest, rather than about exercising territorial power” (Amin 2004, 36). Massey (2004) mentions in this regard that actors can use the hegemonic territorial image in a very relational way. By negotiating in vertical and horizontal networks, but actually making use of a very territorial grammar, the two (seemingly opposite) notions of place, come together in real life.

Seeing these different approaches to place invites the question as to why this discussion is relevant at all. Amin (2004) suggests that it matters politically. Territories and boundaries exist but are always the construction of certain actors, and that only by seeing this constructedness of place can this construction itself can be seen as a political act and thus analysed. In this line of thinking, one must do away with the assumption that there is a defined geographical space over which actors can have effective control. Rather, these (and other) assumptions merely reflect the results of political negotiations. The attempt to hide the available choices and ignore the construction of space and place is therefore political in itself.

Only by seeing space and place (and not only region) as an open process can one discover the agency of actors. Therefore, in the next section, the focus will be on the actors behind this construction. Leadership of (relational) places, therefore, could have everything to do with this construction of place, as “a crucial political stake to challenge and change the hegemonic identity of place and the way in which the denizens of a particular locality imagine it and thereby avail themselves of the imaginative resources to reconstruct it” (Massey 2004, 7). Especially when placing leadership – which on first glance is mostly connected to very territorially and geographically bounded places – this relational reading of space and place has some consequences on how leadership can be studied. I will follow up on this in section 2.3.

2.2 Towards a critical approach to place leadership

Leadership has been recognised as the missing link in regional development (Rodríguez-Pose 2013). As this sounds quite promising for places around the world, and as what exactly is meant by this concept is still vague as Raelin (2016) also emphasises, leadership often simultaneously means everything and nothing. Therefore, in this chapter the aim is to explain how the concept is used and especially how to apply this almost inevitably positive concept as leadership in seemingly less “successful” peripheral contexts. To move away from this normative bias in leadership research, it is necessary to look at the epistemological assumptions underlying much of the research on leadership, which will be covered in the remainder of this chapter. As Mabey and Freeman (2010, 506) emphasise:

“Much writing about leadership of place draws, not always consciously, upon an eclectic mix of theories; while this is to be encouraged, the omission to locate or make explicit the chosen ontology and epistemology in such studies (or worse, a failure to consider such issues at all) can lead to confusing sets of findings and indistinct guidance for those responsible for developing policy.”

Epistemology is here understood as the field that concerns the nature of knowledge and concerns the ways how it can be grasped (Mabey and Freeman 2010). In this chapter, the concepts and different approaches to leadership are analysed in the context of the development of peripheral places. Furthermore, theoretical concepts are used to form an analytical framework that can be used in understanding leadership processes in peripheral places.

A selection of leadership theories

Leadership in general has been studied intensively by various research paradigms. Depending on the strand of literature, differencing conceptualisations and definitions can be found. In the literature, the terms “leader” and “leadership” are often used interchangeably. In the definition by Kellerman and Webster (2001, 487), a

leader is seen as one “who creates or strives to create change, large or small”, which also follows the distinction made by Kotter (1990) between management as needed to produce order and consistency, while leadership is needed to create change and movement. Leadership is then seen as the process in which this change is created by the interaction between leaders and followers. Leadership has focused on the so-called “great man” approach or on the behavioural perspective, such as transactional and transformational leadership) or leadership in times of crises. Also, more recent approaches have focused on authentic leadership, or ethical leadership. (For a more complete overview, see, for example, Van Wart (2013) or Avolio et al. (2009). However, leadership originates from management and organisational theory backgrounds and is not necessarily best applied to understanding leadership in places. As Liddle (2010, 658) mentions,

“Several flawed assumptions have arisen from applying individualistic ‘traits’ models of leadership and reductionist/mechanistic models of organisations to complex multi-agency situations/environments inhabited by 21st-century public leaders.”

While some of the approaches in the more generic leadership literature might be suitable for the study of leadership in organisations or leadership in business environments, it does not contribute to a deeper understanding of the link between leadership in the shaping of peripheral places (Beer and Clower 2013). Given that Sotarauta (2016) prefers to speak of leadership much more as a political process instead of a technocratic process of profit maximisation or customer satisfaction, in the following parts, the scope of leadership will be adjusted first to the specifics of leading in places and secondly by zooming in on the critical leadership literature. In this way, the concept of leadership can be approached from a more open understanding which fits as well the context of place making and also makes explicit its underlying ontological assumptions. In the following paragraphs I will shed light on some differing and rarely combined perspectives in the leadership literature, which together can help to answer the research questions. These different strands are portrayed visually in the figure below.

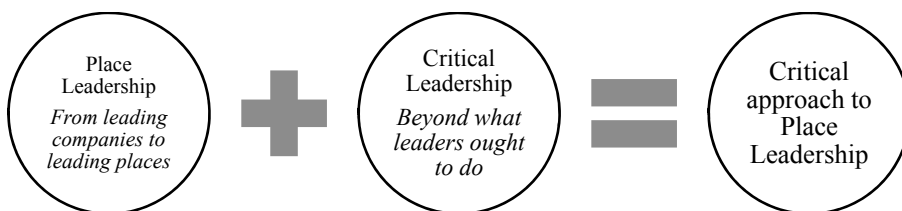


Figure 2: Background of the critical approach to place leadership literature
Illustration by the author

Expanding the scope: from leading companies to leading places

Moving from general conceptualisations of leadership to *place leadership* has some consequences. Most relevant in the context of local and regional development is the literature on place leadership, which considers leadership not as a solo activity but as a multi-faceted process of multiple actors (formal and informal) operating within and beyond the region (Sotarauta et al. 2012). Places are meeting points for different interests, visions and ideas (Sotarauta 2016a), and place leadership is seen as a collaborative exercise in which the wider interests of the place are defended (Sotarauta et al. 2012). This approach also connects to a relational approach to place and space in which a bounded territorial image of a place is not seen as helpful in understanding how places are constructed (Massey 2004). Leaders in these bodies of literature are seen to have the ability or the willingness to be “system thinkers, boundary spanners, conceptualizers and connectors”, as Sotarauta et al. (2012, 4) mention, and tend to have a greater range and depth of assets than other actors, including the commitment of advancing the region (Sotarauta 2005). Even though the approaches within place leadership studies still vary, Sotarauta and Beer (2017) note two elements present in most studies of place leadership. First is the concern with interdisciplinary development strategies, crossing institutional boundaries, technology themes and professional cultures, as also analysed in the comparative case study by Horlings et al. (2017). The second is that place leadership is concerned with ensuring the engagement of communities, enabling their contribution to and benefiting from development processes and outcomes.

In place leadership literature, formal leadership is considered as well as informal. Collinge and Gibney (2010) note in particular the role of informal leaders in the literature on leadership of place and that these informal leaders receive too little attention in the debate on regional development. Leadership is seen as a crucial factor in adapting to the “rapidly changing social and economic circumstances” (Collinge et al. 2010, 367) that this modern world offers for public leaders and regions.

Furthermore Liddle (2010) notes that, today, these leaders of place have to deal with a limited amount of resources available and thus have to identify clear priorities and are expected to engage in partnerships, networks and collaborations. This scarcity of resources and potential possibilities of partnerships, networks and collaborations (all requiring these scarce human resources), is troubling especially when looking at peripheral regions. Furthermore, while identifying priorities, leaders in these places should seek legitimacy for their resource agenda and actions. This legitimacy is then needed to build confidence in places. As Liddle (2010, 660) says when discussing public leadership, “building trust is perhaps the greatest challenge faced by leaders, with so many groups still excluded from political processes.”

In the following table the main conceptualizations of place leadership are summarised. It shows how different studies use different conceptualizations, which overlap at some points.

Table 1: Diverse conceptualizations of place leadership

Keywords	Definitions of place leadership	Author(s)
Collaborative Outcome-oriented	place-based leadership is “the tendency of the community to collaborate across sectors in a sustained, purposeful manner to enhance the economic performance or economic environment of its region”	Stough et al. 2001, 177
Interdisciplinary Engagement of local communities	“new” leadership of place is concerned with: Facilitating interdisciplinary working across institutional boundaries, technology themes, sub-territories and professional cultures to promote the development of sustainable local economies. Ensuring the comprehensive engagement of local communities so that they can both contribute to and benefit fully from the outcomes (avoiding the danger of exacerbating social polarisation).	Gibney et al. 2009
Relational Leader-follower	Leadership is a relational phenomenon in which followers can play a decisive part, and a distinction is drawn between leader-dominant and follower-dominant leadership.	Collinge and Gibney 2010b
Multi-actor	Leadership as a multi-actor process of place-making	Mabey and Freeman 2010
Formal and informal	Leadership is often recognized in terms of formally constituted hierarchical power and while formal offices are important – mayors, members of government-appointed boards, etc. – leadership is also expressed informally.	Sotarauta, Horlings, and Liddle 2012
Outcomes Collaborative Long-term dimension	Critically, leadership at the local scale is seen to be focused on the goal of improving economic – and potentially other – outcomes; it tends to be collaborative rather than hierarchical: that is, it involves collaboration across a number of institutions, individuals and firms; and it has a distinct long-term dimension.	Beer and Clower 2013
Hidden form of agency Influence	In regional studies, leadership is a hidden form of agency, shadowed by such visible forms of influence as structures and formal institutions, as well as development programs and plans.	Sotarauta 2016b
Processual	Place leadership is thus future seeking, but not future defining.	Sotarauta 2016a
Crossing boundaries Networks	Relational knowledge leadership: Leadership that spans, disrupts and erodes established (organizational, sectorial and territorial) boundaries; that promotes networking – taking into account a multiplicity and novelty of relations and practices.	Horlings et al. 2017

Table 1: Continuation

Keywords	Definitions of place leadership	Author(s)
Fragmented/shared Formal and informal Multiscalar, dynamic, interactive	Leadership that is characterized by (1) fragmented or shared actions, events and incidents among a whole series of organizations and/or several leaders rather than processes that simply flow “top-down” from a controlling centre to acquiescent followers; (2) processes where not all leaders are formally recognized as such (and sometimes where people with formal positions may exercise only little if no leadership at all); and (3) multi-scalar, dynamic and interactive governance processes between national, local and regional government actors, firms, universities, research institutions, public and/or semi-public development agencies.	Sotarauta et al. 2017

Illustration by the author

In these different conceptualizations of place leadership, not one single overarching definition can be found among these scholars. While some approaches focus more on outcomes, others pay more attention to collaboration, agency and power relations and yet others re-emphasise the difficulty and shadowed nature of leadership itself. In this multiplicity of definitions, it is therefore important to critically assess the normative assumptions underlying these understandings of leadership. As Tourish (2014) has mentioned, normative ideas about more or better leadership remain popular in situations of business failure, climate- or other crisis situations. This is also evident in the table above, in which many conceptualisations of leadership still emphasise what leaders ought to do (e.g. seek legitimacy, build trust, build coalitions etc.), instead of a study into *how* these processes take place. In order to move away from these sometimes hidden normative and ideological bases, it is useful to re-examine some philosophical underpinnings behind leadership research.

Revealing the norms: beyond what leadership ought to be

Mabey and Freeman (2010) provide an overview of what they identify as four discourses on place leadership which are helpful in viewing different ways of analysing place leadership. Discourses are used “as an analytical device to explore the nature of leadership and its significance in the realm of place-shaping” (Mabey and Freeman 2010, 506). They use two axes as sets of assumptions, the horizontal axis concerning epistemology (duality versus dualism) and the vertical axis concerning social order (consensual versus dissensual). Combining these axes, they distinguish the functionalist, constructivist, critical and dialogical discourses in studying place leadership. In the table below, the differing discourses on place leadership are shown.

Table 2: Four place leadership discourses: research agendas

	Duality	Dualism
Dissensus	<p>Dialogic discourse</p> <p><i>Research approach</i> Analysis of the fluid process of developing as a leader and how this is accomplished via speech, text and other artefacts; deconstructing the language of LP.</p> <p><i>Research contribution</i> To explain the often contradictory experience of those participating in LP; underline the inherently fragile notion of leadership.</p>	<p>Critical discourse</p> <p><i>Research approach</i> Archival, historical, ethnographic, narrative accounts designed to expose and overturn power differentials and other inequalities, including LP's role in perpetuating capitalist ideology.</p> <p><i>Research contribution</i> To identify the questionable assumptions underlying much LP and the way systemic, structural processes routinely distort the effects of leadership.</p>
Consensus	<p>Constructivist discourse</p> <p><i>Research approach</i> Context-specific, subjectivist accounts of LP which privilege the construal of certain participant groups, their theories-in-use and sense-making.</p> <p><i>Research contribution</i> To highlight the symbolic, ritual significance of LP activities and the ways shared leadership and boundary-crossing processes change the policy agenda.</p>	<p>Functionalist discourse</p> <p><i>Research approach</i> Positivist epistemology to identify ways in which leadership skills and practice can be improved and healthy spaces created.</p> <p><i>Research contribution</i> To discover generalisable standards and norms, which can inform the strategic allocation of LP resources (for individuals, organizations, agencies and governments).</p>

Source: Mabey and Freeman (2010, 518)

The epistemological distinction (duality vs dualism) is based on the nature of knowledge and how it is grasped. While dualism is concerned with the question of “what is the phenomenon” and tends to assume that the phenomenon under investigation can be frozen in time and can be measured, planned and constructed, on the other end of the spectrum is duality, which focuses more on the question of “when is the phenomenon?”. Rather than seeing social phenomena as measurable and fixed, in duality, phenomena are constantly becoming and hereby also fit the relational reading by Massey, which also sees space as necessarily open and not fixed (Massey 2005). Therefore, in this thesis the main focus will be on a dialogical approach in place leadership in which leadership is open, processes are central, and consensus is not automatically assumed (but possible).

Duality over Dualism

Studies that tend to follow this dualism discourse have a functionalistic and critical tendency. Most studies on place leadership tend to focus on a functionalist account, supposing consensus and taking a dualist approach in studying these places. Furthermore, this approach assumes that it is possible to identify “a distinct, coherent essence of leadership” (Alvesson and Spicer 2012, 371). This functionalistic account can often be recognised in studies of place leadership, such as Sotarauta (2005), who notes that in Northern Europe it is argued that the most successful city-regions are those that have been able to utilise European and national institutions to their advantage. Successful leadership is in this understanding equalled by the ability to attract funding and narrows leadership down to a functionalistic act of bringing money into the region. Similar to the concept of regional resilience, as explained by Bristow and Healy (2014), leadership has a very normative connotation, which already supposes a certain outcome-orientation and surpasses the political choices that precede the specific direction taken. Following this functional approach alone supposes that leadership must be about measurable outcomes such as economic growth, competitiveness etc. In this discourse, therefore, leadership is already related to certain seemingly neutral and non-negotiable outcomes. In order to move away from this functionalistic and normative approach to leadership, it is therefore more useful to look at place leadership as future seeking and not future defining (Sotarauta 2016a).

Apart from the narrow understanding of what leadership is, this also has consequences for those places that cannot live up to the narrow image of how leadership has been supposedly conceptualised. In this way, it ignores the agency of those regions for which it is less easy to attract funding because of structural factors beyond the reach of individual actors. It thus puts responsibility onto the actors in these regions for the situation in which their places are, while other, more structural, factors are ignored. As Kroehn et al. (2010, 489) have noted, “the focus of Australian governments on rural leadership is but one component of a broader ‘self-help’ ethos promoted by neo-liberal ideologies”. Especially when researching the potential of leadership in the less affluent places of our countries, it is important to move beyond these normative ideas on what leadership *ought to be* (Raelin 2016), but move towards a more open-ended, non-functionalistic view of leadership.

The other approach falling in the dualist approach is the critical approach, since it tends to view the world in analytically “distinct divisions like: truth and falsity, oppressors and oppressed, agency and structure, individual and collective” (Mabey and Freeman 2010, 510). While the focus on emancipation and attention for power relations within place making is relevant for a critical study of place and also acknowledges the negotiation that is part of every place (Massey 2005), this study prefers duality over dualism. Here, there are no straightforward divisions of leaders and followers, but leadership can be understood as a multi-actor process of place-making.

Dissensus over consensus

The other approach focusing on duality is the constructivist place leadership approach. It hereby portrays societies as orderly consensus oriented. With regards to the definition of leadership, in the consensual approach, leaders can be identified, while in the “dissensual” approach there is no single place leader to be identified, but “merely a multi-actor process of place-making” (Mabey and Freeman 2010, 509). In this study, the focus is on the dissensual approach, since it fits with a relational approach of leadership in which multiplicity and therefore negotiation is intrinsically linked to place making (Massey 2005). As in critical leadership studies, this move beyond consensus-oriented and harmonious leadership is sought (Tourish 2014). It embraces, too, the processual character of leadership and aims to study the concept reflexively and treat it non-performatively (Alvesson and Spicer 2012).

Overall in the place leadership literature, this leaves open the dialogic discourse, which sees place as a production of social practices. What I aim to show with these different discourses is that place leadership is studied in many different ways. Instead of a functionalistic discourse alone, which would almost quantifiably measure the effect of leaders on certain outcomes, a differing approach would be more open to understanding the process of how places are led in a more open way. The main focus might then include in which ways these public actors behave, strategise, talk, lobby or relate to community etc. in this environment; and how do they (if they do at all) try to influence the peripheralisation of the region. In this less functionalistic account of leadership, attention can be given to the complex relations between power and networks in the development of places. Therefore, in this research the focus is on the dialogic understanding of leadership, since consensus is not assumed and duality is preferred over dualism.

In this thesis, this dialogical focus will be returned to in the open approach to leadership, seeing it as a multi-actor process of place making in which the focus is on the process of leading and not necessarily on identifying leaders. Furthermore, consensus is not assumed, and negotiation is seen as an inevitable consequence of leading places, which automatically means negotiating differing interests.

2.3 Building an analytical framework for a dialogical approach to place leadership

Building on the above-mentioned critiques of studying leadership, understanding place leadership as different from general leadership literature in terms of scope and epistemology, in this part I will call for an operationalisation of place leadership which is based on the three propositions about place as indicated by Massey (2005). These will also serve as the basis for the chapters in this thesis. These three propositions are crucial for an understanding of place leadership and apply a relational approach to leadership of place. By using these as starting

points (seeing places as constructed, heterogeneous and relational), it can provide an explorative study on how leadership of place can appear relationally.

Figure 3: Background for choosing a dialogical approach to place leadership

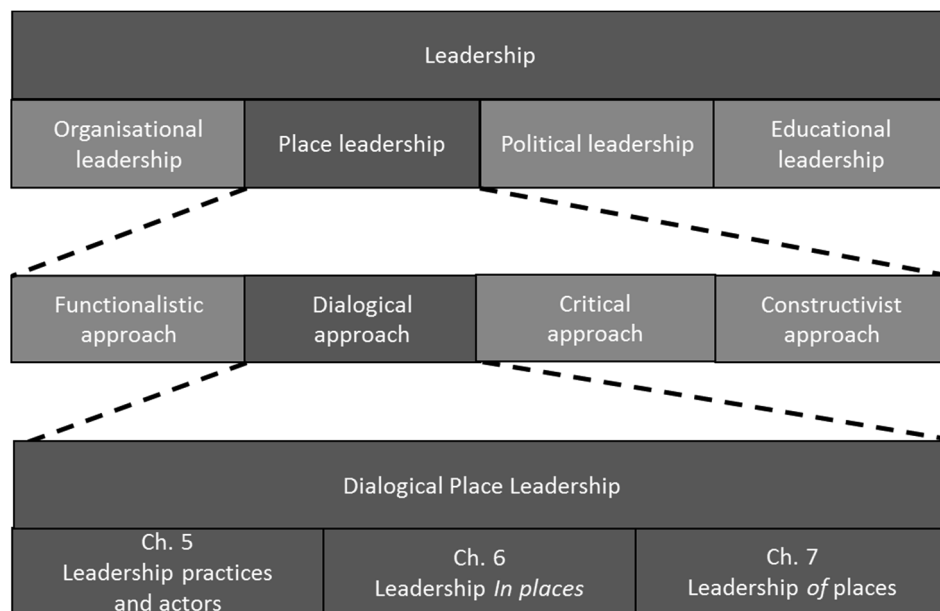


Illustration by author

Figure 3 shows a summary of the conceptual choices that have been made in this thesis with which to come to a more focused approach to place leadership. First, I have chosen to focus on place leadership as one particular process in leadership which differs from organisational, political or educational leadership. Then, on the second level, within place leadership, I have chosen a dialogical approach to leadership, as explained in the previous paragraph. This dialogical place leadership can be divided into focusing on three elements of place leadership, following the three propositions by Massey (2005). While Massey refers to this approach to place and space as a critical approach, in my understanding the dialogical approach as defined by Mabey and Freeman (2010) falls well within in the critical approach that critical geographers (e.g. Massey [2004] and critical leadership studies [Alvesson and Spicer 2012; Tourish 2014]) take. These critical scholars use concepts reflexively and hereby challenge taken-for-granted frames of place, development and leadership. Therefore, in the remainder of this thesis the label “critical approach” is used, because it fits best with the approach taken here.

Chapter 5: Leadership as enacted

Places as stories so far, leadership as practices shaping places

Raelin (2011) has noted that, in order to understand leadership, we must look at how leadership is practised. Therefore, I analyse leadership firstly through its practices to go beyond merely one more discussion of the potentials of leadership. This aligns well with the work by Paasi (2010), who has described regions as being first and foremost socially constructed via actors, expressed in practices. The region gains meaning through the processes and roles of actors and social relations in these regions. Many actors and processes are involved in this “multi-actor process of place-making” (Mabey and Freeman 2010, 509) by actors living in the region, but also outside the region (by national discourses, marketing campaigns, etc.). Due to the involvement of many actors operating at different levels, the concept of agency is rather complex and involves a multitude of actors. Further, scholars also construct the region when trying to conceptualise it to make it empirically “measurable”. The making of the region can, in this sense, be intentional by activists defending regional boundaries, but also unintentional by processes that are not specifically aimed towards the region. This must not be viewed as a functionalist exercise, according to Paasi (2009), but rather as a “constellation of agency, social relations and power” (2009, 133) in which (regional) economic, political and cultural/media elites have an important role (Paasi 2009). Agency is found with the actors, institutions and relations in this region. Leadership can in this sense be connected to Paasi’s view (2010) on this agency or capacity, which he defines as

“a complex set of practices, discourses, and competences related to social positions, expectations, motivations and advantages that will emerge during the institutionalization process.” (Paasi 2010, 2300)

In order to understand the ways in which leadership (co)constructs (peripheral) places, precisely these practices should be the starting point in understanding how places are shaped by place leadership. Starting with these precise practices, this research will thus not privilege one leader above any other, but focus on the process of leadership.

Chapter 6: Leadership *in* places

Place as the sphere of multiplicity

The second element of place leadership connects to leadership *in* places, or how Amin (2004) has called politics of propinquity:

“[D]ifferent microworlds find themselves on the same proximate turf, and that the pull on turf in different directions and different interests needs to be actively managed and negotiated, because there is no other turf.” (2004, 39)

Important in this understanding is the multiplicity of interests in politics and the negotiation of these different interests. This is linked to seeing places as the sphere of the possibility of multiplicity (Massey 2005). This is not necessarily politics around issues played out in the locality only, but rather the management and negotiation of different interests in people's everyday living environment, which can also cross the boundaries of the locality. This can, for example, be the sharing of space between newly arrived residents and longer-established residents in a certain place or other everyday negotiations over the use of space. For Massey, space equals multiplicity; without multiplicity there is no space and the other way around, without space, no multiplicity is possible.

Even though this is not particular for any given spatial scale, the specific element of these politics is that it is commonly perceived as a lived space. In the words of Halfacree (2006), this relates to a threefold notion of space: "the politics of propinquity then may be read as a politics of negotiating the immanent effects of geographical juxtaposition between physical spaces, overlapping communities, contrasting cultural practices" (2006, 39).

With this focus in place leadership more attention can be given to a certain territoriality of places and the perception of territories and their boundaries. While acknowledging that relations matter for places, as is done in a relational reading of place, these relations are also present inside them. Jonas (2012) mentions, in this regard, that the flaws of the more radical relational notion of place is the emphasis on relationships between the global and the local, while the relationships inside the region are often little analysed. He argues that "questions of territory and territorial politics must remain salient in regional development theory" (2012, 6).

When linking these politics of propinquity, it is very much about the negotiation of different interests that meet in a certain place. In this way, it has all to do with what Mabey and Freeman (2010) have called the distinction between consensus- and dissensus-oriented studies on leadership. The negotiation of different interests is crucial in understanding place leadership. Therefore, in this dissertation place leadership is intrinsically linked to processes of negotiation of difference and consensus is not necessarily assumed when analysing leadership processes.

Chapter 7: Leadership of places

Places as products of interrelations

The last element of studying leadership as a process, focuses on the relational element of leading places and especially on the possibility to contest and negotiate the way in which places are shaped. Pierce, Martin, and Murphy (2011) mention that in the scholarship on politics and place, there is not much attention for the connectivities from the places with outside relations. Scholars tend to draw more attention to the people and events within the place, as discussed in the previous section on leadership *in* places, while not having an eye for the politics

that cross these boundaries. This is a similar distinction to that which Woods (2003) has described when he talks about a shift from rural politics to a politics of the rural. While rural politics are primarily located *in* rural places, politics of the rural is more concerned with rurality itself as the primary focus of conflict and debate. In a study by Horlings et al. (2017), leadership is conceptualised using a relational approach, focusing specifically on knowledge, which they frame as “nomadic” leadership, crossing sectoral, thematic and geographical boundaries. Leaders, in this relational sense, are seen as bridging knowledge between different scales, from local to national and vice-versa (Sotarauta et al. 2012). In this understanding of leadership, the focus shifts from studying negotiations and politics inside the place, to the studying of leadership *of* places.

Even though the potential of networks, governance, partnerships and other concepts in studying regional development has been highlighted numerously (Herschel 2010), this picture might not look as positive for all places. In this regard, Nagy et al. (2012) note that, although networks gained in importance in a border region in Hungary, this was mainly between cities and was not the case for the rural peripheries in between. In this way, networks can be seen as a resource for some, but not for all regions, and unequal access to these resources might even exacerbate uneven access to them. Especially as this research looks into peripheral places, networks and relations should not be naively seen as an opportunity for these peripheral places. As Beer (2014) among others have mentioned,

“Communities are effectively denied the capacity to determine their own future. The centralisation of power in metropolitan regions effectively rules out a ‘voice’ for rural and regional towns and settlements.” (2014, 256)

This citation applied to rural-urban relations and is also expected to apply to the understanding of peripheralisation processes. Since peripheralisation is, in this study, understood as a political and social phenomenon, it hereby points attention to more relational accounts of power.

Furthermore, by focusing on more networked structures of governance, the existing structures of government, hierarchy and power should also not be ignored. Hadjimichalis and Hudson (2006) warned more than a decade ago against the optimism surrounding the concept of networks in regional development. While bypassing often hard-fought-for democratic accountability structures, networks should not be seen automatically as solutions for all and could, according to these authors, lay a basis for new forms of “democratic deficit and political unaccountability” (Hadjimichalis and Hudson 2006, 870).

In order to understand more clearly what is meant by these politics of place, one immediately comes to speak of politics. “Politics”, I understand here, in the way that Grémian (1976, in Carter and Pasquier 2010, 286) have defined them, “as actor interactions in the exercise of authority and in the name of the local – a politics in the formation of collective decisions”. It is in this understanding of the negotiation over the terms that govern the use of space and place, which will be

the focal point in this chapter. Trapped or privileged between local politics, as well as the politics of the local, is where the role of place leaders can be positioned in peripheralisation processes. This helps in answering the questions that Beer (2014, 257) also asks: “what are the strategies and tactics used by regional leaders to negate the hegemonic tendencies of centralised governments?”

The third results chapter therefore looks at the politics *of* place, which (Amin 2004) has labelled as the politics of connectivity. He links this to the negotiation over a certain sense of place for the locality: “It is a matter of making explicit, and of choosing between, different senses of place and place attachment on the basis of agonistic engagement between different coalitions of cultural and geographical attachment.” (2004, 42). Here, the focus is much more on leadership *of* the place instead of the leadership *in* the place.

Connecting these politics to the contexts of peripheralisation, it can be argued that being powerless is often related to lacking the resources, lacking the media of power, instead of losing the capacity to shape the future. Defining peripheries as powerless as done by Blowers and Leroy (1994) thus denies the potential agency resting with actors in these peripheries. This chapter will however look at how, as being supposedly underprivileged in resources, there still is power to negotiate in peripheries, thus not closing beforehand the space which we assume to be open (Massey 2005).

Beer (2014) also points, in this context, to the fact that, although sometimes the formal power of communities seem to be muted, there is also an unseen power which makes it possible for rural communities to shape their future. In this sense, the very visible revolutionary change of powers may be not relevant in peripheries, but the more subtle place shaping of localities can be. Therefore, in this element of leadership, the focus should be on the relationship between the leadership of place and broader government and economic processes. Importantly, how do leaders articulate, mediate, negotiate and communicate that set of interactions?

Analytical framework for a critical approach to place leadership

Combining the aforementioned bodies of literature with the proposed conceptualisation of leadership in peripheral places, offers a framework (presented in Table 3) to analyse place leadership in processes of peripheralisation from a relational perspective in a critical way. By focusing on leadership in peripheral places, the crucial role of agency can be better understood in these seemingly structurally deterministic processes of peripheralisation. I have argued that leadership in peripheral places can be better understood by moving beyond functionalistic accounts of leadership in order to not merely re-celebrate the institutionalised “showcases” of local leadership.

Table 3: Analytical framework for a critical study on place leadership

Places as:	Leadership as	Focus:	Chapter
Constructed	Shaping places Constructed	How is leadership enacted?	5
		Who is leading?	
Heterogeneous	Mediating the inherent multiplicity inside places	Leading <i>in</i> peripheral places	6
Relational	Negotiating the relations going in and coming out of places	Leading <i>of</i> peripheral places	7

Illustration by the author

Table 3 shows how the three propositions, as developed by Massey (2005) are used as the basis of an analytical framework and structure for this thesis. Chapter 5 departs from the basis that places are constructed and therefore focuses mainly on leadership as shaping places. Chapter 6 then zooms in on the second proposition, i.e., on places as heterogeneous and leadership processes on the negotiation of this multiplicity. The last, Chapter 7, then departs from the notion of places being relational and thus leadership processes as being focused on that which mainly deals with negotiating these different relations that make up places.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I will describe the research design and methods that have been used for the research. I will start by introducing the steps taken in order to move from the analytical frameworks to the methods for analysis, and discuss the overall research design (3.1). In the part after that, I will zoom in on the specific methodological steps taken (3.2).

3.1 Research Design

In order to answer my research questions, I have used qualitative research methods. Qualitative methods are more useful in understanding meaning, context and focus on processes (instead of only on outcomes). These methods provide enough flexibility to deal with unanticipated phenomena and influences (Maxwell 2004). These methods are most useful as they allow for an in-depth study into human behaviour and the reasons behind this behaviour. The aim is not to measure outcomes of leadership by following a certain pre-given model of leadership, but to look at practices and relations of leadership in the process of peripheralisation, the meaning that people give to these processes, and taking into account the context in which these processes take place. This approach falls within the area of social constructivism. It sees qualitative data as constructed by individuals and not as data that can be measured without these individuals (Bryman 2004). The results that can be derived from the methods will be interpretations of this social world by the respondents. This is important since, as this study goes beyond a functionalistic account and sees place leadership as a constructed phenomenon, as mentioned above. Furthermore, this thesis builds on the grounded theory approach, which is not intended to test hypotheses, but rather to generate new knowledge or concepts. Grounded theory starts with a research question after which data is gathered and eventually leads to the creation of new theory or concepts (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Corbin and Strauss 1990). More information on the procedure of building grounded theory can be found in chapter section 3.2. The inductive character of this research makes it possible to challenge existing theories on place leadership, which is one of the main aims of this thesis. This critical and reflexive approach is suitable for analysing the meanings that are given to leadership processes in peripheral places. Particularly in the leadership literature – being often more focused on quantitative studies aimed at theory testing – a grounded theory approach offers the opportunity to include a more processual notion of leadership with attention paid to varied contexts and thus permits the challenging of existing ideas on leadership (Parry 1998; Kempster and Parry 2011). Further, in the relatively novel place leadership literature, a grounded theory approach is not done before. Even though many qualitative case studies have been carried out (e.g. Kroehn et al. (2010); Raagmaa et al. 2012), they depart from a functionalistic account of leadership but not from a more inductive grounded theory approach to place leadership.

Comparative case study research

This research has an explorative character into place leadership processes. A research method that is useful for this more explorative character of the research is the (multiple) case study. The multiple case study design is an extension of the single case study that analyses a single case detailed and intensively (Bryman 2004). Yin (1984) defines a case study as an empirical enquiry that

“investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used”. (1984, 23)

The addition to the single case study method is the additional cross-case analysis performed after each single case has been studied individually. This cross-case analysis is the comparative element of my research and will be the basis of analysis. Ward (2010, 473) has defined comparative studies as a means “to examine more than one event, object, outcome or process with a view to discovering the similarities and/or differences between them”. In this research, the focus is on an individualising comparison which has a “focus on a particular case study, exploring its specific characteristics and contrasting them as a means of grasping these particularities”. This type of comparison, as defined by Ward (2010), allows me to focus on individual case studies in their own institutional and cultural environment. In this research, I have not claimed to look for causal claims *per se*, but merely extensively analyse single cases and compare these in their own social environments.

Ward (2010, 480) proposes a relational comparative method that “recognizes both the territorial and the relational histories and geographies that are behind their production and re-production”, in which also the “interconnected trajectories of socio-spatial change in different parts of the world” (Hart 2004, 91) can be analysed. This fits with the relational approach incorporated into this thesis’ analytical framework. In sum, the focus in this comparative method is on the constructivist nature of different scale levels and not on the generation of model-like causal relationships.

Case selection

The case selection for this research has taken place in multiple levels: first on the national level, then on the regional level.

Selecting the countries

This research compares a Central and Eastern European country to a Western European country. Often, when these countries are viewed as something particular based on this label of being Western European or Central, Eastern European, the similarities in processes seems to be relegated to the background. While the recent transition for post-socialist societies to neoliberal thinking has consequences for Central and Eastern European countries, which could point to an interesting

comparison to a Western European context based on place leadership processes, this study also aims to move beyond merely examining these differences, and also to note similarities across seemingly incomparable contexts. Therefore, an aim of this research is to manage “the fine balance between recognizing difference and exceptionalism” (Hörschelmann and Stenning 2008, 349), since both Estonia and the Netherlands (and their regions) are enmeshed in global networks and relations, albeit in different ways. Both countries are to some degree impacted by trends towards neoliberalisation, responsabilisation and increasing competition between regions and places. At the same time, these contexts also offer different environments in terms of institutions, which translates into differing infrastructure for possible networks for the leaders in these places. Therefore, the processes of leadership (through influencing, lobbying, collaborating and practicing politics in and of the place) can be seen as more similar between these country contexts than within. As Geddes and Sullivan (2011, 408) also mention in studying leadership across contexts, there is

“the need for specificity of context, together with the ability to position this ability in the wider and often global context and to spot patterns in discourses, strategies and or practices across as within states.”

Furthermore, in order to move towards a more open and context-sensitive approach to place leadership and peripheralisation, it is important to move beyond those particular contexts in which these literatures have developed. Similar to the bias in peripheralisation literature towards the regions which show most clearly the effects of uneven development (Central and Eastern Europe), similar patterns of peripheralisation can be witnessed also in Western European countries like the Netherlands (Bock 2016). Conversely, the bias in place leadership research on Western European or Anglo-Saxon contexts, also inhibits a more context-sensitive approach to place leadership needed for a more complete understanding that pays attention to other institutional backgrounds that are often marginalised (Stenning and Hörschelmann 2008).

In addition, this research compares peripheral places in two very different countries therefore situated in very different institutional backgrounds. The institutional environment of countries is expected to have influence on the emergence of place leadership in regions (Beer and Clower (2013). Beer and Clower suggest that highly centralised governments are less likely to encourage the rise of effective local leadership due to the lack of power at the local level. These findings call for an understanding of leadership which is connected to the institutional environment in which it operates. By comparing a centralised Estonian context with a more decentralised Dutch context, the interaction between this context and the potential for leadership can be seen. More information on the institutional background of these two countries is given in Chapter 4.

Selecting the cases within the countries

In order to select case studies within these two countries, I took several steps. The case studies were chosen by employing several criteria. The first is that they all face the challenges usually linked to places dealing with peripheralisation processes, such as a loss of economic functions, fewer job opportunities, population decline, disinvestment in regional policy, a loss of urban functions, and problems of accessibility (Lang 2011). This is not to prove that these indicators are decisive in making a region more or less favourable for development, but merely to show how these seemingly unfavourable circumstances shape the room for manoeuvre for leadership in these places. One aspect of the above indicators for peripherality that I used to make a first rough selection is population size. In the figures and indicators of Eurostat, there is only one predominantly rural area in the Netherlands, which is Zeeuws-Vlaanderen. The Groningen region is seen as an intermediate region. In Estonia, the only true urban area can be found in the greater Harju region (the Tallinn city region), with the rest as either intermediate or completely rural. Järva-Jaani and Kihnu both qualify as predominantly rural regions. Urban and rural areas are distinguished by using a population grid per km², and by categorising any square kilometre populated by more than 300 inhabitants as urban. Looking at this population density map, one could say that even though the Netherlands as a whole is more densely populated than Estonia, in both countries regional differences appear.

The labels “urban” and “rural” are given depending on the number of people living in so-called urban clusters or rural grid cells:

- **predominantly urban regions**, NUTS level 3 regions where more than 80% of the population live in urban clusters (at least 300 inhabitants per km² and a minimum population of 5 000 inhabitants)
- **intermediate regions**, NUTS level 3 regions where more than 50% and up to 80% of the population live in urban clusters
- **predominantly rural regions**, NUTS level 3 regions where at least 50% of the population live in rural grid cells (grid cells that are not identified as urban centres or as urban clusters)

In the following figures it is clear that the population densities in themselves might be the greatest difference between these two countries, but that in both countries we can witness a certain internal concentration of population (see also a more detailed population map in the figures below). In these statistics, again, the total population density is higher in the Netherlands compared to Estonia, but still the same pattern of uneven spread of population can be witnessed.

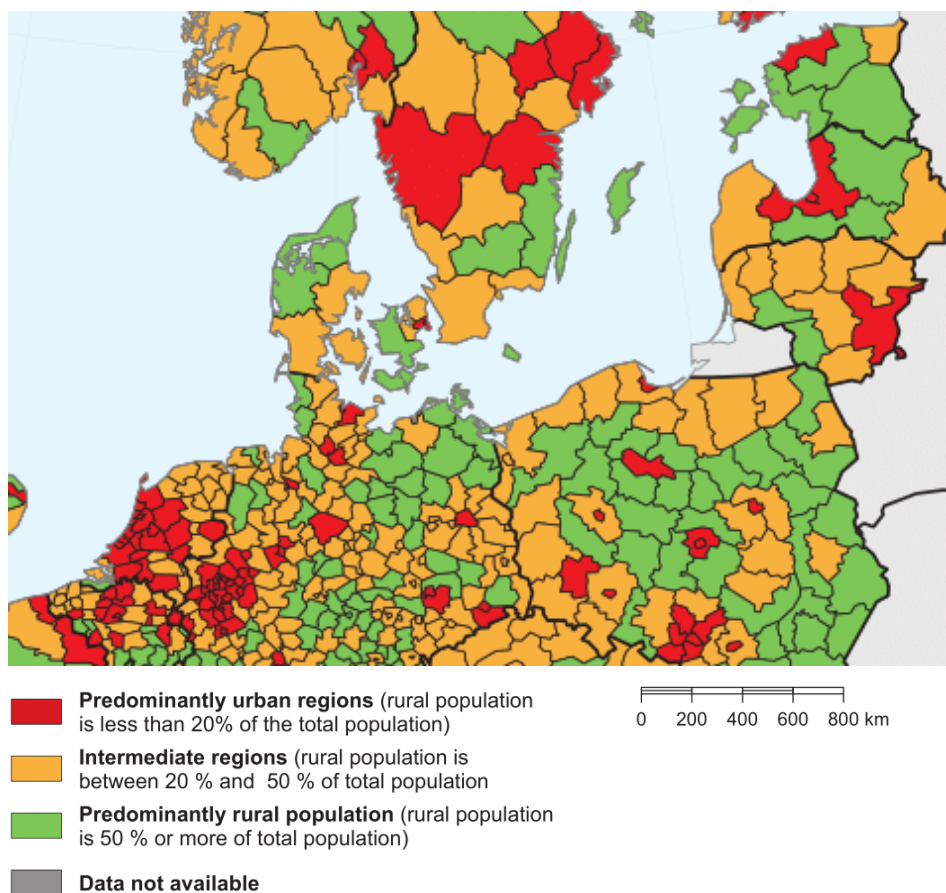


Figure 4: Rural-urban topology for NUTS level 3 regions

Source: Eurostat, JRC and European Commission Directorate-General for Regional Policy (2016)

Omavalitsusüksuste rahvaarv, 31.12.2011
Population number of local government units, 31.12.2011

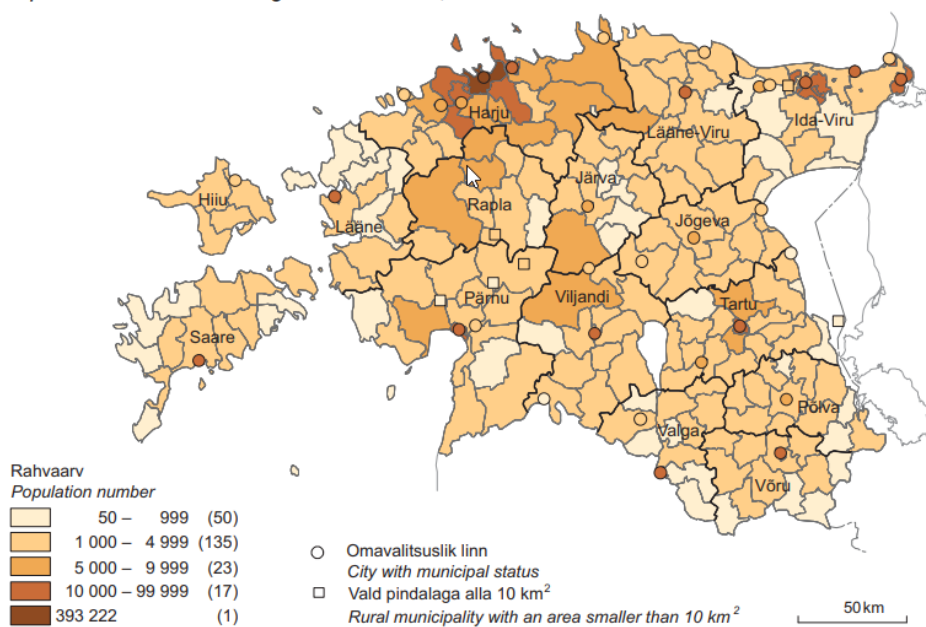


Figure 5: Population density of Estonia
Source: Statistics Estonia (2014, 36)

Bevolkingsdichtheid per gemeente, 2016

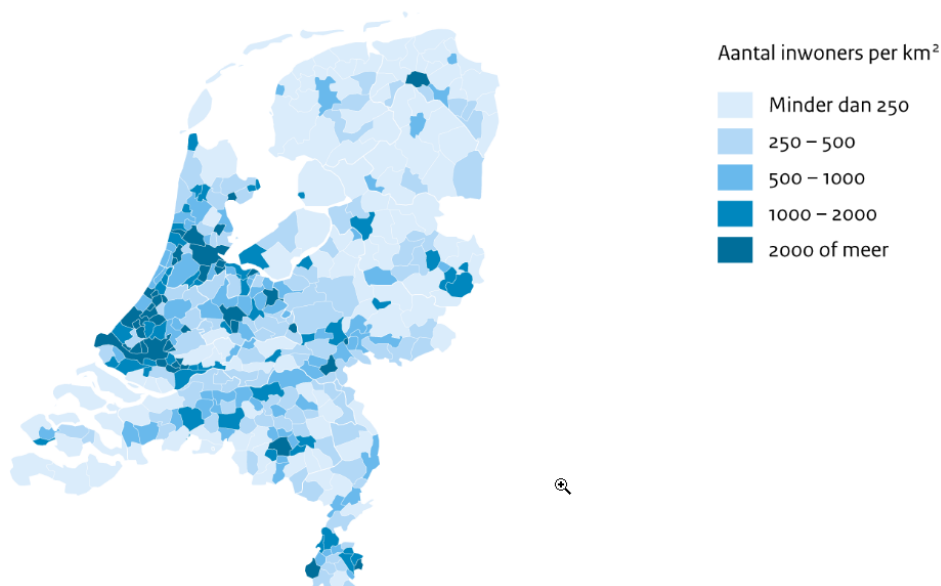


Figure 6: Population density of the Netherlands
Source: CBS (2016)

Understanding the clustering of the population towards one core region as part of peripheralisation processes, the question then becomes as to how in these skewed geographies the institutional context relates to these spatial imbalances and also how policies in these different countries are designed to influence these processes. While there are many more indicators that can be used to show the polarisation of regions within both countries, such as GDP, innovation indicators etc., these are also normative. As Hadjimichalis (2019) critically points out,

“there are some serious concerns with using indices. Although they appear as neutral, universal and technocratic, they are deeply biased, based on historically and geographically specific social and cultural experiences and choices.” (2019, 63)

Furthermore, as Lang (2011, 5) notes, in principle, the notation as being periphery or peripheral is neutral; it is only when these unfavourable circumstances are specifically combined with “discursive negotiation of spatial categories, spatial structures and land use” that they became negatively charged. Moreover, in this research, the focus is not so much on determining how peripheralised these places are, but rather on understanding how these processes of peripheralisation affect the scope for action for local actors. Therefore, the next phase of the selection process considers the different elements of peripherality, as defined by Herrschel (2011). Beyond a spatial peripherality of places (based on distance, or time needed to get there), peripherality might also be based on social connectivity (based on inter-actor relationships and their connectivities) and as distance to functional policy networks. This so-called “inbetweenness” is more a result of being left out or excluded from networks than an unfortunate position on the map. Using these two peripheralitys – network-shaped and spatial peripherality – creates the following table.

Table 4: Combination of different understandings of peripherality

		Spatial Peripherality (‘edgeness’)	
		High	Low
Network-shaped Peripherality (‘in-between-ness’)	High	‘Downward spiral’: Least connected, combines spatial and social peripherality, danger of downward spiral of marginalization	‘Passive’: Centrally located but not capable to connect well – excluded? Lethargic? Discouraged?
	Low	‘Held back’: Spatial on the edge’ peripherality (externally perceived?) with good network-based connectivity. Suggests initiative and capacity within ‘periphery’.	‘Advantaged’: Highly connected, ‘strong’ links, important node in network, sought after node and network

Source: Herrschel (2011, 90)

Taking a more socio-political understanding of peripheralisation also makes especially this networked-shaped peripherality essential. Therefore, in the case selection, I have chosen to select cases that represent a certain variety in terms of connectedness – both physically and communicatively – that can show a different starting point for the leaders in these places to engage in strategies with the extra-local.

Selection of these different peripheral locations was done using exploratory interviews on the regional and national levels. It was based on semi-structured interviews with experts in different national and regional organisations in order to grasp the degree of connectedness of different places in these countries. These experts were currently or previously involved in national or regional institutions, knowledge institutions, or NGOs dealing with regional, local development of rural or non-metropolitan regions and places (see Appendix 1 for a full list of respondents). Based on these interviews I have chosen cases with a diversity in networkedness, as can be seen in the table below. While all cases showed some degree of spatial peripherality, their networkedness differed and, therefore, based on the assumption that this networkedness matters in the processes of leadership that are visible at the local level, via theoretical sampling, different places were chosen with differing levels of expected networkedness.

Table 5: First estimation to show varied peripheralities in the cases

	Kihnu <i>The showcased periphery</i>	Järva-Jaani <i>Periphery trying to get on the map</i>	Schoondijke <i>The forgotten periphery</i>	Pekela <i>The stigmatised periphery</i>
Administrative entity	Municipality	Municipality	Village	Municipality
Population number (in 2015)	502	1012	1275	12678
Spatial peripherality	+++	++	+	++
Networked peripherality	—	+	+	+

Illustration by author, population figures adopted from Statistics Estonia and CBS

Within Estonia, I have chosen two locations. The first is the island of Kihnu, distantly located from the capital region, but it has achieved a well-placed position in important networks. The second is the much more centrally located place of Järva-Jaani, with a much better spatial connection to the capital region, but which struggles more to get into more functional communicative networks. Both localities deal with problems of peripheralisation but face different environments in terms of networkedness. Kihnu cannot be seen so much as a periphery in socio-communicative terms, as is visible in the following quotation from interview data: “How does Estonia, as a country fail in these transportation issues and so on. And

then all the officials are running and, oh, we have to get this fixed, the media helps also. We have a Kihnu friendly media” (K3), which is also supported by the significant media coverage of the island. On the other hand, I selected the case of Järva-Jaani, a rural municipality in Järva county (which amalgamated into the larger Järva municipality in 2017), which has similar circumstances to Kihnu – active cultural life, shrinking population, few working places – but is much less included in important decision making fora and, therefore, can be seen as a more peripheral place in socio-communicative terms. This is likewise shown in the interviews with regional respondents: “nobody hears our voice in Tallinn” (J1); “we don’t think about central Estonia, and I feel it” (J2).

In the Netherlands, I have selected two similar cases, which are spatially both more or less peripherally located and have to deal with declining populations and a loss of economic functions, but through institutional networks have a different level of networkedness. The first case, Schoondijke, has an interesting position in terms of peripherality. While this region can be seen as a periphery for the Netherlands, on the other hand, in terms of Belgium, it is located somewhat equidistantly to the larger Belgian cities of Antwerp, Knokke, Bruges and Ghent. On the other hand, territorially, it belongs to the Netherlands to which it is much more difficult to connect: “The distance to Middelburg [capital city of the Zeeland region] is spatially not that large, but psychologically this distance is much greater” (S4). This shows exactly the experienced distance in the region surrounding Schoondijke in terms of its political regional centre in the Netherlands. Furthermore, the second Dutch case study, Pekela, is more similar to Kihnu, being most physically distant from a core region in Europe, but seems to connect better through institutional networks set up to help this region (e.g. a national report on development in the region, involvement in regional research). The case of Pekela is also interesting because it was created via amalgamation in 1990 from the municipalities of Oude Pekela, Nieuwe Pekela and Boven Pekela. Indeed, there were negotiations in 2018 and 2019 on a further amalgamation of Pekela and neighbouring municipalities. Even though there is now one municipal government, the distinction between the former divisions is still felt. Further, in terms of communicative peripherality, this case is better connected and well known; however, both connectivities are more negatively portrayed. Labelled the “eternal periphery” (Karel 2012, 1), Pekela has a longstanding history of bearing this label, leading moreover to a feeling of neglect: “People are not worried about the image there is in the rest of the country, but rather ask themselves, why don’t we matter, why don’t they see our problems?” (P3).

The map below shows the four case studies that were selected for this study.

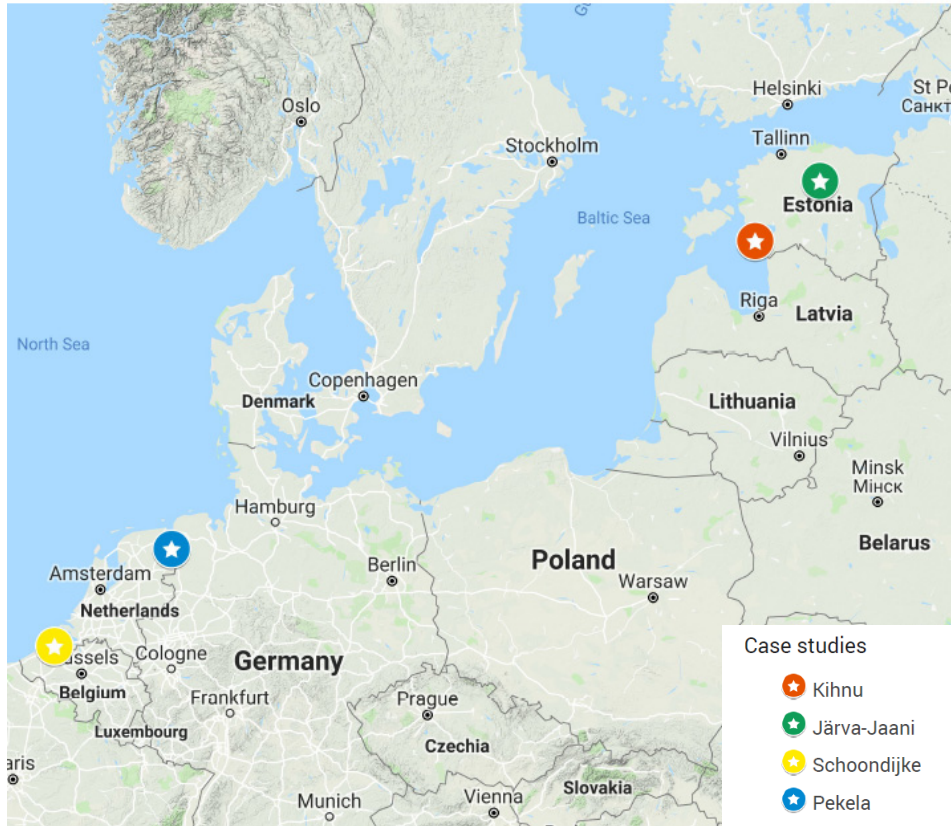


Figure 7: Case study locations
Source: Google 2019

3.1.5 Selecting the respondents in the case studies

The respondents for my interviews, the so-called place leaders and other key individuals, were identified by focusing on a certain issue, as elucidated by Pierce et al. (2011) as a certain conflict or issue. This approach allowed me to identify which different actors form around a certain politics of place without in advance assuming a certain scale or territory. This approach started with identifying the challenges and current practices of the places, with actors being able to be chosen both out of desk research and the interviews with the regional experts. The usual candidates in this first round of interviews were mayors, cultural leaders, teachers etc. After having identified certain issues, the negotiation around these issues was explored. Examples of issues discussed in the different cases were amalgamation, place images, tourism, entrepreneurship etc. These issues were mostly not limited to the territorial boundaries of the places and thus allowed for a more relational approach to place politics.

In the next phase of selection, specific actors that were involved in the identified issues in these place making efforts were identified. These actors were

interviewed multiple times. I visited (public) meetings where these identified issues were on the agenda. Through this I was able to triangulate the knowledge gained from the interviews and supplement this data with participant observation and other interview data. Even though the relations of the respondents were the prime focus, territory remained important, since this were important for the respondents. In this way this research moves beyond what Ward (2010) sees as “methodological territorialism”. By focusing mainly on the practices of leaders of the specific places, the boundaries of the cases are constantly reinterpreted. This can mean crossing the administrative boundary or only involving a small part of the administratively bounded area. In this way, following the actual “acts of locality-making” (Jones and Woods 2013, 39), places were defined by their meaningfulness for local actors. In this way, the research aims to move beyond the view that social relations in general (and the processes of leadership as well) are often organised in these bounded territorial containers. Likewise, a more open, relational view on places was followed. A difficulty with this relational approach is – as Goodwin (2013) also rightly observes – it that is not so easy to determine where to draw the boundary of relations or to define at which point saturation is achieved. Therefore, continuous reflection was needed in order to keep track of the level of saturation in the specific cases. I will return to this reflection at the end of this chapter.

3.2 Research Methodology

Creating the conceptual framework

In order to generate a conceptual framework, a literature review was undertaken so as to relate the important concepts around leadership and peripheralisation and create an analytical framework used to collect the data. Literature from various scientific journals and monographs were used in which the concepts of peripheralisation, place leadership and place (making) were analysed. Starting from a broad conceptualisation of what leadership could mean, literature was narrowed down to fit the critical approach to place leadership. This conceptual framework was then used for designing the final topic guides of the interviews. Furthermore, I analysed policy documents, strategy papers and other “grey literature” that provided further information on the background of the specific places under study.

Exploratory interviews

In March and April 2015, I conducted the first five exploratory interviews in Järvamaa and Pärnumaa (county government officials and local mayors) in order to test the designed topic guides. Furthermore, these interviews helped me to understand more clearly the local context that municipalities and counties are confronted with. These provided the possibility to adapt the topic guide. Then in December 2015, six further exploratory interviews were conducted with experts

at the national level to gain an understanding of the connections between the centre and the peripheries in order to be able to make my final case selection. These interviews were performed with ministry officials dealing (or previously dealing) with European funds or regional policy, with regional development consultants, or with academics in the field of regional or local development. In addition, during field work in the Netherlands, national and regional level experts and regional development officers were interviewed. These informants were all involved in local or regional development, but often worked at the national level. In order to understand peripheralisation as a process about the relations between the core and the periphery, these interviews were meaningful in understanding their view of the regions and places in Estonia and the Netherlands and thus also helped in my final case selection (see Appendix 1 for a list of respondents).

In-depth semi-structured interviews

When the cases were selected, I conducted interviews with 52 actors involved in leadership processes. In all cases I interviewed a minimum of ten respondents, and especially in the Estonian cases I repeated some of the interviews to reach a deeper understanding of the local context. I interviewed these leaders in more and less formal environments. Furthermore, during the interviews I also asked about other possible informants and leaders, by asking about collaboration, active people, non-active people etc. Next to selecting respondents by using this snowball sampling method, I also spoke to other important actors within civil society and the business sector.

Interviews were semi-structured, since this allowed a good balance between guaranteeing that important topics in the interview would be covered, and also allowed some freedom for the respondents (for the complete interview guides, see Appendix 2). The aim was to connect as much as possible to the way in which the respondents viewed the world around them. Interviews generally took approximately 60–90 minutes and were preferably done in the respondents' working or living environments. All the interviews were recorded, after written consent was gained via signing of a form by both researcher and respondent (see the consent form in Appendix 3). When necessary, an interpreter was provided.

I used also other (more ethnographic) methods, as participant observation and informal interviewing in order to understand people's practices, relations and discourses. By talking to ordinary people day-to-day and meeting them at community events, my understanding of the local context was deepened. Also, for the Estonian cases, I stayed on multiple occasions for several consequent days in the localities in order to improve my understanding of the unfamiliar everyday issues of the places. Due to these longer visits, I was able to engage in everyday conversation and informal interviewing with the inhabitants, which led me to more interesting results and to other important actors in the places, and also provided a broader understanding of the processes of leadership. These "slower" methods have provided me with more information on the less successful stories of development and gave me an insight behind the often showcased elements of these places.

I was present at village meetings, informal handicraft meetings, local festivals etc. (see Appendix 1 for an overview of the events visited). These events were chosen to get as much understanding of the local practices and challenges as possible. These were not necessarily focused on one sector (economic, social, cultural), but rather reflected the issues the actors in the places were dealing with. Depending on the meeting, the people involved locally knew of my presence, but in general I preferred a role of bystander in which I could observe the practices. Due to the intimacy and lack of anonymity at some of the events, it was impossible to maintain this bystander role. In these cases, people were informed of my background and reason for being there. These events were also gave the possibility to mirror some of the findings to the “general” public, and these coincidental meetings turned out to be of importance in getting a fuller understanding of the processes of leadership in the places.

Overall, the data generated by this study has led to a rich dataset. In total, 21 exploratory interviews, 52 in-depth interviews and eleven participatory observations were carried out (for more details, see Appendix 1).

Data analysis

Transcription

The first step in the interpretation of results was the process of transcription. All in-depth interviews were audio-recorded (after consent was given) and then transcribed. Since all of the interviews lasted around one hour, this resulted in approximately 51 hours of audio material, which was transcribed in order to start the data analysis phase. Poland (2001) mentions a few challenges relating to the practice of transcribing. First of all, there is the challenge that in a conversation people do not often speak in sentences, so the insertion of a period or a comma can sometimes alter the interpretation of the text. Secondly, it is often not possible to indicate when people are mimicking others, or when respondents quote others. There are also challenges related to more technical issues, when for example the recording might lose crucial words in a sentence. I have tried to circumvent these challenges by listening to the audio file multiple times, indeed, also after transcription had been done. Furthermore, transcriptions are often seen as objective data, as Kvale warned scholars, by suggesting to “not conceive of the interviews as transcripts; the interviews are living conversations. Beware of transcripts.” (1996, 97). Quite literally, transcription can be seen as a translation from audio to text, but in this process, there is some selection happening, but because choices have to be made, this “translation” is never the same as the original. When actually carrying out transcription, the choice can be made for more naturalised and more denaturalised transcriptions, in which naturalised means that as much detail as possible is attempted to be included, including particles of speech; and denaturalised, in which “rather than seeking standards and conventions, interpretive researchers rely on critical reflection and contextualised negotiation of method” (Lapadat 2000, 21). This denaturalised transcription was chosen, and by being

critical and reflexive towards interpretation of the results, I have tried to stay as close as possible to an interpretation shared by the respondents. In order to limit these interpretations in the transcription phase, the transcription was done as soon as possible after the interview was taken.

Coding

After the data were transcribed, they were coded using a grounded theory approach (Corbin and Strauss 1990). This approach began with open coding, a process in which interview data is broken down analytically into smaller parts. This is an interpretive process in which events, relations, actions etc. are categorised in so-called codes and sub-codes. In this process, the researcher constantly asks the question as to what this piece of text or field note is/about. Later in this phase more specific codes were grouped into more general codes. After the coding of some interviews, codes can be regrouped and reinterpreted, overall leading to a set of concepts that came from the data. (Corbin and Strauss 1990) After this open coding, axial coding was done, in which several sub-codes were related to each other in order to find more complete explanations for phenomena. In a final phase, selective coding was performed in which only certain codes connected to a certain theoretical lens were compared and analysed across cases (Corbin and Strauss 1990). The figure below shows in which way the process from data collection to open coding, axial coding and selective coding, is a process of constant comparison between incidents, data and theory. The data analysis software program Atlas.ti was used in order to organise and visualise coding patterns.

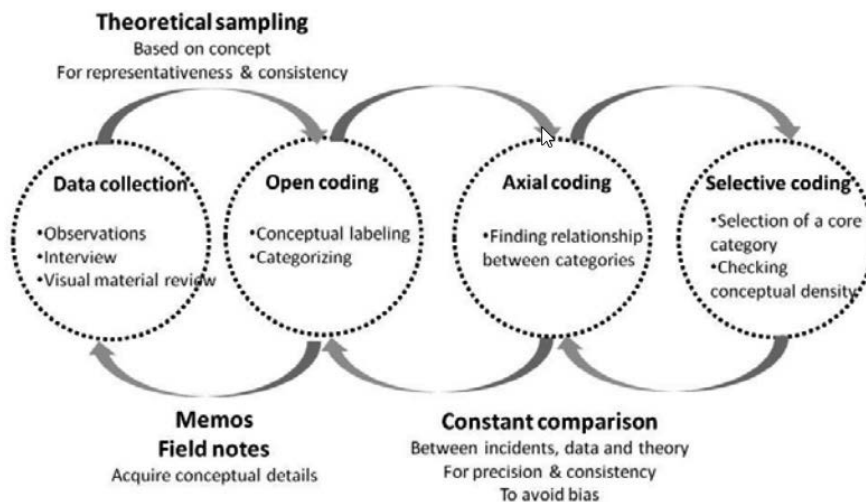


Figure 8: Data analysis procedure of grounded theory method
Source Cho and Lee (2014, 9)

After the process of selective coding was completed and a level of saturation was achieved, the first comparisons were performed and the analyses were written into chapters. An example of this process of moving from statements, coding them openly, towards more axial coding into selected categories can be found in table 6.

Table 6: An example of the coding process

Statement from interview	Open Coding	Axial Coding	Selective Coding
“We don’t think about central Estonia, and I feel it” (J2)	Feeling invisible	Invisibility	Socio-communicative peripherality
“And if you look at the map, you think that this region must belong to Belgium” (S2)	Forgotten places on the map		
“Why don’t we seem to matter to the state and why are our problems not heard in The Hague?” (P3)	Feeling neglected		
“Everyone knows in Estonia that there is Kihnu island and Kihnu culture, everybody starts valuing Kihnu culture” (K4)	Visibility status	Visibility	

Illustration by the author

This table shows that in the first stage, certain fragments of texts are selected (column 1), then they are labelled into concepts in open coding (column 2), then similarities are sought between the open codes, resulting in axial coding (column 3), and, in the last step, the concepts are even further abstracted to broader themes relevant in the analysis. These codes and the constant comparison between the different codes and underlying statements form the basis of the data analysis and the following results chapters.

Limitation of the research methodology

Taking an interpretive approach on doing research, the role of the researcher should also not be forgotten, as they interpret themselves as well. As Yanow (2007) also mentions: “No longer seen as a neutral, tabula rasa, the researcher-analyst is increasingly seen as also participating in generating the data which are then subjected to analysis” (2007, 116). This position is also taken up in this research – and was experienced. In both the Dutch and the Estonian field work, local actors viewed my presence and involvement and asked me to be involved. Talking with local actors about problems in their places often automatically led to a conversation about possible solutions, in which I could not engage. As can also be seen in Plüschke-Altof and Grootens (2019), the research was in itself seen as an instrument in the local development studied. While this is inevitable,

it is important to reflect on the different roles that can be taken by researchers, from that of a mere bystander to a more activist position; the positionality of the researcher determines which role is taken and how to respond to situations of interference.

Transparency surrounding the interpretations made by researchers, and explicitness about certain positionalities can help to guarantee the quality of the research process. Therefore, I acknowledge that power is ultimately present in research situations, and thus have attempted to be explicit about these positionalities. In this research I recognise that “tension between trying to understand people’s perspectives from the inside while also viewing them and their behaviour more distantly, in ways that may be alien (and perhaps even objectionable) to them” (Hammersley 2006, 11) is ultimately part of conducting research.

Furthermore, due to the different country contexts, as a researcher, being more familiar with the Dutch context and language made it more difficult to reach a similar level of saturation in the Estonian cases. Interviews were either conducted in English or in Estonian with the help of an interpreter. Either way, this has led to a certain incomparability in case materials. In order to minimise these effects, I have spent more time considering the Estonian cases and did more interviews in order to get a deeper sense of the local situation.

Another difficult element of the research design was the relational approach. The choice not to limit the focus of research in one bounded area, but follow connectivities beyond the borders, led to issues of delimitation. This led to the question as to where the study area starts and ends. While the explorative character of this study made it possible to reach a certain level of saturation rather quickly, this was always an artificial point. In a more radical relational approach, focusing on single cases studies, more in-depth insights could be provided in terms of relationality.

An often-mentioned constraint of using the case study and grounded theory approach is the inability to make generalisations (Kempster and Parry 2011; Yin 2013). It is true that generalising to larger populations, in a statistical sense, is not possible when doing four case studies employing a grounded theory methodology. This does not mean, however, that it cannot contribute to the development of theory. Especially in the approach that was taken in this research – challenging the underlying assumptions in place leadership while using critical leadership studies and relational theory in a peripheralisation framework – has the potential to provide a more open and contextualised understanding of the concept of place leadership. Moreover, comparing a Central Eastern European context with a Western European context in a case study design is essential in pointing out the different trajectories of change that are practiced in these different contexts. The aim is thus not to generalise to the wider Central and Eastern European contexts or to essentialise the trajectories of “Eastern” and “Western” Europe but rather to challenge the universalised Western imaginations of the world and simultaneously understand the complexity of post-socialist change in certain contexts (Hörschelmann and Stenning 2008).

4. RESEARCH CONTEXTS

In this chapter, the different contexts for place leadership in the Netherlands and Estonia are compared and contrasted. As mentioned in the introduction, place leadership has often been studied and theorised mostly from Western (European) contexts. In order to broaden this scope, this research was conducted in two different countries, Estonia and the Netherlands. This chapter provides some basic background information on the rural and regional development, governance and institutional backgrounds of these countries. This background information helps in understanding the different contexts for place leadership in them.

When comparing Estonia to the Netherlands, one of the biggest differences can be seen in their population size and density. In 2015 the population of Estonia was 1.3 million and 16.9 million for the Netherlands (OECD 2019). This means that the Dutch population is approximately thirteen-times greater than that of Estonia. Taken with the fact that Estonia's land area is even more expansive than the Netherlands, means a noteworthy difference of 31 people per km² versus approximately around 504 people per km² respectively (OECD 2019). While the Estonian average remained somewhat constant over in the period of 2014–17, in the Netherlands the population density increased in the same period, as can be viewed in table 3.

Table 7: Population density (population per km²)

	2014	2015	2016	2017
Estonia	30.3	30.27	30.3	30.29
The Netherlands	499.59	501.68	504.01	507.05

Source: OECD (2019)

Some see the Dutch *Randstad*, the conurbation located in the west of the country, as a European metropolis with 10 million inhabitants within 12,500 km². This compares to Paris (including suburbs) with 11 million inhabitants in 1723 km² and Greater London with 8.5 million in 1577 km² (van Alkemade 2016). Comparing this to the capital city region of Harju (Tallinn city region) in Estonia (of around 600,000 inhabitants) provides a striking contrast.

However, this research focuses not on these urban regions of these countries, but on the non-urban, peripheral places. In the next section, below, I will show how these contexts – also for the non-urban areas – provide different starting points. I have chosen to focus on the institutional contexts, overall rural and regional developments in the countries, and also to provide an exploration of the different policy environments of the two countries. Since these elements are all part of important contextual conditions for place leadership (Beer and Clower 2013), an introduction to these elements must be provided in this chapter.

4.1 Estonia

Institutional context

Administrative structure

Even though there used to be a more independent regional level in Estonia until the latest administrative reforms in 2017, the “counties” could already not be seen as administrative units while directly subordinate to the central government (Oppi and Moora 2004). After Estonia regained independence in 1989, a two-tier local government system was formed, in which the basic level was formed by the municipalities and the secondary level by the fifteen counties (the former Soviet *rayons*), with considerable power during the 1980s. This system remained until 1993, when the regional level started to lose some functions, including its self-governmental status (Sepp and Veemaa 2010). Today, urban and rural municipalities form the base layer of the administrative system in Estonia and the second is formed by the nation state. After the administrative reform of October 2017, there are now 79 municipalities (versus 213 before), and county governments have no longer been active since 2018 (Valner 2018).

Centralisation

From regaining independence, central government has become more dominant in Estonia, as Sootla and Laanes (2015) describe. This centralisation mainly occurred at the expense of the regional level. Estonia has changed from a country with a regional tier with capacity and legitimacy to a country of counties which are not much more than a deconcentrated unit of one of the ministries. This downsizing of the regional level was not only supported by the national government, but also local government leaders were in favour of a removal of this layer, mainly motivated by a fear that any decision making power added at the regional level would be at the expense of decision making power at the local level (Kettunen and Kungla 2005). Furthermore empowering the regional level was also seen as a potential danger for a capture of regionalists’ demands in regions where minorities constituted majority groups (The Russian speaking part of the population constituted 36% of the Estonian population after regaining independence (Kettunen and Kungla 2005). Therefore, among other reasons, this perceived danger has led to a more centralised approach in Estonia.

This centralisation also had its influence on the tasks and responsibilities of local municipalities. For example, since the end of the 2000s, the upper-secondary level of school has been removed from the responsibility of the municipality and has become a mostly national state affair (Sootla and Laanes 2015). This increased dependence on the national level went hand-in-hand with a dependence on European funds for Estonian municipalities (Tatar 2010). This connects to what Sootla and Laanes (2015) describe: in 2009, getting loans as a local government was made *de facto* impossible, which only increased the pressure on EU fund-co-financing. In the same period, the proportion of income tax flowing to

the municipalities was cut, thus even more complicating the financial scene for local governments. After the 2017 administrative reform, the situation improved again somewhat, when pre-2009 proportions were re-established. Overall, for several reasons, Estonia centralised its powers more and more to the national level, leaving less room for regional administrative powers and a reducing of power at the local level.

Rural and regional development

Estonia's recent history is marked by the transition to post-socialism. In this process, drastic changes in the economy, policy and society occurred. Lauristin and Vihalemm (2009) discuss the transition of Estonia from pre-independence to EU accession in 2004 and show that, while the external view on Estonia was one of economic success, internally the darker consequences of the transformation are felt. This was made visible by increased market liberalisation posited as the only way forward, and downplaying its negative consequences for society. In this so-called "transition culture", the perspectives of the most successful actors are framed as icons for the whole society. Lauristin and Vihalemm (2009) describe how in the fast transition of Estonia a new capitalist elite was born. In the two decades following regained independence, this elite supported a liberal market-oriented paradigm. It followed principles of New Public Management and reacted against the former state-dominated economic system (Loewen and Raagmaa 2018; Tönnisson 2006), focusing on less state intervention and on market-led principles.

In this time period, weaker socio-economic positions were politically marginalised, since their claims sounded too socialist in the national-reformist versus Soviet-anti-reformist division of Estonian politics. In these decades, the dominant transition culture favoured individualistic values, economic success and competitiveness (Lauristin and Vihalemm 2009), in which according to Annist (2014), the losing individuals are blamed for their inability to cope. Nagy et al. (2012) mention specifically the reproduction of peripherality in "backward" regions in these transformations, which combined with a strong shift toward neoliberal policies, led to new winners and losers, which could also be witnessed in Estonia.

Even though this period factually ended after independence, a certain coexistence and discontinuity of past and present in Central and Eastern European countries also exists (Kay et al. 2012). While the feeling of regained independence "inspired Estonians, empowering their activeness in the social sphere and organizations" (Vadi and Roots 2006, 194), for others, these changes lead to a willingness to stick to the "old" understanding or mindsets. Vadi and Roots (2006) define this as a polarisation of mindsets in which both new ways of organising and holding on to the past can simultaneously be witnessed. Both in private as public organisations, these double tracks in mentality can be witnessed.

Like in all three Baltic states, transformation to a market economy was rapid, which led to a relatively quick recovery, but also to a system that led to marginalisation of the rural areas (Nugin 2014). The transition from a socialist

subsidised rural economy to that of the open market meant a clear break for the rural areas of Estonia, since their rural economy was mainly based on agriculture and industries. For rural areas in particular, the restructuring process from collective to private farms was far from smooth. During the Soviet period, the Baltic countries were seen as agricultural producers and people moved to the countryside in order to fulfil its needs (Nugin 2014). After the collapse of the Soviet Union, however, this function largely disappeared and in the years after, the rural areas saw outmigration to the cities of Tallinn and, to a lesser degree, Tartu. In terms of employment, Estonia has also seen wide disparities from this early transition period onward. While between 2001 and 2007 overall unemployment decreased in Estonia, regional disparities remained and even increased, reemphasising the spatial unevenness of the “successful” Estonian economy. Also after the late 2000s recession, when unemployment grew, the regional disparities remained (Marksoo et al. 2010). The percentage of the population living in Harju county (including Tallinn) was still 41.2% in 2011 (and increasing) and GDP was 61.1% in 2009 and still growing (Raagmaa et al. 2014). These numbers do not tell the whole story, but give an indication that regional disparities are increasing. Furthermore, in terms of employment, for the primary sector, this is ever decreasing, which is expected to lead to a further concentration of people and resources in the capital region (Tammaru 2001; Raagmaa et al. 2014).

Due to a diminishing birth rate, urbanisation, and the dissolution of the Soviet agricultural structures, according to Nugin (2014), Estonia’s rural areas have been marginalised structurally as well as discursively. Structural marginalisation can be witnessed through the loss of functions for the villages, such as schools, shops, pharmacies etc. This development is also in line with the change in service provision and higher mobility of people in general, yet has also led to outmigration by potentially more active people from these areas. Furthermore, the whole restructuring of agriculture has resulted in neglect of the land, bankruptcy and at times poverty in the rural areas (Nugin 2014; Trell et al. 2012; Kay et al. 2012). This had led to rural areas being labelled as losers of the transition. Nugin and Trell (2015) describe how in the Estonian media rural inhabitants are usually depicted as “lagging behind, disconnected from the rest of the world and very likely coping with an alcohol problem” (Nugin and Trell 2015, 265). They also emphasise the stigmatisation of the rural population connected to their nostalgia for the Soviet period, which is seen as politically inappropriate and ideologically backward. For some rural inhabitants, however, the Soviet period represents an era of stability (Nugin and Trell 2015).

Policy regarding uneven development

In Estonia the first Regional Policy document was put into force in 1991, aiming towards a balanced development of Estonia’s regions. It lasted until 1994, when the first minister of regional affairs was appointed and, in the period after, regional policy was high on the political agenda. In 1997, the Estonian Regional Development Agency was created. When Estonia started the process of accession to the

EU, special support in the form of programmes of aid to CEE countries (PHARE) began. In 1999, during the economic crisis, regional policy became the responsibility of the ministry of economic affairs, which also decreased its perceived necessity (Raagmaa et al. 2014, 782). This was combined with the politicisation of the executive apparatus, where loyalty to the “right” parties, mainly county governors, was rewarded. At this time, the attention on regional policy decreased. From the 2000s on, other European sources, such as PHARE and INTERREG became available, considerably higher than the domestic funding for regional policy, was at that time (ibid.).

Funding, including European Structural Funds, was mostly allocated to the larger municipalities and was decided upon by the ministry of finance. As Kettunen and Kungla (2005: 367) mention, “the central government ministries, especially the Ministry of Finance clearly dominates all phases of the regional policy decision-making, assigning local and regional actors only a subordinate role”. Furthermore European Regional Development Funds, aimed at improving regional competitiveness, was mostly spent on the interests of small municipalities, focusing on municipal schools and kindergartens and, in minor amounts, also on tourism development (Raagmaa et al. 2014). Moreover, Oppi and Moora (2004) show that most of the European funds aimed at alleviating regional differences mainly ended up with the municipalities which already had a higher socio-economic status and were therefore already better off. Overall, policies to combat regional disparities have been attempted in Estonia, but have ultimately not been utilised for what was intended.

Context for place leadership in Estonia

Taking the above-mentioned factors together brings forward an image of a changing context for peripheral places in Estonia. With the legacy of post-socialism leading to discursive and structural marginalisation, polarisation has increased ever since. Furthermore, the institutional context led to an increasing centralisation, which increased polarisation between leading and lagging regions even further. Combined with a centralised central government, in which less decision making power is left for the local level, leads to a difficult position for local leadership. Raagmaa et al. (2014) point to the issue of capacity loss in local government and the lack of resources for these local governments to be a partner in regional policy. On the other hand, Sootla and Laanes (2015) mention that this gap in capacity can be mostly explained by the lack of financial resources and not only human resources and professionalism

However, in terms of local capacity, Kettunen and Kungla (2005) note that having this centralised system in which less room for manoeuvre in the formal channels is found, means other channels have gained in importance: “they have often been able to mobilize grass-roots opposition to the reform through party channels” (Kettunen and Kungla 2005, 374). Even though the structural context might seem constraining, this research will look more into the opportunities of leadership as a form of agency operating in this structural environment.

4.2 The Netherlands

Institutional context

Administrative structure

The Netherlands has a three-tier administrative system, which comprises of the state, twelve provinces and 355 municipalities in 2019 (this number is still open to change due to administrative reforms). The provinces handle a number of duties, such as environmental management and public transport, and have their own representatives and executive bodies. The third level of Dutch government is the local municipalities who have the duty to organise a range of things for their local inhabitants and for which they are financially dependent on central government. For decision making, local governments were also dependent on the central and provincial governments' approval, but recent years have seen re-increasing local responsibility (Pro Demos, House for Democracy and the Rule of Law 2013).

Centralisation/decentralisation

Dutch history shows shifts from more decentralised (the Dutch Republic of the United Provinces being the first ever federal state in modern history) to more centralised government and vice versa. After a time of centralised welfare state up until the beginning of the 1980s, the Dutch government started budget cuts in the welfare state and began decentralising government tasks. This was inspired by New Public Management thinking, which advocated that the country should be ruled as a company. In the time following this, government corporations were privatised and many formerly provided subsidies were removed (Vermeulen 2015). For municipalities, this meant that their greatest portion of revenue is transferred from the central government via a fund – the municipal fund – calculated on the basis of indicators (for more info on these indicators see Bos 2010). This division of funding, however, means that, based on the rationale of having poorer inhabitants, bigger municipalities receive a higher proportion of municipal funding (Bos 2010). The rural municipalities of the Netherlands have since 2010 tried to lobby for compensatory extra amounts in this municipal funding, which up to now has not led to any structural change in the funding structure, called P10.

In 2007, an important new law was enacted, the law on societal development (WMO). These decentralisation measures led to more responsibilities for local governments and local inhabitants in terms of care provision.

Governance

In terms of government, according to Kickert (2003), Dutch governance styles show a remarkable continuity, in which pragmatism and compromise have always been central. After the Second World War, society's organisation into so-called pillars ("pillarisation") resulted in compromise and consensus politics.

Apart from a more pluralistic period during the 1970s, Dutch governance returned to a model in which high hopes were seen for the nation state's ability to "steer" society. This welfare state was narrowed after the economic crisis of the 1970s, which led to massive cutbacks throughout the public sector in the 1980s. The mode of governance at this time was based on the ideas of New Public Management with a focus on economy, effectiveness and efficiency. So, to some extent, this could be seen as neo-liberalism, although "most Dutch political decision-making is carried out without any ideology at all" (Kickert 2003, 125) and pragmatism and consensus is the general rule of governance. At the end of the 1980s, neo-liberalism ceased to be the dominant principle, and management was seen in a more pragmatic sense. In the 1990s, this led to a more network-based model with experiments in interactive democracy.

Another historically rooted element of governance is the discussion culture, or "polder model", which is said to have its roots in the time of the Republic of the Netherlands, where the seven provinces all had an equal say in governance and no hierarchical command structure existed. Another possible explanation is that dates back to the necessary collaborations in the never ending fight against flooding. The endless discussion and debates are said to be a traditional feature of this "polder model" (Kickert 2003).

Rural and regional development

In the Netherlands, attention towards the development of its rural regions began mainly after the Second World War. In the first post-war decade, the country was under reconstruction and population decreased in rural areas. The national government played a significant role in stimulating development in rural areas, funded by the Marshall Plan, focusing on both agriculture and industry. At this time, agricultural and rural development were almost synonymous; agricultural land was reallocated, which made it fit for highly-productive and intensive agriculture (Wiskerke 2007). Mechanisation led to a further decrease in jobs in the countryside and to outmigration to the cities. Furthermore, the government also invested in industrialisation of these areas in order to stimulate economic developments in those with most unemployment. Later, this policy broadened from only economic planning to also include "social planning" (Melis 2013, 47), in which there was an increase in self-awareness of the need for change in their environment.

From the 1970s, due to suburbanisation, more people with differing stakes involved moved to the countryside (Mommaas and Janssen 2008). Rural areas were increasingly seen as attractive living areas, and, later, also as an interesting tourist destination. The countryside was changing from solely a site of production to one of consumption, thus increasing its societal functions, in the areas of nature conservation, biodiversity, infrastructure etc. (Steenbekkers et al. 2013). This went hand-in-hand with government investment in nature conservation and "beautification" of the countryside. Consequentially, these rural areas were also governed by a more pluralistic group of actors, including societal actors, such as

NGOs, all together dealing with issues in the countryside (Boonstra and Frouws 2005; Horlings 2010; Wiskerke 2007).

These changes in the countryside also had their effects on the people living there. During the time of post-war reconstruction, mechanisation and falling agricultural employment led to outmigration. In the 1950s and 60s the overall rural population declined, which led to the feeling in the 1960s that life in the countryside no longer had much to offer its population (Steenbekkers et al. 2013). This development was followed by a wave of suburbanisation in the 1970s and again a small population decline in the 1980s. Zuid-Limburg has seen a somewhat different development trajectory, mostly due to its more urban character (Melis 2013). Moreover, due to a further concentration of jobs in urban areas, the rural population further declined, and households there had a relatively larger proportion of older people.

Apart from some government-framed “problem areas” (in the spatial peripheries of the country in Zeeuws-Vlaanderen, Oost-Groningen and Southern Limburg), the rural areas of the Netherlands were doing quite well economically. From the late 2000s financial crisis onwards, areas with a relatively large share of industrial concentration and one-sided economies suffered more (mainly Brabant, Limburg and Zeeland) (Steenbekkers et al. 2013).

However, in the peripheries of the Netherlands, at the national borders, a different picture emerges. A structural decline in population, increasing proportion of elderly people, and economic activity have created a country running at two speeds (Steenbekkers et al. 2013). Alongside the disinvestment and decline in households in rural areas, most of the regions also struggle with other socio-economic problems: a disadvantageous job market, many people in social care, decreased health, relatively many people of a lower socio-economic status etc. (Team Midterm Review Bevolkingsdaling 2014).

This divide between successful (urban) and less successful (rural) regions of the Netherlands has been a frame put on the agenda by national policy makers, but this has also been contested. Molema (2012) talks about the specific urban-rural divide in the Netherlands and how this frame of uneven development has been very productive, picturing the big cities as the “Randstad” as the “rim-city” and the North as the underdeveloped. In the 1960s, this frame resulted in policy which saw spreading the Dutch population across the country in a rational way as an important principle of Dutch spatial planning. The investment in industries in the development regions was intended to make these regions economically attractive once again. Molema (2012) describes how different lobbying actions, especially in the north of the Netherlands, have led to the acceptance of the urban-rural divide by the regional actors. Framing of the urban areas were done

“as ‘developed’, ‘industrial’, ‘dynamic’ and ‘economically profitable’, whereas the other side evoked the picture of rural space as ‘dominated by agriculture’, ‘backward’ and ‘lagging behind’, with a large number of ‘registered or unregistered unemployed workers’.” (Molema 2012, 445)

Regional actors also used this frame in order to lure infrastructural investments into their regions. (Molema 2012). However, in the following decades, when population growth and industrial growth also came to a halt in the country, the division between the “west” and the “rest” slowly faded. Unemployment was no longer something for rural areas only, while unemployment grew in cities too. And as Wiskerke (2007) emphasises, the urban-rural dichotomy is no longer clear, through increasing rural-urban linkages. This coincided with the development from the 1980s onwards that, instead of emphasising the urban-rural divide, some regional actors increasingly emphasised their own unique qualities (Molema 2012).

Policy regarding uneven development

Rural policy has its origins in the period after the Second World War, when it was mainly shaped by the agrarian sector. Increasing agricultural production was of great importance for economic recovery and food production, and, therefore, national programmes aimed at modernising industries and agriculture were rolled out across the country in order to improve welfare in the regions. Although the main focus was on improving economic welfare, wellbeing also later became a focal point for policy. Investment in industry and infrastructure was planned in designated development areas. (Melis 2013; Molema 2012).

However, in recent decades, Area Based Policies (*Gebiedsgericht Beleid*) has come to be seen as the solution to these problems. In this policy, the focus is primarily on solving problems in specific regional issues. Different forms of regional governance arrangements have been developed from the 1990s on, such as “ROM areas” focusing on integrating spatial and environmental policy in a certain area, and “Valuable cultural landscapes” that sought to balance the economic with the other qualities of agricultural land (Horlings 2010). Furthermore, nowadays, a new National Spatial Vision is being prepared (expected to be published in 2019) in which a new Spatial Policy will be developed. Intended to simplify and streamline processes, this new Spatial Policy re-emphasises the urban dimension (Ache and Hospers 2016). Further, also following these more integrated rural development models, since the 2010 government took office, certain themes have been supported by policy. One of these was Agenda City (*Agenda Stad*), a national policy which sees cities as the engines and incubators for economic growth (Ache and Hospers 2016).

Today, the Netherlands does not, however, have a comprehensive regional policy, but instead different ministries have their own policies which sometimes overlap (Boonstra and Frouws 2005; OECD 2014). Policies aimed specifically at improving the countryside were cut back since the last change in government in 2010, even though support for farmers (in terms of broadening their activities via nature conservation or environmental issues) remained (Steenbekkers et al. 2013). While, in some policy areas, attention remains for regional problems (e.g. in terms of amenities, the ministry of public health, welfare and sport (*Volksgezondheid, Welzijn en Sport*) also stated an ambition to improve their accessibility),

overall, national government no longer focused its policy specifically towards rural areas.

Economic policy was geared more towards stimulating innovation. Supporting the “top sectors”, those in which the state sees the most national economic benefit (among which agro-food is also a priority) is showing an increased focus on regional innovation. However, the regions that are focused on this policy can no longer really be seen as peripheral regions. (Melis 2013; Steenbekkers et al. 2013)

In this sense, the interest in bottom-up initiatives in policy making is important to mention. This can be identified, for example, in the *Agenda Burgerschap* (Agenda Citizenship) in which citizen participation has been a point of focus. While not specifically intended for rural areas, it certainly has consequences there. The focus of this so-called “do-democracy” (*doe-democratie*) is on the ability of citizens to organise themselves (WRR 2012). The focus on civic self-reliance in particular, which advocates a more self-help ethos, has led to the question whether in this new participation society, the withdrawal from the state in rural areas is not going too far and whether this is something that can be asked from these areas. Especially when also the stress on volunteers has been increasing and exclusivity seems to be an integral part of self-organisation (Salemink et al. 2016; Uitermark 2015; Soares da Silva et al. 2018, Tonkens et al. 2006). Critique of this development has been expressed by other authors who mention the dangers of a national government that withdraws too much from the local level. By calling for more self-governance, the government thus favours the most active and most organised villages at the cost at the least. Therefore, this withdrawal might bring the danger of increased inequality (Steenbekkers, Vermeij, and Ross 2013; Tonkens et al. 2006; Soares da Silva, et al. 2018).

Policy regarding areas with population decline

A specific domain for which policy has been developed is developed specifically for areas dealing with population decline, even though the demographic trends as described above had long been visible time after a 2006 report on Structural Population Decline (*Structurele Bevolkingsdaling*) written by Derks, Hovens, and Klinkers (2006). Politically, the topic gained attention when the minister of housing, neighbourhoods and integration (*Minister van Wonen, Wijken en Integratie*) walked through the city of Heerlen in 2009, and saw the consequences of this decline. And even though Heerlen is a city, this became an important moment which has placed the topic on the Dutch political agenda, and indeed also for rural areas. Since then, ministries, municipalities, provinces and knowledge institutes have increased attention on the issue of shrinkage, which shows in the large number of publications written from this period until now (e.g. Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties 2016; Nationaal Netwerk Bevolkingsdaling 2013). Because of this increased attention, it seems as if a shrinking population is a new thing; however, this has occurred from just after the Second World War (Melis 2013). This increase in attention can be explained, according to Haartsen and Venhorst (2010), due to population decline and negative spirals of spatial developments (empty houses, brain drain), but also due to the Dutch

spatial planning tradition as “the almost irrepressible urge to organise, plan, and guide all developments that (may) have consequences for the organisation of space” (Haartsen and Venhorst 2010, 219).

Initial reactions from the municipalities dealing with population decline were denial and continuing the construction of new houses, also supported by a certain bias towards growth present in spatial planning. While, in later years, and especially in the most drastically shrinking regions, houses have also been demolished, in general this is still seen as inappropriate. An example of this was when Ganzedijk, a village in the north of the Netherlands was about to be demolished and received much press attention. The often-heard motto now is “smart shrinking”, in which a shrinking population is more often seen as a base for doing things differently.

Context for place leadership in the Netherlands

While the overall context for rural development has been shown to be quite dynamic from the Second World War onwards, leading in particular to changes in agriculture and several policies aimed at regional and rural development, in later years, the focus has increasingly been on stimulating urban areas and successful regions. While policy has still been developed for areas dealing with population decline, the focus is rather on promoting self-responsibility and rewarding winning regions – even though critique is also expressed and worries are voiced (e.g. Team Midterm Review Bevolkingsdaling 2014; Tonkens and others 2006; Steenbekkers et al. 2013).

4.3 Comparing the contexts of Estonia and the Netherlands

Exploring the institutional structures of both Estonia and the Netherlands, a quite different set of contexts for rural regions can be seen. While both countries have economic policies focussed towards the development of their core regions, the Netherlands combines this policy with decentralisation, while in Estonia there is a more centralised approach. Further, the Netherlands has witnessed a relatively stable governance tradition of deliberation and negotiating, while in Estonia, the relatively recent transition has only begun to form a stable governance environment. The institutionally-thin environment of Estonia compared to the very densely regulated Dutch environment shows how a very different institutional environment deals with uneven development. In the following chapters, I show how these different institutional environments are connected to the ways in which local leadership in peripheral places deals with uneven spatial developments.

However, similarities are also present. Both countries show a neoliberal move towards more self-responsibility, active citizenship, and less government interference at the local level and therefore also for peripheral places. In different ways, both contexts have been inspired by New Public Management thinking. In the table below, the main differences are summarised.

Table 8: Comparison of the different case study countries

	Estonia	The Netherlands
Administrative structure	Two-tier government	Three-tier government
(De)centralizing	Centralising	Decentralising
Keywords in rural & regional development	Transition economy Rural marginalisation	Agricultural modernisation Suburbanisation
Policy environment	Urban focused and neoliberal Dependency on EU funding Low capacity at the local level	Urban focused and neoliberal, yet attention to population decline

Table compiled by author

5. RESULTS: LEADERSHIP PRACTICES AND ACTORS

This chapter will start by providing more background information on how leadership is enacted in the cases studied (5.1), and can also be read as a more elaborate introduction to them. After having listed the most important practices in these places, in section 5.2 I will zoom in on the actors performing leadership practices. As mentioned above, place leadership is understood as “a multi-actor process of place-making” (Mabey and Freeman 2010, 509). This, therefore, does not limit this chapter to an understanding of only official or political leaders, but, rather, takes a broad and open conception of leadership processes and the actors involved in these processes.

5.1 Leadership practices in the four case studies

Kihnu, leadership in culture and tourism

In Kihnu, leadership is very much connected to preserving its cultural heritage. From the 1950s onwards, interest for its folklore and traditions, mostly preserved because of their spatially peripheral position, was recorded by scientists. In the interim, this attention has grown, also by local as well by external actors including artists, scientists, journalists and lobbyists (Rüütel 2004; Rüütel et al. 2013). Partly because of these efforts, since 2003 Kihnu has been inscribed on Unesco’s representative list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. This is seen as an important milestone for the community, since it shows the recognition that this island’s culture has received, not only within Estonia, but in the rest of the world too. Even though this listing is immaterial and symbolic, it has also come with very material and tangible consequences, such as funding for cultural preservation. Indirectly, it has given a boost to the development of the tourism sector.

Following from the Unesco listing in 2003, many cultural practices have been supported. Two organisations have been important in this: both the Kihnu Cultural Space Foundation and the Kihnu Cultural Institute. With a slightly different focus, each organises cultural festivals, music education for school children, publishing of Kihnu-dialect books, etc. A large part of these cultural practices are also employed in touristic events. As well the annual Kihnu Sea Party, or, for example, the violin festival, many events take place during the summer. In the winter the island looks quite different. In this period, the museum organises events for local people.

Both developments in tourism and the preservation of its culture make Kihnu more visible. Having this visible position can easily change. Therefore, actors are constantly working to keep this island ‘on the map’. It is very much thanks to the local and extra-local actors that Kihnu remains in the minds of tourists and policy makers.

In the winter, when tourists visit the island less frequently, other activities on the island are more visible. In this period, Kihnu people get organised again for

the coming summer season. In the museum events are organised for islanders, people prepare their homestay accommodation for the winter period and are making handicrafts to sell in the winter again. Apart from tourism, the more “basic issues” (K3) also need to be dealt with. Activities such as keeping the roads, school and kindergarten open are all challenges that keep the local government occupied on an island with around 600 inhabitants and a very small capacity of local civil servants. Being busy with these things keeps the local government from developing leadership practices further.

While the emphasis has increasingly been placed on tourism and entrepreneurship activities, Kihnu also has people with more traditional livelihoods. One of the entrepreneurs went a little back in history and describes the development of tourism on the island:

“it was in the 1990s, fishing was the main thing and income was very good for fishermen. So, of course they didn’t like having any tourists here. An owner of a fishing company said that tourism can’t be important, it must be traditional living styles, which is right, but nobody knows how to keep traditional living styles like farming, we have no ideas. Because economically there are no possibilities anymore. And so, now it seems that tourism is important for everybody, almost everybody. Only a few people are not involved in tourism”. (K4)

Understanding that “not everybody can be an entrepreneur” (K2), the municipality also organised an economic conference on the island in order to find solutions for employment. Ideas like long-distance working and the building of a production plant have been mentioned: “The island needs some kind of small production, where people can work all year round. So we urgently need some kind of small production, something, fish-related” (K13). These ideas have however up to now, not led to any concrete actions. Also, the local municipality is supporting people to start small businesses to make a living on the island. As the municipality leader mentioned, “we give at least 7,000 euro every year to small projects” in order to simulate small businesses.

Actors from the island and at the national level thinking of these kind of opportunities too, in terms of ways to create small economic initiatives, for example, through teleworking. Another idea, supported by the ministry of the interior, is an online shop to sell Kihnu handicrafts have bearing the label “Made in Kihnu”. One local entrepreneur also engaged the public by writing a piece to a national newspaper, focusing on economic issues in which she puts the problem to the general public. She warns of the danger of disappearing and actually ends her text by saying:

“I am extremely concerned about the sustainability of Kihnu’s traditional culture, culture does not survive without the economy, and on the contrary, culture feeds the economy (tourism industry, craft business, etc.). Maybe someone can help?” (Äripaev 2015)

As a consequence of the lack of employment, young people are increasingly moving away from the island and work in other regions of Estonia, or abroad. As

a cultural entrepreneur mentions, “we can pay only 300 or 400 or 500 euro and people go to Finland and work there one month and get 1500 euro per month. And this is the problem right now” (K4). While these salaries might change in the future, speaking to local actors on the island, the image of badly paid local jobs still exists.

For many Kihnu islanders, however, tourism is still seen as something positive and necessary, mainly to secure an income: “tourism is a very important substance of living, because we have this harbour market and everything is built up for the tourists. And homestay accommodation, they are fully booked, all of them. So many people get income from that, it is very good” (K4). Tourism is mainly seen as an extra source of income to get people through the winter (K9).

In short, the development path for Kihnu seems to have been increasingly focused on tourism and entrepreneurship, while the more traditional way of living has lost its emphasis. At the same time, fishing is still a livelihood from which many families earn their living and ideas for other types of employment are still sought.

Järva-Jaani, leadership in uniqueness and activeness

Overall, Järva-Jaani can be seen as an active community with at least nine museums, an historic voluntary fire brigade, dancing, singing and other music groups, and an active church community. Even though these are not unique and noteworthy clubs for villages in Estonia and beyond, special in Järva-Jaani is that the municipality chose to keep supporting these more “soft” practices in terms of funding, which was not applied in all municipalities. The municipality decided to continue financing cultural work. One of the leaders in the municipal office mentioned:

“If I just take a paper, the law, what a municipality has to do, there is no sport and no culture. I think it was 2009 they took it out, that municipalities don’t have to do this, and they took money away also from municipalities, but it is hard to say to people that I am closing up my cultural house or I don’t run my gymnasium.” (J5)

It is therefore the choice of the municipality to support this “soft” sector. This makes it possible for many dancing and singing groups to exist at all. While other neighbouring municipalities have chosen to invest in other things, in Järva-Jaani these cultural activities are seen as a priority. Further, they are trying to do “this interesting stuff” (J5) in other ways. Examples of these unique things are the nine museums, among which the most famous is that for vintage vehicles which in 2016 hosted 451 specimens. One of the local leaders joked that “in Estonia there are two big cities where you can take a tram. One is Tallinn, the other is Järva-Jaani” (J5). Even though the tram only moves when it is pulled by people (preferably tourists), it does show how uniqueness is emphasised and Järvi-Jaani consciously plays with its image of being a small town and jokingly pretends to be a city.

Apart from being an attraction for tourists from Estonia and abroad, Järva-Jaani also attracts events. Festivals are held on the museum grounds for vintage vehicles, a church festival with 200 young people was held in 2016, and there many other events. In 2016, during a classic film festival, there was even a bus arranged for passengers from Tallinn to Järva-Jaani – something quite uncommon which again emphasises its uniqueness: “It is unique again, we haven’t done any events that made it possible to arrange a bus from Tallinn to Järva-Jaani. Cool!” (J5). Also unique for a small town are the different kinds of sports that can be practiced: disc golf, football, basketball, volleyball, swimming and Frisbee, and even skating due to a newly built skate park. In this sense, the town has been trying to do unique things in terms of events and activities.

The leadership of Järva-Jaani is mostly focused on engaging the community in many activities and these actors try to make life more pleasant for the inhabitants. Further, in order to entice new inhabitants and to attract tourists, new activities, a positive attitude and community engagement are emphasised when talking to the active actors in this place. The organisation of events, opening of museums and the focus on developing tourism is seen as, on the one hand, a way to make Järva-Jaani visible and, on the other, as a way of keeping local inhabitants and attracting new inhabitants. In terms of real estate, the leadership of Järva-Jaani is trying to actively sell places for new departures: “If you have any good plans, for example, the post office here, you can buy it for 25,000 euro. It has cool project inside, but it also needs much money” (J5).

Another connected development in Järva-Jaani, which also shows this town’s willingness to engage in “new” activities, is a new approach to education in the local gymnasium focusing on providing something extra for the pupils. Alongside to the regular curriculum, children can also learn something unique, for example, a qualification in volunteer fire fighting or civil defence. In this way, besides compulsory subjects such as mathematics, English language etc., the new school principal has chosen to make lessons connect more to life outside school and to community life. When teaching, for example, physics, it is easy to shift the focus somewhat to learning about firefighting in cooperation with the volunteer fire fighters. As the school principal mentions, “this is already something different. And a lot of schools don’t work that way in Estonia. So we are kind of pioneers on that” (J8). Another new thing is that physical education does not have to be taken anymore in the school, but can take place in local sports clubs.

Like the abovementioned unique activities, these school developments also show that standing out or getting on the map is seen as something crucial. As one of the official leaders mentioned, “We are trying to be a small centre. We are not big, but doing this interesting stuff” (J5).

What is also special about the leadership of the town is that it is not part of a great masterplan or strategy. According to the municipal leader it has much more to do with taking opportunities when they come up and not only doing what is in the law or policy documents.

Schoondijke, leadership in building community

The village of Schoondijke has been part of the larger municipality of Sluis since the 1990s. Since that time, there has also been a village council active in the community. From the moment that the last shift in village council took place in the village council, one of the main aims has been community building. Where, according to some of the respondents, it used to be more a village in which the community was not very close, in recent years they have tried to actively bring people together:

“I used to think that Schoondijke was more a loose sand village, now it seems that they do more together, people do a lot for each other. If now something has to be organised, then everybody helps. Everybody comes. But, it used to be that not even half of the people showed up. The togetherness has grown, and I think that that is something positive that will keep increasing.”(S5)

One way of concretising these community building ambitions is in the organisation of community events. One of events of which respondents has good memories were the *Schoondijkse Spelen* (Schoondijke Games), where neighbourhoods of the village compete with each other. This event had been dormant for some time, but due to a renewed energy in the village, from 2016 on, this event was back on the agenda. Something new was tried for the first time in 2016: a walking dinner. Both community building events have the aim of getting people in the village to know each other. The opportunity to organise this walking dinner arose when there was some money left from the budget that village councils get annually from the municipality. When this became available, the village council, tennis and soccer clubs, seniors’ society, and the activity committee, got together and started to brainstorm about something they could do for the village. The walking dinner was the result. Local businesses took care of the products and volunteers prepared the food in the different locations. In constantly changing groups, the participants had a starter, main course and dessert in different locations. 225 out of 1500 inhabitants participated in this event and it is seen as a success: “what is important is the connection with each other, the togetherness, the awareness of we live here together on such a small spot, we need each other” (S5).

Furthermore, Schoondijke organises events, such as annual parties (*Maone-blussersfeesten*) and also the annual King’s day and others. A further practice initiated by the village council is a welcome box with local products from local entrepreneurs and associations. Local shopkeepers put one of their products in a basket and all altogether this is given to new village inhabitants. On one hand it welcomes them, but is also good advertising for these local shops.

A final, very material practice on the agenda in Schoondijke is its village renewal project, a project in which local inhabitants were invited to join in the planning and are also regularly informed via general meetings and news bulletins. The physical renewal and clean-up of the village centre is also seen as a potential for more social cohesion when people have more spaces in which to meet each other: “You have to make sure that it stays lively, that you come up with new things and that is not always easy of course” (S3).

These events are also seen as a way to improve the image of Schoondijke, not for the national public, but more for the villages around. With the Schoondijke Games, other villages asked how they did it, and, in this sense, Schoondijke can to some extent be seen as an example village. So, while at the local level it does not launch any image campaigns, it tries to always uphold a positive image to the outside world:

“We don’t have any campaigns to come live here or to come work here or whatever. We of course say, Schoondijke is cosy and we do a lot in Schoondijke, we have associations, you can play tennis, you can play football, you can ice skate, if it freezes. That kind of things.”(S3)

Overall, leadership in Schoondijke has been mainly focused on increasing the bonds within the community. By organising community events, a positive image is created internally. While inhabitants have also been invited to participate in the local construction of the village centre, this is mainly a municipality competence.

Pekela: leadership in very diverse practices

Pekela is a municipality amalgamated in 1990 from two separate ones: Oude Pekela (Old Pekela) and Nieuwe Pekela (New Pekela). While Pekela is used as a term throughout these chapters, this division sometimes is relevant still in terms of its leadership practices. This, however, depends on the practices themselves that are focused on. I will return to this in the concluding section.

In Pekela, the local government is tackling quite a few challenges. A significant example, mainly taken up by the local government, concerns poverty alleviation. For example, an idea was picked up from Belgium, now operating in Pekela, to educate people living in poverty as poverty experience experts. Those formerly living in poverty now have this role and help other people to also move beyond poverty. In another project unemployed people are socially activated, not necessarily yet on the job market, but at least activated (P8). This last project, named “the tacklers”, also goes beyond what the national government is forcing them to do. One of the civil servants working for the municipality of Pekela has even called it somewhat anarchic, making a clear break with what has been thought up in The Hague, and finding solutions that fit its inhabitants: “we go just a bit further than what is expected of us in The Hague and what they want from us” (P8).

Another concrete example is when the national government does not pay for the public transport to vocational schools, the municipality covers this cost, also trying to encourage the younger generations to get educated: “To get a somewhat higher education than their parents had in previous times” (P8).

Another important task for the local government has to do with managing the shrinking of its population. By stimulating collaboration between clubs, they hope to tactically make use of facilities together, making it more feasible for clubs to keep on existing. Further, participatory approaches towards village centre renewal are taking place.

While most of its industry is declining, people have been thinking about new ways of boosting Pekela economically. A step in this direction has been taken by one external lector and the chairman of the Pekela business association, which started by setting up a regional cooperative. Together with entrepreneurs and educational partners, this cooperative is planning to create “1000 jobs, 1000 research questions and 1000 themes” (P4) in the region. A first meeting was held in the former straw board factory, which is currently preserved by SIEPCO (see below) as an example of the old industrial heritage of Pekela. Even though it is a regional cooperative and does not necessarily focus on Pekela alone, there was an active lobby trying to get this first meeting to be held there.

Furthermore, there are also several NGOs in the village creating a positive image of Pekela, such as a shipping museum located in an old captain’s house, and SIEPCO, an association working on safeguarding the industrial heritage. They do this by displaying it and also renovating those machines used in the time of industry. Run mostly by volunteers who themselves sometimes worked these machines in the glory days, this association is also one of the main leading organisations in Pekela also recognised by the municipality. When, for example, organising the opening meeting of the regional cooperative took place, the venue where it took place, the SIEPCO building, was actually found not safe enough to host so many people at once. But due to good relations between the municipality and SIEPCO, and the value that the municipality sees in an event like this, it was tolerated.

Furthermore, all sorts of events are also held in Pekela, such as a yearly market in Oude Pekela, organised by many volunteers. Further, the chairman of the local entrepreneurs’ association organises a blues festival. In Nieuwe Pekela, there is a cultural committee which organises concerts on Sunday mornings. Another association, Sustainable Pekela, considers how they can make Pekela energy neutral within a certain timeframe. This is to help the environment, but also people to lower their electricity bills.

A final important element in Pekela’s leadership is image making. Due to some incidents, documentaries and repeated negative imagery, Pekela has quite negative stigma. The local community feels powerless, as also mentioned by one of the local entrepreneurs: “there are a lot of people who want to make an effort, or who are making an effort to improve the image of Pekela – you can work on this for 100 years and one of those documentaries ruins everything again at once.”

As a counterstrategy, the municipality and the former mayor actively started working on a response to this stigmatising image by making a movie called *Pekels Goud*. With the help of a professional camera operator and many volunteers, a film and shorter video clips were created showing the different sides of Pekela: some positive and some not so, but done in an honest way. The Christian broadcasting company (EO) which broadcast the documentary leading to this response effort did not broadcast the film, as did neither of the other national broadcasting companies. It was shown on the regional channel, however. Further, the municipality is thinking of ways how they can show the film to groups of people who have not viewed it before, under the name “Pekels Gold on Tour”.

This also led to recent interest from a *Financial Times* reporter who actually complimented Pekela by saying that if this is the Netherlands' poorest town then it is doing quite alright. After this article appeared, many reporters visited Pekela to make a story about this. This image making process is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

Overall, leadership practices in Pekela can be seen as quite diverse in their scope, in the actors who are involved and at the scale it intends to reach. As well, structural economic challenges are dealt with, clubs of volunteers help safeguard its history, and different organisations also deal with an image reversal campaign.

5.2 Identifying the actors behind the practices

Kihnu's leading actors

Leadership on Kihnu Island is enacted by a coalition of people from different fields (tourism entrepreneurs, teachers etc.) Among this group of people are individual entrepreneurs working in tourism and/or fishing, local civil servants, local councillors, the official leadership, but also volunteers organised in one of the many NGOs (see for a detailed list of respondents in the Appendix 1). Many of the actors involved in these leadership practices fulfil multiple roles simultaneously (being as well an entrepreneur, teacher and volunteer). Alongside the actors living on the island, there are also external supporters with functional networks connected to the capital city, Tallinn. These ambassadors for the island have lobbied for the Unesco label and also continue to play a role in keeping Kihnu on the map of policy makers, tourists and culture lovers. As an earlier study already noted (Kuutma 2007, 193), there is a "negotiation of agendas by cultural insiders and outsiders on local, national and international level [sic]". Therefore, leadership on Kihnu Island cannot be seen as bounded to the territory of Kihnu alone, but as an example in which leadership is a multi-actor process of leading on multiple scales. This multi-actorness is well described by one of the leaders on the island, who likened Kihnu to the local version of a national government with dedicated ministers for every task:

"For example, our mayor, he is minister of finances and we have local government board member, he can be like minister of countryside affairs [...] and we are working all together, everybody has characters and things which they are strong. For example, I have many relations outside of Kihnu and I know members of parliament, ministries and the president and people from abroad and scientists and everybody and I have relations and this is like the foreign ministry" (K4).

The collaboration between these actors is emphasised as the group of leading actors for the island.

Leadership in context – Leading in divided Kihnu

Overall, one could say that on Kihnu island leadership is not straightforward and there are some divisions on the island. The one party formally governing the island was mainly representing only one part of the population. As one of the respondents mentioned: “Going back in history Kihnu had two powerful sides, two families, clans” (K4) that could be distinguished, where one was leading and seen as the “local elite” (K4). This also translated into separate community life for these two sides, up to even different dancing groups. When Kihnu islanders had contact with ministry officials, “they asked you on which side you were” (K5).

The division between these two groups also became visible during the application for Unesco listing. While, at first, there was only one NGO created to manage the activities, (Kihnu Cultural Space), later, a second was created (Kihnu Cultural Institute). Both of these organisations still exist today alongside each other. Despite the division, currently this is also seen as a positive thing:

“Thanks to that competition, you can see how many events, and how many of publications we have done. We are a little bit criticizing each other, but in a very good and respectful way, which is also good.” (K12)

On the question of whether this division is still in place at this time, opinions differ. Both insiders working at the local government, and outsiders, ministry officials, mention that “I think there is no longer straightforward polarity in Kihnu” (K3).

The fading of this division is also connected to lesser involvement of the opposition party. After one of the important leaders of the opposition died, this side of the population has been less actively involved in political life and moved somewhat into the background.

A good example showing this disengagement of part of the population can be inferred from recent local election results. After the previous two elections, the local council has been formed by only one political party, Parem Kihnu (Better Kihnu). While in the municipal elections of 2009 there were still other parties competing, leading to a council of three parties, in the elections of 2013 and 2017, the other parties did not participate (and only individual candidates stood). On first glance, this looks like a unanimous victory for the ruling party, but when looking closer at turnout figures, it shows that the people who voted for the other parties at the previous elections no longer turned out to vote (see table 9).

Table 9: Kihnu local government election results

Year	Results for Parem Kihnu	Other parties	Turnout
2009	57% (241)	43% (180)	73%
2013	95% (255)	5% (66)	53%
2017	72% (277)	28% (106)	62%

Source: adapted data from valimised.ee

While in 2009 turnout was around 73%, in 2013 this had dropped to 53% but rose slightly in 2017. Looking at the number of people voting for Parem Kihnu, it is clear that the seeming victory of Parem Kihnu is more connected to the presence or absence of an opposition than of a large rise in voters for it (since the number of voters has risen only slowly over the last eight years).

Even though one could interpret these low turnout figures as a sign of discontent, one of the councillors from the ruling party mentioned that “if the turnout is small, then they are either very satisfied or not at all. We have agreed that they are very pleased [...]. We have concluded that the direction is more or less correct” (K9). Not all islanders would agree with this conclusion, but it does show in which way legitimacy for leadership is debated or explicitly not debated.

This remark also shows that they have chosen to interpret these results as a sign of contentment with the leadership of the village and mainly attribute the lack of representation to the opposition’s inability to organise: “Most groups of Kihnu society are represented in the council. This one side who has always this kind of negative attitude, they are not there, but they didn’t manage to get a group together last time...” (K3).

In this sense, the “outgroup” is seen as responsible for its own passiveness. In other democratic arenas, to guarantee the inclusion of more voices, like the “*üldkogu*” – a meeting for all islanders from the age of 14 and which small islands must organise once a year – are considered as useless in increasing broader participation, since “nobody will come”. Further, “these guys who have so-called different visions and plans, they are mostly never at these meetings. They have their own meetings, maybe, at the same time”. This means that on the surface, it seems like the institutional conditions for ensuring the participation of more people in decision making are in place, but that, however, these are not stimulating broader representation from the community.

Further, in general, the usefulness of guaranteeing representation is debated. When asking if it would be better if the group now excluded were represented, one of the current leaders in office does not see any added value: “no, there is no need. I think it wouldn’t make Kihnu more, I don’t know, develop faster” and the critique this group airs is qualified as “not constructive criticism, it is just being angry at something. (K3). A colleague of this person is making an interesting distinction between “those who lead and those who only say” (K11), hereby emphasising outcome orientation as important and hereby interpreting leadership from a functionalistic angle.

Looking from the perspective of the opposition however, this outcome orientation is much less present in their rhetoric. People do not feel listened too, as also one of the frequent visitors on the island mentioned:

“many islanders feel that they are secondary people or third category people, whose worries are not so important for those who are in power. So, for such a small community as Kihnu is, it is very important that all members can be involved and that everyone’s opinion must be at least listened.” (K12)

Apart from the feeling of exclusion, local actors also exclude themselves from local politics, similar to what is witnessed by Shortall (2008). For these people, it has become an active choice of local islanders to no longer participate in local politics: “they didn’t want to speak about politics at all, because they are disappointed, so many disappointed people on the island. And in a small community it is very bad” (K12). Further, one of the teachers on the island mentioned that she actively excludes herself from decision making after having witnessed, among her family members, how local political life can have a significant influence on people’s lives. As a consequence, people, according to her, “do not want to stand out” (K8) and leadership on the island is very much connected to individuals. Relationships between individuals matter a lot. She illustrated this with an example from a few years ago. At that time, a petition was set up regarding the local food canteen, and parents were asked to sign. While some of them might agree with the petition, they did not sign because they were afraid that a colleague or a boss would find out. This reluctant attitude made her conclude that people in “small places”, where people know each other prefer to be quiet and not speak out. (K8).

Starting this chapter, on the surface it seemed that leadership in this community was quite straightforward and consensual. Digging a bit deeper showed, however, a more complicated picture in which representation could not be taken for granted. Even though institutional structures for ensuring participation were in operation, they did not lead to participation by all. Some actively chose to be excluded and others felt excluded. Further, due to a lack of people fit for leadership roles, a gap in representation evolved. Connected to this is also the different understandings of leadership that exist alongside one another. While, for some, leadership is ultimately about representation and the relationship between leaders and followers, for others, outcomes were much more central in their understanding of good leadership. This case shows clearly how the concept of leadership itself is debated at the local level, and also that ideas on what is legitimate leadership entails differs depending on the person asked.

Järva-Jaani’s leading actors

In Järva-Jaani, leadership can be seen in the most clear and classical sense. The municipal leader can be seen as someone who is actively trying to shape this place and is seen as an important actor in its leadership. First of all, he is seen as a community leader and accepted as such, not only by inhabitants, but also has recognition at the county level where his practices are valued. As someone involved in the LEADER group at the county level mentions, “if he sees opportunity, he can use it, his mind is open, first of all in his blog, but also as a member of a dancing group; he is an example actor” (J4).

This also means that he is seen as a leader not only due to his official position, but also because of his involvement in community life. Apart from being physically present in many community activities, he is also visible online in communicating with his followers via blogs and on other social media. Furthermore, other

active actors are working in museums, among which is the most famous one, the old vehicles museum. Further, the newly appointed grammar school principal is seen as somebody who wants to do what is possible to keep the school open, but also expands his ideas in encouraging pupils to get active in Järva-Jaani community life. The local dairy plant is also mentioned as a crucial actor in local development due to its important role in providing employment for people living here. Other leading actors are seen among youth work and the various dancing and music groups.

Overall, leadership in Järva-Jaani is enacted by multiple people, of whom officially elected people such as the mayor is an obvious and accepted leader, but also important people in local NGOs and in community life in Järva-Jaani are seen as important in changing the towns' future.

Leadership in context: connected leadership in Järva-Jaani

In Järva-Jaani there seems to be more consensus on who is leading there. The mayor, as the head of the local government and leader of the largest political party, is seen as the political leader as well as a real community leader. This community leadership can be seen in his connection to the community, participation in sports, dancing and cultural activities. It is also seen as something essential for his leadership. He mentioned this in relation to the possible upcoming amalgamation in which Järva-Jaani would be amalgamated with its neighbouring parishes:

“I think I can be mayor where I live and where I know the history and I know the people. As you can see, I can wave to the people, I know their problems [...] I can't imagine I could be the mayor of the whole Järva county. It is too much for me I think. Because I want connection.” (J3)

For this leader, the connection between leadership and followers is seen as crucial. In other ways too, this connection as a form of legitimacy is sought. The mayor of Järva-Jaani has written blogs in which community members can read about his life as mayor. This also points to a leadership style which is very much oriented to a processual understanding of leadership in which the connection to followers is very important. This already suggests a different focus in understanding leadership compared to that in Kihnu.

Schoondijke's leading actors

In Schoondijke, the main actor behind most of the leadership practices is the village council. In a recent change of council members, the village chose individuals that represent the people living in the village, both in age as in background. They are officially seen as the village's spokespersons and also get funding from the municipality (Sluis) as the legitimate actor in its development. A second important leading group of actors there is the local shopkeepers' association. A third group is the activity committee composed mainly of parents who organise things for the community and its children. The latter two groups are not seen as

representative of the community; however, they are seen as important in developing the village.

All these groups of active people have their own activities. In a recent community building activity, they all worked together in arranging the walking dinner for the inhabitants to get to know each other more. Furthermore, there are also the various sports and associations, seniors' club, and other active inhabitants.

Leadership in context: democratic revolution in Schoondijke

The current leadership of the village in the hands of the village council seems quite stable, but this is only a recent development. The current council was constituted in 2014 after the previous was dismissed. This change of power happened at a time when the plans for a reconstructed village centre were developed. During the negotiation over this reconstruction, inhabitants did not feel that they were getting enough information on the developments and plans. Therefore, a group of active inhabitants stepped up and asked for more influence in this process. Disagreements over who should be appointed as architect occurred. While the municipality and the village council were in favour of giving the job to one, this was not appreciated by the reconstruction committee (which was set up specially to manage reconstruction). Mediation between the reconstruction committee and the village council was tried, but in the end did not help to solve the problem.

Then, on the day of the visit by the municipal authorities to the village, the group of active people in the village told the council that they were acting wrongly. One of the initiators described what happened thus:

“It happened on an evening with the municipality present. And there was a new mayor who was not prepared for this and who kept asking: what is your intention? And I said, I will get to that. I said yes, I think it is a pity, but I think that our village council is not functioning.” (S9)

In the six weeks after this, a newly formed group of active citizens sought new council members. Even though the leading figure in changing the council did mention he wanted to make sure that the old village council members could take part in the new, none of the old councillors did.

After the change of leadership, the village council has done a lot to improve its functioning by learning from past experience. They made it a priority to keep inhabitants updated via newsletters and meetings. Together with representatives of the new village council, the reconstruction committee debated with the municipality and the architects. Public participation was organised in the form of open evenings in which architects presented their plans and people could come and bring forward ideas and state their preferences.

In sum, this small-scale democratic revolution in Schoondijke shows how even at the scale of a small village, negotiations on leadership are happen, and have impact. In this sense, the negotiation over leadership and relationship with followers is not something that not only leads to friction and negotiation as in the heated multi-scalar debates over the future of Kihnu culture. While on Kihnu the

actors involved might be from different scales and in Schoondijke only villagers were involved in negotiating, both cases show evidence of negotiation over who is legitimate to lead as an integral part of the leadership process.

Pekela's leading actors

In Pekela, the local municipality is an important actor in shaping its development. The municipality shows this both materially through renewal of the town centre, developing policy to reduce poverty, and also immaterially in the making of the abovementioned film to boost Pekela's image. Furthermore, there are different local groups, such as the Inhabitants' Organisation for Pekela (BOP), who take an official role as the stakeholder for all its inhabitants. While their existence is financially dependent on the social housing cooperative, they have chosen to widen their scope and work on behalf of all the population.

Other important organisations include the business association, the chairman of which is also seen as a leader by the respondents. There are also some organisations and actors working more at the regional level, so not necessarily solely for this municipality. For example, the collaboration between the lector in Groningen (the nearest large city) and the local business association which has plans to develop the town and its wider region, the old peat colonies, by setting up a cooperative of entrepreneurs, educational partners with a facilitating role for local government.

Furthermore, welfare organisations, a museum, local neighbourhood community centres, NGOs (focusing on sustainability and on maintaining industrial heritage) and social teams are mentioned as actors who play a leading role in improving well-being. Even though it is not easy to point out the leaders in this place due to the diverse leadership practices, actors in Pekela do, in some way, act for the benefit of the community and thus show agency in contributing to leadership there.

Leadership in context – challenging backgrounds in Pekela

Even though the local government is taking a significant role in leadership practices, the relationship between local government and Pekela people has not always been smooth. An example from the past of a well-known former farmer living there shows this, in his stories of Pekela of the 1970s and 1980s. He was the self-proclaimed "first youth worker of the Netherlands" when he decided to turn his unused barns into a youth centre. In his work for the Pekela community, he always remained independent from the government. When the government professionalised youth work, the farmer stayed independent from this institutionalisation. The farmer, however let the young people themselves decide what they wanted to do. In his later life too, this former youth worker was confronted with local government in his voluntary work and still displayed an aversion to collaborate with them, even when asking for money:

“And we refused to go on our knees to the local government with the bobos, like do you have some pennies? I’d rather bite off a few fingers than doing that. I won’t do it. They should take the initiative, this is a citizens’ initiative, this is what they should anticipate, but then they don’t respond.” (P12)

These stories told by one of Pekela’s older inhabitants shows a certain distance between the municipality and its inhabitants, which can also be heard when talking to the BOP, who say that communication could improve considerably with the council as well as with the local government: “[E]ach time you want to work with the municipality you hit a wall” (P11).

Further, from the local government side, there is an awareness of the need for a broader change of roles for the local government. For example, in supporting local initiatives, they try to let the community decide what they want to do and how they want to do it, and the local government tries to step back. An example of this is the Saint Nicolas celebration, organised in particular for low-income families who cannot always afford presents for their children. While this used to be organised by the local government, they are increasingly facilitating inhabitants to take care of these matters by themselves.

Another concrete example which shows the local government trying to involve inhabitants is the reconstruction of the village centre. While at the first meeting there were 100 people present, and “people were enthusiastic and came with all sorts of ideas” (P2), this number had already halved by the second meeting. Looking at the people involved, this is mostly limited to a small circle of “the same faces” among which younger people are less represented (P3).

It is not only local government, however, working on its relationship with Pekela inhabitants; the BOP also sees how difficult it is to connect to them. When they once organised an information evening, attendance was disappointing: “and you have the material and you make sure that you have a good presentation, a Powerpoint presentation or something like that and then there are only five or six people present” (P11). Overall, the ambition of involving more people into decision making is therefore seen as a struggle here.

On the other hand, resistance to certain leading actors is also identified. Some volunteer for leadership roles, yet they might not always be accepted by the community. One of the leading actors said, “being in the top ten per cent, I am probably seen as part of the elite [...] the bottom ten per cent I will never reach. They already have something against me and then even someone from [progressive liberal political party]” (P4). This also shows class difference felt by this respondent, who in his vision is doing something good for the community, but does not feel accepted. This specific person has chosen to collaborate with people who give him energy and thus does not necessarily seeks acceptance from everyone:

“At the moment when you take action, this is also a pure form of change management, you know that it brings up resistance. So, my story will totally come across wrong, and actually they are saying, why does it work for you and not for me?” (P4)

For others, this connection to the local people was a crucial precondition for acceptance as a leader in the community, as one of the local politicians also mentioned:

“If you, only for even one second, feel better than the people who cannot take the time and energy for that, than you will be alright. But if you start to look down on that and don’t engage in conversation anymore with those people, then you have a problem here.” (P3)

In this sense, people also refer to leadership in terms of Fré Meis, a historical figure who was a leading light in the Dutch communist party and, here, is honoured mostly for his work during the strikes for better industrial labour conditions. In this activism, the link between leaders and followers was central:

“Fré Meis was, of course, the ultimate example of someone who could combine, sincerely knowing what was going on, sincere interest in the circumstances of people and wanting to change that, with the ability to translate that to The Hague, the politicians! He was at the same time in parliament, the provincial government and the municipal council.”(P3)

This local hero, focusing on the relationship between leaders and followers, was mentioned in interviews more than once as a model for leadership in Pekela. Being close to the community and simultaneously wanting to change the circumstances for them – also having the skills to talk to people and to talk in the higher arenas of national and regional government – is seen as a role model by many Pekela people. Yet this is a role model not found in Pekela today. The ability to speak on behalf of the whole community, which is the (romanticised) image that people still have of past leadership, is difficult in a divided Pekela.

In short, here, we can witness the difficulty of leadership in a place where leading has been met with some resistance. In a place in which the relationship between community and its leadership has not been smooth, its context seems to have influenced its leadership. Leadership there is first of all trying to re-connect to local citizens. In this sense, leadership is, first of all, much more connected to the process of improving the relationship between leaders and followers. It can be seen that, while for some the inclusive leadership style is still something to aim for, for others they have seen too much resistance and have given up on a more accepted leadership process and started instead to focus more on outcome orientation.

5.3 Discussion & Conclusion on leadership practices and actors

In this part, the answers to the first research question will be answered: how is leadership enacted and who is behind these leadership practices? Since this study assumes leadership to be a “multi-actor process of place-making” (Mabey and Freeman 2010, 509), this is not a straightforward identification of practices and leadership. Rather, it is a constructed process in which both actors living in the region, but also those outside the region, are participating. A comparison between the different cases is shown in the table below. In the following sections, these differences will be explained further.

Table 10: Comparison of leadership practices and actors

	Kihnu	Järva-Jaani	Schoondijke	Pekela
Leadership practices	Cultural preservation Tourism Entrepreneurship	Community-building “Soft” sector Unique aspects	Community-building	Dealing with shrinkage Citizen participation Entrepreneurship Image making
Leading actors	Majority political party External lobbyists NGOs Volunteers	Mayor and party Political party volunteers	Village council Entrepreneurs’ association Volunteers	Municipality Private initiatives NGOs Volunteers
Background of leadership	Political Business Community	Community Political	Community Business	Political Business Community
Relationship between leadership and followers	Divide between ruling and passive opposition	Close connection between leaders and community	Renewed relationship between villagers and leadership	Attempts in strengthening relationship, through participation of inhabitants

Illustration by the author

Comparing practices

Practices in all four cases focus on the more concrete attempts to combat effects of peripheralisation: attracting residents, attracting business, working on village renewal etc. While, on the one hand, the practices described in this chapter might seem incomparable, on the other, comparing them here together under the category of leadership practices is important: as well the government-led practices to destigmatise Pekela, the entrepreneurial leadership for a touristic Kihnu, but also the community building efforts in Schoondijke and the organisation of a rock

festival and educational renewal in Järva-Jaani, all these practices can be considered place leadership. The practice of choosing which practices can be seen as “leadership worthy” would be a normative choice, valuing some activities over others. Whether it is the “soft investments” in Järva-Jaani’s education or cultural centre, or the building of a touristic economy in Kihnu, both these practices are considered by the people as acting for the benefit of their place. While this might, in the first instance, not be seen as place leadership in the classical sense, it does show an active choice by actors in trying to develop the town into an attractive one with a grammar school – and therefore can very much be viewed as leadership. Thus, one could argue that any categorisation in either strategy or “mere” practice is more a reflection of what a certain researcher finds noteworthy or what policy makers consider to be valuable, than what is valued locally. Therefore, when studying place leadership in its broadest conceptualisation, as could be done using grounded theory, it was possible to show this variety and not in advance privilege any one type of leadership practice over another. Furthermore, as the Järva-Jaani case showed, practices of leadership are also not always part of a major masterplan, and are sometimes also more a coincidental coming together of beneficial factors.

Scale

Furthermore, the scale at which leadership was enacted differs between the cases. The range of practices over which control can be exerted is much smaller in a village, of which the official leadership is passed up to the municipal level. Therefore, on the scale of Schoondijke, leadership is constrained to some smaller scale issues such as village reconstruction and community building, while other decisions are passed up to the municipal level over which the village of Schoondijke has less control. While its citizens still have influence over its administrative leadership via elections, the more informal connections between the official leadership and the community are seen as more limited. For the other cases, this is different. Kihnu, for example, is an independent municipality and has decision making powers at the local level, which shortens the distance from its leadership (official and informal) to its community, and in Järva-Jaani too (in the previous situation before its amalgamation, this was the case). Beer (2014), in this regard, also emphasised the importance of scale for rural places in defending their political stakes, since “many communities are effectively denied the capacity to determine their own future” (2014, 256).

Furthermore, some of the cases have been or are still in processes of amalgamation which also decouple the administrative from the enacted scales. In Pekela, for example, the scale of leadership practice depended on the leadership practice itself. While, for some practices (e.g. government-led poverty reduction strategy), these practices were enacted on the scale of Pekela, smaller scale initiatives, such as a museum or energy cooperatives, focused mainly on Oude or Nieuwe Pekela. This also showed how changing borders also takes time in adjusting to new leadership spaces and that these different scalar divisions exist alongside each other. In Järva-Jaani too, where amalgamation was on the agenda at the time of

field work, the upcoming events and the expected growing distance between authorities and the population worried the respondents. Similar to what Ayres (2014) has noted, scale matters for the type of leadership that can be expected from places.

Leaders from diverse backgrounds and with diverse resources

First of all, when comparing the actors behind the leadership processes, we can witness a very diverse range of actors across these cases: from the municipal leader taking on a community leadership role in Järva-Jaani, to the coalition of internal and external actors in Kihnu. The case of Pekela shows the important role that local government plays, viewed in the many practices to alleviate poverty and somehow take away the stigma – and also the more communal village council leadership in Schoondijke. Within the cases, diversity was also found among the involved actors, depending on the issue at hand. This reflects the findings of Beer et al. (2018) who found a similar diversity in place leadership in six different countries.

It is important to reflect on these very diverse sources of leadership as also Hambleton (2015) demonstrates in his model of civic leadership, in which he distinguishes between political leadership, community leadership, business leadership, trade union leadership and managerial/professional leadership. In the cases described in this thesis, mainly the first three typologies could be seen, i.e. political, business and community leadership. This diversity of actors involved in place leadership also has consequences. While the paid job of (mayors, elected officials etc.) is to lead the place, it is actually voluntary work for most of the actors which needs to be done alongside their regular employment. This points to the importance of availability of so-called “slack resources” (Beer and Clower 2013; Sotarauta and Beer 2017) (e.g. time, money, [project writing] skills etc.). Comparing the various cases, depending on the origin of leadership, people can invest much of their time as volunteers leading the place further, which makes local leadership sometimes extremely dependent on certain volunteers. If leaders move or indeed pass away, as in Kihnu, this automatically means a problem in leadership (and potentially in representation) as certain activities are dependent on this scarce level of resources. Especially in peripheral places, this resource, being the basis for local leadership, is limited. This dependence is, on the one hand, a typical problem for peripheral places in which human resources are scarce anyway, but also within places, the uneven distribution of resources leads to unequal opportunities for certain development paths to flourish.

Discourse on leadership

The discourse on what leadership should entail differs in each case and even within cases. In other words, there is not one single understanding of what leadership should entail and how leaders are legitimised as leaders. The same diversity of understandings of what leadership means found in Mabey and Freeman’s article (2010), from more functionalistic accounts of leadership focused on outcomes (as

could be witnessed in the entrepreneurial leadership in Kihnu and the entrepreneurs' association of Pekela), to more critical accounts of leadership focusing on inclusion and representation (the Kihnu opposition, the Pekela Socialist Party, or village council in Schoondijke), or the more consensus-oriented focus in community building of Järva-Jaani and Schoondijke: these different discourses are not only academic, but also can be seen in the understandings of local people. Often within cases, too, different understandings exist alongside each other. The dialogical understanding and grounded theory method used in this research made it possible to see these different understandings alongside one another, and not preclude one form of practice as not fitting the discourse of leadership.

An element that came up in all cases was legitimacy. Legitimacy was either based on outcomes, such as getting in the picture or dealing with shrinkage, but also more based on processual legitimacy, dealing with the question as to whether leadership is representing the people in these places and how inclusion and exclusion occurs. This importance of the relationship between leaders and followers is emphasised, and the question seems to be "leadership for whom?" The interesting element of this diversity of understandings of leadership and its conceptualisations is that it points to its constructedness. Furthermore, these cases have shown that, even when people acknowledge the loss of representation or passiveness of certain voices, there is often no quick way or solution to deal with this. Places also have their own ways of legitimisation, sometimes deeply rooted in history and historical divisions between classes not easily changed. Leadership is a relational phenomenon that is ultimately about the relations between leaders and followers. Relations can be distorted in many ways and therefore not modelled following an ideal leadership formula. The historical divisions in Kihnu have shown that people also actively exclude themselves, as earlier described by Shortall (2008). The class conflicts in Pekela are all relational artefacts which have their influence on leadership in places, and which are essential in understanding how places are led.

Consensus/dissensus

Comparing the negotiations over leadership in these different cases, it is clear that this does not fit with the consensual picture that often arises in the literature. While, in some cases, leadership seemed consensual and rather harmonious at first glance, scratching beyond the surface, all of the cases revealed negotiations over the leadership that was enacted. A continued emphasis on consensus is perhaps something that we would wish to strive for in developing inclusive regions, but does not do justice to understanding the real experience of leadership in places. It is exactly the relationship from leadership to followers that makes place leadership move away from business and management leadership. Having to deal with the horizontal as well as the vertical dimension of collaboration in leading places is challenging, and these dynamics should not be omitted from the story.

In sum, the processual reading of leadership that was taken in this research is as follows: not privileging any practices or actors, allows leadership to be seen as ultimately about issues of legitimacy and representativeness. The table below shows the ways in which leadership is identified in this chapter. While the first layers of the pyramid are visible and easily recognisable (who the leader are and what they are doing), the layers below, on discourse of leadership and negotiations behind leadership, are not very often regarded as part of the leadership process. When digging deeper into the cases, issues popped up that were intrinsically linked to how leadership was understood. First of all, this had all to do with what is actually meant by “leadership”, i.e., is it outcome- or process-oriented. Delving deeper into the cases, the negotiations were also an integral part of how leadership was then enacted as a process. The harmonious picture of consensus-seeking leadership was not the norm in these cases and the negotiations over who can lead the place and for whom was crucial in understanding how these places were led. Therefore, what starts off with the deceptively simple question of who leads the place turns out to have a much richer and more difficult answer.



Figure 9: Model showing more exposed and more hidden elements of place leadership
Illustration by author

Overall, the approach taken in this research, i.e. analysing leadership in a dialogical, more open-ended way, without pre-conceived ideas of what leadership should entail and who leaders should be, made it possible to analyse the part of the iceberg that is often metaphorically “below the water”

- In terms of practices, some places understood the concept of leadership as entrepreneurial-outcome orientatedness; others, however, focused more on legitimacy and community building. Identifying these diverse understandings opens up to a more heterogeneous understanding of leadership practices. In this way, more mundane and less “heroic” behaviour can also be labelled as leadership.
- In terms of leaders, it showed the diverse range of actors involved in leadership processes; Leadership was comprised of actors from very diverse backgrounds with different resources. These resources and backgrounds are, however, still important in understanding the scope and feasibility of leadership.

Both these findings demonstrate the importance of an open approach to leadership and using a grounded theory approach which also has eye for the inherent negotiation that accompanies such a debated concept. Leadership is not always an harmonious exercise and should, therefore, also not be portrayed in this way. This negotiation is the leading theme for the following chapter (6) in which I zoom in more closely on the negotiation of leadership in the four cases.

6. RESULTS: LEADERSHIP IN PERIPHERAL PLACES: EXAMPLE OF IMAGE MAKING

As could be seen in Chapter 5, negotiations over practices of image making were important elements of leadership practices in all the cases. Following the grounded theory approach, negotiations over image making came up as an important element of multiplicity. Even though other choices could have been made and multiplicity does not equal image making, this fitted the cases and made it possible to perform a more in-depth analysis of one element of multiplicity. Understanding places as spheres of multiplicity in which consensus cannot be assumed makes these negotiations an inseparable element of leadership *in* places. In this chapter, the focus is on image making and how leading through image making is ultimately a question of negotiation over these images. The four cases show very different ways of leading through image making, which will be explained in the first parts (6.1–6.4), and compared and contrasted in the last section (6.5).

6.1 Kihnu, negotiation on what image to project

As was noted in Chapter 5, leadership on Kihnu island has been mainly connected to the preservation of cultural heritage. An important part of understanding this leadership in cultural development has to do with the images that are activated. In this section the focus is on what role images play in the leadership on Kihnu island.

From the 1950s onwards, folklorists, ethnologists and other culturally interested people have had an interest in visiting Kihnu Island. Their specific singing and dancing culture, unique handicrafts and textile patterns have hereby gradually moved from a natural activity as part of everyday life to the cultural stage. As a folklorist said: “It seemed very strange for them. It was songs, especially wedding songs that they used practically” (K7). For Kihnu islanders, though, there was nothing particularly special about these customs.

From Estonia’s regained independence in 1991, attention towards this culturally specific island grew more widely and together with the cultural attention more tourists started to discover it. In 1995, the Kihnu municipal development plan attempted to control tourism with a maximum of 100–125 tourists per day visiting the island (Parts and Sepp 2007); these limits could however not be maintained. The Kihnu Sea Party is alone responsible for a multitude of 100 tourists in just one weekend.

Another important factor in the popularity of the island was the inscription of the Kihnu Cultural Area on the Representative List of Intangible Cultural heritage in 2003. This open appreciation of the cultural space of Kihnu accelerated the numbers of visitors. Furthermore this Unesco label has also given it publicity and increased attention, even worldwide. Articles have appeared in many newspapers, such as *Le Monde*, pieces on Al-Jazeera and documentaries have been made for

Arte and other foreign media. Very many foreigners go to Kihnu to make videos and conduct interviews. This has overall also led to an increase in (inter)national tourism.

Apart from the direct consequences of Unesco, Kihnu has also gained a powerful position in lobby networks, building on their discourse of being special and thus in need of protection. For example, their spatial peripherality and the consequential material difficulties are raised when they are in need of help. More detailed information on how this lobbying functions can be seen in Chapter 7.

“See võlu aga ka valu” – “it’s the charm but also the pain”

As the abovementioned narrative of transformation from relatively unknown peripheral island to a touristic, culturally unique and recognised island shows, this development builds very much on two discourses. On the one hand, this remoteness has led to a specific cultural space seen as central for Estonian national culture; on the other, this peripherality has some quite painful material consequences for people living on the island, due to this spatial remoteness and consequential declining economy. The two discourses are poignantly described by one of the teachers of the island: “it’s the charm but also the pain” (K8). Kihnu can, therefore, be seen in this sense as the perfect cultural periphery. As was said in the application for the Unesco application: “Due to the island’s long history of isolation from the mainland, the traditional culture and lifestyle were preserved here over the centuries”. Conversely, it also has to deal with the negative consequences of being located in the periphery.



Figure 10: Kihnu’s two opposing discourses
Illustration by the author

Explaining the two discourses

The uniqueness of Kihnu culture is a strong element, especially when compared to other regions. As one of the local leaders mentions:

“places that are maybe 60, 70 or 100 km from Tallinn, but nothing happens there, and these people say, we don’t get support and we don’t have state programmes which support our living there. But usually the problem is that they don’t have culture, roots, tradition, culture any longer. This is a difference.” (K4)

However, towards state actors, these two discourses can be inconsistent. Somehow the discourse of being a special and unique island attractive for tourism does not connect well to the discourse towards state actors in need of money. In the communication towards the nation state, a sense of not overdoing the request for help is felt since, at some future point, you might lose the state's willingness to help. As one of the island's entrepreneurs mentions:

“he [the county governor] was very fond of Kihnu culture, but he also said one sentence in the light house that you get so much support from the state, so... it is always, you must always keep balance – diplomacy and balance.” (K4)

In this quotation, it becomes clear that it seems to be a balancing act for those bringing these images into the world, selling this uniqueness and simultaneously seeking state support because real structural solutions to many of the island's problems still seem distant. A strategy based on these competing discourses, therefore, seems quite fragile and susceptible to change. When looking for example at the application for the Unesco listing (Kihnu Cultural Space Foundation 2003), the aim was to protect Kihnu culture, also from mass tourism. Interestingly, as seen in the consequences, this rather protective strategy resulting from the application was later transformed into a strategy more connected to openness, tourism and global networks as to with local protective measures. In the latest Kihnu development plan, it is telling that the restriction of tourism is still on the list of goals for the local government (Kihnu municipality 2015). This is also visible in the fact that in the years after the Unesco listing (post-2004), tourism has grown, and in the plan even tourism is encouraged as a solution for balancing the outmigration from Kihnu. While protection of the culture by restricting tourism was one of the aims of Unesco candidature, throughout the years this aim has moved more towards the background.

Connected to this is also the contradictory strategy of openness to the outside world via tourism etc. by using a discourse based on a territorial discourse of local development. For a peripheral place like Kihnu to develop, they have chosen to invest in their territorial discourse, emphasising local culture and emphasising the borders between what is local and what is not. Interestingly, the content of the discourse clashes with the strategy of instrumentalising it, which is focused on openness, relations and connection to the outside world. This contradiction comes to the surface in situations in which the distinction between “us and them” is exacerbated. An example of this happened when deciding who can participate in selling local products at the annual market: “do we allow only Kihnu people, or also “mainlanders” to be involved?” While the preference of the organisers was at first to keep the “mainlanders” out, in later years they decided it was untenable to exclude them. Connected to this is also the fear of losing the local identity when opening themselves up, as can be read in the application to Unesco. Overall, a development model based on unique territorial identity is always at odds with more global consumption habits. The interesting combination of territorial discourse in a relational strategy opens up theoretical puzzles and everyday

dilemmas for development actors – dilemmas which should be seen as part of the effort, here, in understanding place leadership.

Opposing images

The island's leadership makes use of these different discourses in their own practices and are also confronted with both opposing images. During the empirical field work, it was visible where different discourses come together. For example, some tourism "audiences" also require other stories to be told, for example, when Japanese tourists come to the island: "near the lighthouse, they never enter, they don't want to go to the lighthouse, they do not come here for the lighthouse, they want to see handicrafts and traditions" (K4). While the lighthouse is usually seen as one of the main attractions for most others, these tourists have other interests on the island. Furthermore, they must confront tourists expecting a poor periphery who also express this to the islanders. One of the younger respondents remembered that tourists have said things like, "I feel so sorry for you living in this kind of place" (K11).

Conversely, tourists looking for clean, tidy, upscale accommodation have been disappointed by the relatively modest standards of the homestay accommodation. Even though there have been plans for developments aimed towards the more luxury segment of the market, up to now, most accommodation is quite modest and simple, usually in or close to people's homes. Other disappointments are also related to the unique cultural heritage, the main selling point of the island. As one of the island entrepreneurs of the island explains:

"Italian guys asked me, quite unhappy and unsatisfied, they haven't seen any ladies with traditional skirts in the village road, and I said everybody is at home or is working and nowadays, because the younger generations do not always wear skirts – but old ladies, they wear them, but they are working at home and they are working so much, they are gardening, they have fields, they conserve all the products they get from the fields, making soups for the winter or making salads for the winter or pickled cucumbers and juice and jam and everything they are making themselves, it is a huge amount of work." (K4)

This quotation quite clearly demonstrates that tourists come to the island and have a certain set of expectations in mind from the brochures and marketing and these cannot always be met by the locals. The huge amount of work that has to be done in order to survive on the island, such as gardening and food preparation, are activities do not feature in the tourism brochures and therefore not part of it's the expected image. Moreover, understanding this discourse of difficulties on the island and an understanding for how "real" life on the island is seems missing, as a different homestay entrepreneur notes: "And then people come here and they wonder how come a loaf of bread costs €1.05 here when it is 80 cents in Pärnu, I am like: really?" (K13).

This again shows the material hardship of having to live on an isolated island, which leads to higher prices for commodities and requires a hard-working mentality, of which only in one, very short season, the benefits can be reaped.

This image of a life of hardship is sometimes hidden in favour of showing a more resplendent image. As one of the local entrepreneurs also mentions: “I am so tired, and my body is ill, sometimes I am so dead I am broken and then I must go to the party and I smile and start dancing – it happens very often” (K4).

In this sense, the so-called “always positive” discourse often overshadows the real, materially difficult life of the islanders. Depending on the audience, material difficulties seem to not be suitable for public display and a certain idealisation is taking place in order to cover up these less beautiful aspects of island life. Due to the many tasks that have to be done, combined with the specific circumstances of living on an island, life on the island is not particularly easy for the inhabitants. On top of that, the role that some take in showcasing culture in a “shiny” and “happy” way serves to cover this up.

Connected to this idealisation of one image of Kihnu, other ways of life on Kihnu island are more hidden. The strong focus on culture and tourism development does not always leave room for other views on how to develop the island. One of the teachers mentioned that agriculture and fisheries have received less attention within the image of Kihnu as a cultural island.

Image making actors

As became clear from the image making practices, these discourses about life on the island do not come from out of nowhere. For touristic purposes, the local women riding motorcycles in their traditional Kihnu dress has become something of an attraction for tourists, which has to be repeated multiple times. However, in this active image making, the positive shiny image of Kihnu can mostly be witnessed. As one of the entrepreneur critically mentions: “people have the image; the image they have is the image we have put before them” (K13). The image is, therefore, not seen as something that is out there, over which the locals have no control, but is an active choice of what to show to a wider audience: “If we want them to see how poor we are, or how much trouble we have, then that’s possible. And then that’s what they’d see. But no one wants to do that” (K13).

Not only actors living on the island contribute to this image; this also includes quite distant actors such as the media with their broadcasts, over which local actors have only limited control. This raises the question of who constructs which discourses and for which goals. Even though the role of Kihnu leadership can be witnessed in this image making, it is always a multi-actor exercise in which local people are not only in the lead, yet also very much dependent on the powerful media actors which influence the images tourists have of places like it.

An example of this more external image making is from a documentary maker from the mainland who has been filming and lobbying for the island since the 1970s (also leading the Unesco application), and has been actively involved in this image making. The documentaries that he made also showed the less polished images to the wider public. One of the local leaders mentions the effect of these documentaries on the local population:

“The documentary shows that this is a community which is going to die out very soon, because they are drinking and they have so many drinking problems and Kihnu men were so offended about this.” (K4)

It showed, therefore, a slightly different picture which fitted more with the discourse of showing difficulties and was not accepted by all Kihnu people at this time. It had even led to feelings of shame for being a Kihnu person, as another islander also mentions. At the time of screening she did not want to admit to anyone that she came from the island. Even more distant or unreachable actors also play a role in this image game. As one islander mentions:

“But if you are filming all the time and showing this to all the local media and people who haven’t been here before, they don’t want to come maybe, because they saw in *Reporter* or some other news [media] that are those kind of people here.” (K11)

This also had an influence on relationships with the media at that point. This same respondent mentioned that next time that this broadcaster came to the island, the people no longer wanted to talk to them since they had no control over what was broadcast. This case points to the power of the media in image making. Leadership in image making is not necessarily restricted to official or legitimised leadership, and can come from nearly everywhere, whether local leadership, national media etc. This also means that images are always a fragment of a part of the population and do not necessarily represent reality or the interests of the community.

Negotiation on being visible at all

Apart from the question of legitimacy of certain images and their representation for the community, increased use of image making has also led to some resistance towards being visible at all. The presence of the media, which has grown in the past years, is not appreciated by everyone. One of the teachers on the island mentions that she tends not to wear the local dress as “the attention towards Kihnu can be positive, but also negative, and ruin your mood for the whole day”. (K8) Kuutma (2007) has reflected upon this and claimed that Kihnu, in some ways, has become a living museum. Signs of irritation against this openness and media exposure are also mentioned. A development which effectively illustrates this point is the involvement of mainland police on the island. This is, of course, an immediate effect of the opening up of the island. People are more checked if they are wearing their helmets, while previously, being far away from mainland institutions, islanders could do more as they pleased. These findings make clear that, in very diverse ways, local people experience the (un)intended side effects of being in the picture and part of the tourist gaze. Choosing a strategy that opens up the island to the outside world, on the one hand, creates more opportunities for some, but on the other, has its downsides and constrains other inhabitants.

Looking at the leadership of Kihnu, it can be seen that many actors, whether legitimised or not legitimised, distant or local, organised or individual, all

contribute to image making in a strategic use of the peripherality of the island. At one point this peripherality made them unique, special and important; this same peripherality also makes them economically vulnerable and dependent on external help. Using these different discourses for lobbying purposes, on the one side, and encouraging tourism on the other, the actors involved in the latter have arranged some impressive materials and symbolic achievements on the island impossible for the more invisible peripheries of Estonia. Due to financial support, it is still possible to have a school, to teach the Kihnu dialect, have a new ice-breaking ferry, and much more. Further, it has given them possibilities to negotiate exceptions with ministries and have their local problems discussed in the national parliament. In some ways, it is exactly what the neoliberal agenda expects from peripheries, i.e. to proactively help themselves. In this sense, one could argue that, in functionalistic terms focusing on direct and measurable outcomes only, Kihnu is a perfect example of how a peripheral island has used its endogenous cultural resources in a strategic way to develop. Conversely, one could critique this and question whether this discourse benefits all inhabitants. When looking at the relationship between leaders and followers, in terms of representativeness not all inhabitants feel represented, as shown in Chapter 5. While for the entrepreneurs involved in tourism the exposure has benefits – which can outweigh the unintended side effects – for other people there is not much benefit to be gained from the extra visibility.

This case, however, shows that even though local actors can control what they show and can get some things done, they have no complete control. Many non-local actors, the media and other actors have influence on the way that Kihnu is portrayed in Estonia and beyond.

Moreover, this case has shown that different discourses are used for Kihnu, which do not always overlap. Sending out these different images, Kihnu as rich (in culture) and Kihnu as poor (in possibilities) also sometimes clashes. Leaders on the island carefully manage these (sometimes competing) discourses and this means that, at times, the real material difficulties are purposively hidden.

Furthermore, while the multiplicity of discourses that Kihnu portrays to the outside world has been discussed in this section, these inward-facing images have to be defended. While the discourse is of being culturally specific, this also prescribes some form of culture, which opens doors for some and closes doors for others and gives some people power but leaves others powerless, a process that can also be witnessed in the south-eastern Estonian region of Setomaa, as demonstrated by Annist (2013). More concretely, in the case of Kihnu, this means that the growing attention for (cultural) tourism also results in other means of living moving more into the background. As the museum director clearly stated: “not everyone can be an entrepreneur” (K6) and, therefore, some are excluded. Negotiation of images is thus often about much more than only images; it is also the negotiation on what future inhabitants see for their places.

6.2 Järva-Jaani, visibility at all costs?

Järva-Jaani is a place which, in terms of visibility, has a longer road to travel compared to Kihnu. It is situated in the centre of Estonia and often referred to as being “in the middle of nowhere” and even accused of having neither culture nor traditions (K4). In order to stand out from the empty areas of the Estonian map, the town is engaging in “doing this interesting stuff” (J5) witnessed in Chapter 5. With their many sports activities, multiple museums, among which a unique vintage vehicles museum and the hosting of several events, Järva-Jaani is working on its image and seeking publicity where and when they can. As the municipal leader mentions, “we are trying to be like a small centre; we are not big, but doing this interesting stuff” (J5). Publicity and media attention, in this sense, is very much also seen as a tool for making themselves visible.

Image-making actors

It is mainly the local leadership sending out this message, i.e. the local mayor and the actively involved people. Another important actor in this is the media. Due to a personal relationship between the municipal leader and someone working for the newspaper “they always try to make the news positive” (J5). When, for example, the grammar school dismissed a teacher and when this story was told to the media, according to the municipal leader, a “more neutral” story could be put forward. In this way, the media can be used as a tool to defend the decision take by the local government and school leadership.

Negotiation over content of the image

As part of their activities, Järva-Jaani has also hosted two television series about life in the Estonian countryside. The first, only partly filmed there, was called *Naabriplika* (“village girl”) and was about typical clichéd village life. In it, a specific image was created of the countryside, but Järva-Jaani did not specifically feature prominently. In a follow-up show, *Doctor Silva*, about an unprofessional family doctor in the countryside of Estonia, by the same director, Järva-Jaani did get, however, a featuring role. Its broadcast provoked varied reactions. As one of the active volunteers in Järva-Jaani says:

Some people think that *Doctor Silva* is not good for Järva-Jaani because all these activities they do, all these activities are in Järva-Jaani. The name is Järva-Jaani in this place, but in our medical centre there are good doctors, very good doctors, they are very clean, they are very ok [...], but if it is a joke, maybe it is not bad... (J9)

Some inhabitants are in favour of the series and refer to how this kind of exposure could actually help the countryside, also in light of negotiations over amalgamation, because “it shows that Järva-Jaani is willing and Järva-Jaani wants to develop and we are doing whatever to be in the big picture, to big in the big plan” (J8). This leader working in education thus also mentions the indirect effects of

being visible: for him it is evidence of activeness and involvement with the place and shows that they are not afraid to say this out loud (J8). Other active volunteers in the community (J7, J10) also mention mainly the innocence of it. One of the local council members mentions that they have also discussed it in the local council and some people were not happy, but that still, overall, it was considered as positive exposure and therefore accepted.

Public discussion has also taken place on Facebook with people for and against this type of exposure. While some feel sorry for the doctors actually working in the medical centre, others applaud the humour of the mayor. The municipality leader himself mentions the fact that he thinks being in the picture is good in itself. In terms of potential tourist attraction, too, it is seen as an option for attracting more tourists to the museums, and the local hostel named “Naabriplika Hostel” after the series. For this leader, apart from the series, overall visibility is seen as useful.

“I think it is good to get some connection that when I go to somewhere and I say I am from Järva-Jaani. Oh, I know that place! I think it is good. I think it is easier to do some new things also here. And they know, there is this old machine shelter or fire brigade, [...], or this film festival now, or disc golf players, there is very good disc golf field. This makes new projects easier to plan.” (J5)

Beyond only this television exposure, the municipal leader also actively sends out messages to the world via new media channels. Here, it becomes clear that these visibility practices work in two ways: on the one hand, it works as a news update for the inhabitants of the municipality, but on the other it is also useful in selling the place.

“I know that journalists are reading what we are doing and they write news built from that, it is like a tool for me. Also Facebook, when I share something, I know that the journalists will also read this and this might expand to the newspapers. I think it is good.” (J5)

The use of this “new” media, therefore, serves multiple purposes, such as keeping up the connection with to community, reaching more traditional and broader media channels and moreover increasing its visibility. As the municipal leader also notes: “when we don’t know what is here, then it is hard to sell that too” (J5).

Negotiation on being visible at all

Aside from the positive sides only, this increased visibility also throws everything very easily into the open. This is something that the municipal leader experienced when a local journalist found out via his blog that he was using his work car for his private activities: “then the local journalist made a very big headline like ‘[name of municipal leader] is using his official car in private’” (J5). This is, of course, the other side of the coin: visibility is not only positive and critical items also get into the news.

Apart from the television series, in other instances too has the municipal leader experienced the consequences of being open towards the media. After the sacking of the grammar school teacher there was much commotion in the media with some people supporting the choice to fire the teacher and others more disapproving. Due to the open culture of sharing information freely with the outside world, these local issues which are kept local now become national news and used in political discussions. In this sense, a culture of openness has also its risks.

In sum, the leadership, in terms of image making, had everything to do with increasing visibility and trying to get the town on the map. Through good relationships with the local media, publicity is used for the benefit of the place and its leadership, and it thus shows evidence for the activeness and presence of this “invisible” town. While, at times, being exposed may also have its downsides (with the risk of self-stigmatising), being visible is still seen by local leaders as something beneficial. It seems to follow the maxim that “no publicity is bad publicity”. The mixed reactions of local inhabitants, and the fact that the municipal leader openly discusses this issue with people on Facebook and in his blog, shows the negotiation and taking place over image making in Järva-Jaani.

6.3 Pekela, place with a sticky stigma

In Pekela, a quite extreme situation can be encountered in terms of images. A very negative image has been long connected to Pekela. Karel (2012) noted that already by the 1970s, when journalists wanted to show a piece of the Netherlands which looked impoverished, they would head to the eastern part of Groningen province. The stigma of being a village with rough people and high unemployment has haunted Pekela for some time. Furthermore, in the national elections of 2017, the far right PVV won the most votes, tied with the socialist party (SP) on 24%. In the latest local elections in 2018 however, the Socialist Party regained its prime position with 27.6%, while the PVV fell back to 12.6%. Provincial elections in 2019 then again showed a rise for another right-wing party, Forum for Democracy (14.5 %), and 14.5 % and 18.2% for PVV and SP respectively. Overall it shows continued support for both extremes of the political spectrum.

The local chairman of the entrepreneurs’ association commented on this latest election result as follows:

What does it mean for the potential future investors? The SP is big, the PVV is big. Is that the workforce that I want to have in my factory, I don’t know. So that is reinforcing the image again. (P4)

The stigma also exists among younger inhabitants, and even translates into shame. The same entrepreneur mentions that he had heard of a young man who changed his city of origin on LinkedIn from Pekela to Groningen. National newspapers and broadcasters contribute to this image and reinforce it by publishing ranking lists on crime, unemployment etc.

Image making actors

Instead of only a passive acceptance of this stigma, leadership in Pekela has tried to react to it. This reaction comes from very different actors. Even though the local council has a broad range of political parties, they react together against this stigmatisation, as the leader of the socialist party describes:

“the other day there was research by the Verwey-Jonker Institute that [showed] Pekela was the least healthy place in all of the Netherlands, in terms of air quality and everything connected to that. Then there is one [joint] front here... how crazy are you? And then the political disagreements disappear. Bring it on, tell us where you got this nonsense from?”(P3)

Furthermore, positive story telling happens by word of mouth. The mayor mentions that they take every opportunity to explain to the people how pleasant life in Pekela is: he takes visitors on cycle rides to show them how people try to make the best of the village. He explained how he sees that small steps like these should be done to lead to an overall changed picture. He does not believe in quick fixes and that a longer-term strategy towards an improved image is needed.

Further initiatives are trying to add to the positive storytelling. A website called *Prachtig Pekela* (Beautiful Pekela) was launched, in which positive news about Pekela is brought to the world. Another initiative is a start-up called “My Placebook”, whose goal is to make a living by putting the rich cultural history of the region on the Internet. At the same time, the goal is to add value to the region, employ (young) people and thus stimulate regional development. Other organisations also try to promote the rich history of Pekela, such as SIEPCO, in terms of industrial heritage and appearing positively in the newspapers. The captains’ house museum is trying to tell “a more nuanced story about Pekela” (P6).

Even though most active people in Pekela try to add to the positive storytelling, a volunteer working at the museum mentions that some Pekela volunteers still tend to return to the negative publicity. Apparently, even with good willing people it is not easy to remove the stigma and it tends to remain quite sticky. In a desperate attempt, the local entrepreneurs’ association had once considered putting in an advertisement in the newspaper to undo the effects of recent negative publications, but found out it would cost €10,000 and thought this was not worth it.

In many ways, people in Pekela are thus trying to turn the image around – not necessarily in a simple place marketing or branding story, but, rather, to show their pride and dignity. Further, a local politician mentions that for people in Pekela the issue is not so much about putting themselves on the map but more about the question of dignity. As one local politician noted, “why don’t we seem to matter to the state and why are our problems not heard in The Hague?” (P3).

One example showing this local pride was the making of the film, *Pekels Gold*, initiated by the local government. The direct motive for the timing of this film was a documentary made by the Christian broadcasting company that stigmatised Pekela even further. As a reaction, the previous mayor initiated the making of a movie to show another image of Pekela. With the help of a single

professional cameraman, affordable because he chose to support the initiative and also due to the connections of someone working in the national news broadcasting company, a project was set up in which different sides of Pekela were shown. Over a year, a group of volunteers worked together with these professionals to create this counter-film. In the end the film was shown. At the opening night the infamous broadcasting company was invited, but did not dare to come, according to the local aldermen:

“EO [the Christian broadcasting company] was invited with the opening night, but they didn’t dare come. People from Pekela are a quite proud of their village, they find it tedious when someone talks badly about their village.” (P2)

Therefore, initiative is undertaken seriously by a diverse group of people in Pekela to counteract the negative images related to it. Whether this will result in a different image in the longer term remains to be seen. From previous experience, Pekela people have experienced how sticky the image was and how difficult it is to change.

However, out-of-control media can also sometimes show a converse image. There was for example the report in the *Financial Times*, mentioned above, which mainly portrayed Pekela as quite well-off compared to the “worst” former industrial places in France and the UK. Thanks to this positive report, Pekela appeared in numerous foreign papers from Russia, Denmark, Italy etc. So, even though the local media can be influenced, local people have no say over the stories that told by the national media. Whether it is a stigmatising story as with the EO documentary, or a nuanced picture from the *Financial Times*, control over these images is limited.

Negotiation over content of the image

After having decided as one community on the need for making this counter film, the negotiation started internally on what should feature in it and what not. The mayor mentioned that, from the start, they wanted to show both sides. They wanted to show the honest and difficult picture of people “in debt, for whom life is not that easy” (P10), but also positive stories with “people who are also happy to be a part of the local orchestra” (P10). Always having these two sides at the back of their mind, it was not intended to be a promotional film, as the local mayor mentions:

“And in some images these two sides come together. When you look at the clip of the children’s week, then you see two volunteers who are completely enthusiastic and then you see the children... what did you like the most? Building huts. Yes... and then you see the vulnerability written in their faces, that they cannot go on holidays, but can go here. So, there is that balance, we looked for that every time.” (P10)

In order to make sure that there was a good balance in the content of the film, the honest picture and the showcases, a committee on the film’s content was set up.

Made up of civil servants, aldermen and the mayor, who managed the budget, it conceived of the main topics. Then there was the editorial committee, with local people involved in the local media, education and other volunteers who wished to participate. This editorial committee then dug deeper into the individual themes. Apart from the content, the movie was well received in Pekela. Even though some people doubt its usefulness for promotion purposes, internally people were proud. Despite this, the movie did not display the unique things of Pekela well enough, as one of the local entrepreneurs mentioned: “It is a realistic image. There is also a miller. That is so country bumpkin. There are millers in 200 other small municipalities, this is not something with which we stand out” (P4).

Even though the uniqueness of some of the elements is doubted by some inhabitants, what all respondents agree on is the positive effect that this film has generated internally. A local politician categorised it as a reaction to “being constantly slammed on the head, like you don’t matter, you mean nothing, you are no longer a player... and by telling your story, you gain self-confidence again”(P3). Many worked hard on this movie, people recognised themselves in it and people were proud, as another councillor mentioned:

“Even if these movies don’t do anything, we obviously don’t know that yet, but then it is already has the value that it means something to the people of Pekela. Self-confidence, pride in the area where you are living.”(P5)

This image reversal campaign by Pekela clearly shows how, in a context of stigmatisation, local leadership can take action in sending counter images. Even though the pride in protecting Pekela is visible all around, and this has supported internal cohesion, the negotiation of the content of the image remains. The question is, though, of whether it is an internal film for bringing back some dignity for Pekela people, or is it trying to sell the place to potential investors or tourists. This is seen as a process of negotiation which is inherently part of leadership through image making. This leadership is ultimately about the inevitable nature of multiplicity in images about these places.

6.4 Schoondijke, image making by an unexpected actor

In the following section I will only briefly discuss something that happened in Schoondijke in regards to image making. While Schoondijke does not engage much in this (there are, however, some campaigns which are exercised on the municipal and regional level), in Schoondijke there an image making practice of which they themselves were not the initiators. In this sense, it was not the leadership of Schoondijke who initiated a campaign for promoting the village, it was a label that was put on Schoondijke to which its leadership reacted.

In a publication made by the Dutch National Network on Population Decline (*Nationaal Netwerk Bevolkingsdaling*) – a network that gathers knowledge about areas dealing with population decline in the Netherlands – a quite pessimistic

picture of Schoondijke was given. With the title *Schoondijke Sadness (Verdriet van Schoondijke)*, it is portrayed as a less liveable place which has no will to participate in decision making (Nationaal Netwerk Bevolkingsdaling 2013). While this publication was written at a time when there was no active village council, it still produces a story (in black-and-white terms) not enthusiastically received by local inhabitants. One of the village councillors mentioned his discontent with the publication and mentions that you can always find someone making some negative comments on the village, but this is not a fair representation of it. Moreover, local municipal government in Sluis had not seen this publication in advance. This was, however, also surprising for the village council because some municipal employees had participated by giving interviews for this publication. Even though respondents also doubted whether it would actually be read by many people, one of the village council members mentioned how this has actually motivated the village council to act and show a different side:

“we just started when this publication came out, we were actually a bit shocked on the one hand. On the other it also was a stimulation to say, well, we will show what the other side is.”(S5)

When talking with one of the local Schoondijke shopkeepers he mentioned that Schoondijke is an active village. This image of an active village is also talked about when people from Schoondijke go to other villages.

This story of Schoondijke shows that images are also produced from unexpected corners. In this case, it has led to extra motivation for the village council to show a different story and react to the image they thought did not fit the village. In this sense, the external stigma that was placed on it created more local solidarity and a common energy to change things.

6.5 Discussion and Conclusion on leadership through image making

Looking at the ways in which leadership is enacted, this chapter has shown that image making plays a role in all the cases, to a more or lesser degree. This is not only immaterially, but in some cases (most visibly in Kihnu) these images have led to very direct material consequences (Eriksson 2008), while in Kihnu it can be seen how image making has become a crucial strategy in, on the one hand, demanding (and receiving) support from the nation state and, on the other, in showing their cultural specificity to tourists. On the other side of the spectrum, is the stigmatised Pekela, a place to which negative images were mostly ascribed in former times and local leadership is looking for ways to remove this using different practices. The case of Schoondijke showed the possibility of an unexpected actor involved consciously and unconsciously in producing images “on” the periphery. In Järva-Jaani, conversely, local leadership is actually contributing to the image of a ridiculed countryside in order to try to stand out from otherwise invisibility.

All these four cases share the fact that images matter to local leaders, whether it is idealisation (Kihnu), stigmatisation (Schoondijke), de-stigmatisation (Pekela) or a form of self-stigmatisation (Järva-Jaani). In sum, images matter.

In cases of stigmatisation, there is an interesting aspect. The stigmatisation and negative portrayal of Pekela and Schoondijke, on the one hand, puts these places in a backward position but this common enemy does, on the other hand, lead to more social cohesion internally. In Pekela, it made the local people more proud and motivated to react to the image that did not fit with their experiences. For it, it is not so much about selling the place, but much more about defending a feeling of self-respect, which motivated them make a film. In Schoondijke, the negative portrayal of the village also led to extra motivation to create more positivity and extra activities.

As all the cases have shown, image making is a multi-actor process in which not all actors are locally embedded. Even though local actors can take an active role in this, as in Kihnu for example, other actors also play a role. The media has an important role, and actors like Unesco or a national government institution can also have a role in creating a certain image of a place. Images from the past can be quite persistent, which makes it hard for places such as Pekela to get away from their past reputations, and also for Järva-Jaani in starting becoming visible in a context of invisibility. Overall, the strategy of leadership through active image making is seen as crucial, but at the same time also very difficult to manage.

Context matters

Having said that images matter for the development of places, it is not necessarily equally beneficial for all places. Two cases that show that images can either work as a blessing or a curse are Kihnu and Pekela respectively. The difference in possibilities for leaders from either Kihnu or Pekela has a lot to do with their pre-existing image. Kihnu's image of a culturally specific and acknowledged island helps its leadership practices that fit this cultural development model. The media helps too, because it is an image liked by Estonians and foreigners, which helps in the island's positive exposure. Furthermore, the demand for culturally specific island life matches the willingness of some Kihnu people to be in the picture. On the other hand, in Pekela, local leadership has fewer possibilities for bringing positive news to the fore because they have been classified as hopeless periphery. The media, in this case, are working against a more positive storyline. Further, efforts to combat this stigma have not been picked up by the national media (even though some regional media were willing to broadcast their film). Therefore, the support of the media is missing, which makes it impossible to cast off the general stigma. Furthermore, in order to benefit from image making as a strategy, another crucial resource was to be included in functional networks. Therefore, networkedness has been shown to be important in order to be a part of these image making processes. These opposing contexts of these peripheral places made images either into a blessing or curse for these places quite regardless of the leadership efforts put into image making by the place leaders. Therefore, the conclusion from

Chapter 5, emphasising the importance of resources, is also confirmed in the context of image making.

Negotiation over the image portrayed

As witnessed, negotiations were a common theme in all the cases. In terms of negotiation, a differentiation can be made between more internal horizontal negotiation (for example, on the content of the image), and more vertical negotiations with outside actors (media, national government, tourists). These horizontal negotiations concerned, first of all, whether being in the picture at all is something to be strived towards. The choice in favour of more outside exposure can be beneficial for some actors, but not necessarily for the whole community. People who have nothing to gain from this exposure are also confronted with the consequences.

The second dimension of this horizontal negotiation is on the content of the image. While images are always a representation of some actors and not of all the members of a community, this means that images are always too narrow and inevitably exclusionary. The negotiation over the construction of these images is also an inherent part of leadership through image making. In Kihnu, within the community there is a certain support and non-support for this narrow image which benefits some and not others. In Järva-Jaani the strategy of creating a ridiculous image is not appreciated by all of the community. In Pekela, while the community was in favour of doing something about the stigma again after an extreme documentary, not everyone then agreed on what image to send out to the world.

The final type of negotiation is a more vertical one between local leaders and outside actors. In this, the more dispersed power of the media, broadcasters, tourism entrepreneurs and officials are involved and it is not only the locally bounded leaders who have a powerful position here. As was shown in Chapter 5, there are a multitude of actors operating in leadership processes, of which not all are officially legitimised. These negotiations shows the relevance of leadership in defending the interests of the place in a context of outward relations with media and external actors, and also to defend this on the local community level. As Beer (2014, 257) has asked in the context of more centralised Australia: “how do leaders seek to both build and maintain their position as legitimate leaders within the community?” This also connects to what Gray and Sinclair (2005) identify as a certain external dependency felt by local leaders. Being responsible for horizontally aligning support for a certain strategy, and simultaneously dealing with external dependency on that strategy, is a difficult context for local leadership, especially in the context of a lack of available human resources.

Furthermore, due to this external dependence, choices for some development routes may not be labelled as free choices. In Kihnu, for example, their growing dependence on tourism to secure income and the loss of other options might mean the choice to focus on tourism is no longer so much of a choice. Rather, this tourism development might be seen as the only option for sustaining livelihoods on the island.

Concluding words on negotiation

Leadership through image making, therefore, was negotiated in different ways and under very different circumstances. Only by seeing these multiple dimensions of negotiations and diverse contexts, can it be seen in which way leadership was exercised. A failure to recognise these negotiations misses the complexity of leading in peripheries. It reduces once more the process of leading through image making to a blueprint model in which interests are aligned, collaboration is the norm and contextual factors are beneficial by default. Taking this model-like approach misses complexity and more importantly, also blames place leaders for not being able to live up to this unrealistic model (Plüschke-Altöf & Grootens 2018). A further question is what this means for places which have no brandable image (Grootens 2018).

7. RESULTS: LEADERSHIP OF PERIPHERAL PLACES

In this chapter the focus is on leadership that can be recognised through its outward relationships. While networks and relations are seen as essential elements in leadership practices of peripheral places (Chapter 5), and also in image making strategies (Chapter 6), in this chapter, these networks and relations are themselves the topics of analysis. In which way can these networks and connectivities live up to their promises of being enabling factors for the development of peripheral places that were studied in this research?

7.1 Kihnu as the connected island

Kihnu can be seen as the ultimate example of a networked, outwardly orientated place. As an advisor working at the Estonian ministry of culture mentioned, Kihnu could not function without these connections: “*ei saaks*” (“it could not”) (K5). The strategic networks, lobbyists, national cultural programs and actors have all been part of Kihnu’s leadership story. As became evident in the previous chapter, images are crucial for Kihnu Island. The following section will show how these images are instrumentalised by using Kihnu’s many connections and conversely how the image of Kihnu helps it become even more connected. The following story shows the importance of good timing and crucial connections, which has consequences still today.

A story of “coincidental” networking

The story of Kihnu starts with an example that can clearly show how Kihnu got networked. A crucial moment in Kihnu history is when it got inscribed on Unesco’s List for Immaterial Heritage. The initiative for the application for this came from a documentary maker from the “mainland” who became familiar with Kihnu culture after his studies (Kuutma 2007). Starting as a private initiative in the 2000s, he made documentaries which focused on Kihnu community life and their traditional fishing practices. Through his previous job at Unesco, he could introduce Kihnu culture to the person responsible for the list there. Later on, when organizing a documentary festival, he introduced his Unesco colleagues to Kihnu and Manija islands. The idea of inscribing this culture was born and the next step was to have the support of the Estonian minister of culture, who happened to be a quite famous textile artist who “understood immediately the importance of being in Unesco” (K12). With the support of the ministry, in July 2002, the command was given to prepare the application, which had to be finished that September. When time was running out, the documentary maker himself traveled to the headquarters of Unesco and successfully asked for an extension of the deadline. Together with the Baltic song festivals, in 2003, the Kihnu Cultural Space was added to the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage. The documentary maker looked back at this, saying:

if I was not send to Mongolia maybe it would not have happened, maybe if there was not very close friendship between me and [Unesco] maybe it wouldn’t have happened. If maybe she was not coming to Estonia, you know, if I was not inviting her. So all in life you know, it happens that there are certain people, certain moments, they must meet each other. (K12)

The importance of this inscription shows in the many positive developments that followed. First of all, materially, it led to support of the nation state in the form of a special Kihnu Cultural Programme from which projects could be financed, such as the museum and the publication of books in Kihnu dialect. These projects are seen as a direct consequence of UNESCO recognition, as one of the folklorists mentioned: “The importance [of UNESCO] is that the government has started with local cultural projects – the Kihnu cultural space – and gives some money” (K7). This label can then also be used when applying for project money from the Kihnu Cultural Space or for European funding; the UNESCO label is something that always helps in the application, as mentioned by one of the local entrepreneurs.

Furthermore, it also led to the founding of institutions (a necessary precondition in order to receive support) for managing this programme funding. Alongside the Kihnu Cultural Space, another cultural organisation, the Kihnu Institute, was developed with a quite broad base of projects, focusing on tourism, education, festivals, language etc. It focused more on the Kihnu dialect, publications and Kihnu radio broadcasting. Today still, these two different institutions are responsible for safeguarding the maintaining of the Kihnu Cultural Space in slightly different ways.

Next to the material benefits, building of institutional structures, the inscription by UNESCO has also given publicity and increased attention to Kihnu, as witnessed in the previous chapter. These consequences of the networking story show how the “right” people in the right place at the right time (when culture is obviously valued), can lead to very material and positive developments for peripheral places.

Enabling networks “Kihnu, it is like a business card”

Apart from the direct consequences of becoming a “UNESCO island”, more broadly, Kihnu island is strategically using its image in order to get things done. Through the years, Kihnu has grown into a label and resource in itself, a label of unique and fragile culture which needs protection. As the municipal leader mentions: “Kihnu, it is like a business card: I’m from Kihnu, please help” (K3). According to him, it is not even necessary each time to show why they need support or why they are unique, but this is seen as something self-evident. This also helps them to lobby for exceptions: “Investments in roads, we are different, also in enterprises, your market is smaller. So you just need exceptions” (K4).

This status as a business card then provides actors from Kihnu with easy access to important people in functional networks. Kihnu has direct access to the nation state first of all through the national cultural programmes, of which Kihnu also has one. The national administration can help Kihnu out in other ways, however. This happened, for example, when the building of a web shop for local Kihnu products needed funding. In this case, while the leaders first tried to get funding from the ministry of Culture, it could not locate funds and arranged that another ministry did. In this sense, Kihnu leaders have colleagues in the ministries who help them with their development challenges: “We warm up the connections when it is necessary, or try to get straight through to ministers or ministry officials.

That's the quickest way to deal with issues, if you want to have them dealt quickly" (K3).

State ministers or other well-known Estonians are also regularly purposively invited to the island. These ministry visits can have some direct and tangible results for the island. During a visit by the minister of rural life, the problem arose of having no ATMs on the island. After having heard this, the minister arranged with the director of one of the Estonian largest banks that one would be installed in a shop where Kihnu people could access their money. This is a very visible example of how Kihnu's network works in a very concrete and material way.

These networks not only run through the official leadership of the island, but also via private persons. One of the entrepreneurs on the island is well known by journalists, ministers and has other useful links. She is invited to the national president's reception each year to represent the island. She also invited the minister of economy to Kihnu to show the island, but also to talk about its economic problems for which the minister might have a solution. Even if these do not directly lead to positive things, in the end they will work out positively for the island, as one of the entrepreneurs mentioned:

"Always when some VIP invites friends everybody starts to visit the island. And again the winners are those small homestay accommodations. So if some VIP is visiting the island, it always good thing for the island's image again, and then people start coming and are interested and start booking accommodation, it always has a great influence." (K4)

Behind this powerful position is the reasoning that builds on the somehow contradicting images of being unique on the one hand, and in need of help on the other. As shown in the previous chapter, leadership in image making always has to switch between two different discourses, as when one of the Kihnu people mentioned "it is the charm, but also the pain" (K8). The combination of Kihnu as the charm as Kihnu as the pain too is used to justify the support for this island and safeguarding its existence. This makes the charm and the pain ultimately connected. Because of the recognition of this uniqueness by Unesco, the Estonian government has also committed herself to safeguarding the culture – especially in a context of "threatening assimilation", as can be read in the Unesco application:

"For the Kihnu community itself, it is a question of retaining and promoting their identity in opposition to the threatening assimilation in a globalised world." (Kihnu Cultural Space Foundation 2003, 50)

A final point of negotiation in the "Kihnu strategy", which can be seen in many other places too, is that networking also costs time and energy which is not always recognised. In particular in places in which available human resources are scarce, these activities add to the burden of many volunteers already working for the community. The mayor mentions that the time spent on these issues usually does not match the benefits of networking.

Administrative reform – selective networking

In terms of the networks that the municipality engages in, it can be selective and choose those most useful to them. This opportunity to be selective in networking shows the powerful position they have achieved. For other Estonian municipalities, the local government association can be an important network for getting their interests defended; for Kihnu it was not seen as valuable so they decided to leave it. They also left the small island programme for defending the interests of all the small islands, in favour of a self-selective network of only the islands of Ruhnu, Vormsi and Kihnu, in which they can negotiate directly with the minister. This was the case, for example, when amalgamation was a topic, as the municipal leader mentioned: “we are having discussions with Ruhnu and Vormsi and so we are, all three of us, going directly then to the minister” (K3). During 2016, the national government urged that all municipalities of less than 5000 inhabitants should be amalgamated into bigger ones. So, therefore, amalgamation has also been a topic in Kihnu. Kihnu has resisted this together with two other islands and lobbied the responsible ministry in order to keep their independent status. In the end they gained the exception they asked for. The mayor of Kihnu was surprised that it was written into the law so easily but sees Kihnu’s special position as the reason.

“the main issue was as I heard, the thing is that nobody wants to deal with small islands, because probably there would be so much fuss about it, and everybody will be writing to the press and so on and so on and they have to deal with it.” (K3)

This quotation shows again quite clearly that Kihnu had gained a powerful position in negotiating with the state.

Potential alternative networks

As noted in the previous chapter, it is actors (local and extra-local) with different backgrounds and interests who consciously keep Kihnu in this central position in the minds of Estonians, tourists, policy makers and the general public and thus instrumentalise the image of Kihnu for its development. For some respondents they can even be seen as lobbyists:

“We have had good lobbyists who are constantly letting people know that Kihnu exists and so on and it kind of grows in people’s minds, in the subconscious. [...] The women who are dancing and singing for the ministers or whoever comes here, people who cook fish soup and so on, people who, whatever, whoever does anything, it has an effect.” (K4)

This effect is crucial for the development of Kihnu and actors also continue their efforts to keep Kihnu well known. One of the cultural leaders is very much involved in external relations to make Kihnu well known for tourism and overall visibility: “I have made many documentaries for the Japanese market and for their national TV and of course many things were published in newspapers and printed in books, for those are coming here, with groups and alone” (K4). And as also

her former colleague describes this cultural entrepreneur, who has been doing the same trips again and again with the typical image of Kihnu women driving on motor cycles: “She has been riding these motor cars and things like, I think millions of times and telling the same stories” (K11).

As could be seen in the previous chapter, the media are an important network for the leading actors on the island. As the mayor mentioned, “we have Kihnu friendly media” (K3). At the same time, more traditional media are also used to keep Kihnu constantly on the radar. Alongside the frequent exposure on the national and regional media, Kihnu also has a weekly radio broadcast, also developed thanks to this external lobbyist. This shows that also the media are a good partner in which personal links can also not be ignored:

“we have one TV reporter for the commercial channel TV 3 in Estonia. One TV reporter, he has a Kihnu girlfriend, he is living on the island and he is producing lot of news from Kihnu island for the TV, and I think that people are happy about it.” (K4)

Social media is also used to reach outwards. Facebook, for example, played a significant role when there was a local issue with Italian song-bird hunters coming to the island. This is an example which shows quite clearly the power that local leaders on the island have and that different sets of tourists behave differently to others. People were not happy and approached this local leader and complained. At some point this local leader got so frustrated that she used her personal network to ask for attention for this local problem:

“And I wrote about it on my Facebook [page]. And after that all the radio stations in Estonia, the newspapers wrote about this problem and because I had my list and many scientists, usually they are folklorists and those who doing research in the cultural field, but others, well-known journalists and they started discussions and it finished like that, that parliament had a debate on it”. (K4)

This example shows that the special position that Kihnu has, combined with island leaders’ networks, has given them a stage for their very local issues to be discussed in the national parliament. The power of social media as an alternative platform also meant that this issue was discussed in court. This shows, too, that spaces of negotiation not only exist in formal arenas of power but also in the virtual world. Social media has become an additional tool for negotiating place politics. This shows that (social) media does not consider scales and therefore for a well networked place like Kihnu can help in their possibilities. For Kihnu, this was, however, only possible due to the networks of some important people, without which the connection to important journalists and politicians, social media would still be useless for Kihnu.

Concluding remarks

The case of Kihnu shows that a relational politics of place is possible and is made possible when the right circumstances are in place. In terms of beneficial

circumstances, Kihnu has good access to important partners, the support of important actors (such as media, lobbyists, ministers etc.) and also the personal links of active leaders on the island. The examples in this chapter show how crucial these links are for its development options. The example of the Unesco application shows quite clearly how networks were crucial in getting culturally recognised and, conversely, how Unesco recognition has been shown to help in expanding networks and gaining a beneficial lobbying position. Having this beneficial position has also led to a selectiveness in the networks that Kihnu engages in. Due to their access to state officials, other networks become less necessary.

However, when also viewing the special position that Kihnu had in amalgamation negotiations and the possibility it had to get local issues discussed in parliament, these examples show how powerful actors in Kihnu are in leadership of the island. Actors on Kihnu are capable of using these relational strategies in a very convincing way.

As a final point it was shown that despite having a successful negotiation position, outward-directed images also have to be negotiated, as was seen in internal terms in the chapter on image making: the image of receiving support from the state while also needing to be handled with care and balancing this to keep up sympathy for that support.

Furthermore, an interesting finding is that the very relational strategy employed by leadership on the island is very much based on a territorial discourse. This is in itself an interesting paradox of which also Massey (2005) has spoken.

7.2 Järva-Jaani, the creative use of new connections

Järva-Jaani's leadership is focusing mostly on the so-called soft sector and on community building. These activities are more enacted at the local scale by local actors. Compared to the previous case of Kihnu, the actors in here are less able to take part in external networks. This chapter, therefore, shows that that the networkedness as seen in Kihnu cannot be taken for granted. Moreover, this chapter shows that networks connect some places – but exclude others.

Constraining relations

The municipal leader of Järva-Jaani mentioned that “we are on the leash” (J5), pointing to a more dependent picture. Even though they are trying to do as much as possible, the local administration is very much dependent on the national. This feeling of powerlessness is not only experienced by Järva-Jaani. At the regional level this invisibility is felt, too, and explicitly talked about:

“There is not much a local municipality can do. Can you imagine, in Estonia, the decisions are made in Tallinn, in the ministry of education, ministry of economics, and nobody wants to hear this head of [...] parish who is responsible for 590 people. Who are you?” (J1)

An example which shows quite clearly in which way Järva-Jaani's future is dependent on the national government is its attempt to keep its grammar school open. Whenever at national level the decision is made to change the education system, this could mean that they have to close down their secondary school. Even though a closure might be upcoming, the school principal does everything in his power to save it. This extra effort and motivation to keep the school is fuelled by the importance that is felt locally for having secondary education, as the school principal mentions:

“I think if we are closing our secondary school, so many people wouldn't come here, it is not such an attractive place. This is also my challenge, to keep this secondary school and also this positive image of Järva-Jaani.” (J5)

Next to the importance given to education, he is also highly motivated and willing to try whatever it takes to save the school: “And I think my ideas are maybe even too radical for ministry level. I just think because right now I am trying to save what I can save in the school, maybe it will work” (J8). The school principal and the municipal leader together are ambitious in trying to stay independent and to keep the school in Järva-Jaani, even though there is a plan as well to centralise the grammar school to a central place in the region. In this sense, the leadership which is very much based on keeping a grammar school for Järva-Jaani and staying independent thus challenges the government discourse of more centralisation of municipalities as well as more centralised grammar schools in every region.

Another example where the needs of Järva-Jaani are dependent on the national level is when talking about housing opportunities: “my biggest problem is accommodation [for locals]. I don't know exactly how to solve it.” (J5) More affordable housing is unavailable in particular for the younger generation that wants to live in Järva-Jaani. One of the youth workers mentioned that many of her friends are leaving Järva-Jaani because there is no affordable place to stay, even though they would otherwise want to remain in Järva-Jaani and commute to work in the city. Solutions were found, for example, by a worker who is now living in the hostel, and also a youth who chose to move in with their parents again after their studies. Even for companies that want a location to settle in the region space is unavailable:

“it was three days ago, some young man asked me if you have in municipality like 200 square metres, I want to start my own business here, something with wooden furniture, but I don't have any space. They want and are willing to do it here, but I don't have any possibilities, no space.” (J5)

When discussing the lack of rental accommodation, the municipality leader said that the national level civil servants would reply to him with: “What are you talking about? Houses are empty in rural areas, so, what is the problem?” (J5). This points to a lack of understanding for the needs of peripheral places in terms of housing opportunities. Peripheral places are normally associated with empty houses and not necessarily with a lack of housing. It shows that on the local and regional level, they feel powerless and misunderstood in changing and negotiating their

futures. In this sense, a feeling arises of being the subject of negotiation and not partners who can sit at the negotiating table. Thus, a feeling of powerlessness arises.

“Our voice has to be louder”

In this sense, for local leaders in this centrally-located, less understood part of Estonia, it seems as if there is not much power and space for negotiation. This has also led to the conclusion that “our voice has to be louder” (J4). The county governor mentioned that, while some regions have the possibilities to apply for special programmes, mentioning Kihnu explicitly, some sort of state support is also needed for the Järva region. Even one of the teachers from Kihnu signalled the difficult situation for the peripheral places that do not have such special treatment as it does:

“There are even some special programs here, there are some ways of making money. But there, they must compete on completely level terms with large settlements.” (K8)

This supposes that competition is even more unequal for these invisible places than it is for the more visible examples. As a response and an attempt to cast off this invisibility, Järva county has, together with the neighbouring county of Raplamaa, organised a cultural event to show to the ministry of culture the value Central Estonian culture, hoping also to get some sort of institutionalised support from the national government as Kihnu and other cultural areas also do. Up to now, this recognition has not been granted, but the initiative from these two counties signals the importance already given locally to becoming more visible.

Local actors tried to improve the accessibility of the region by improving infrastructure, thus trying to establish physical links between regions, unfortunately without success. The county governor mentioned in this regard the dual carriageway that was promised to them. This currently half-finished road should have been built all the way from Tallinn to the regional centre and would have the potential to make the region more accessible for commuters to Tallinn.

Administrative reform

A development that shows Järva-Jaani’s dependence on the national level are administrative reforms. These have been on the agenda for some time in Estonia, but at the time of research was in its most heightened period of negotiation. The process happened in a more or less compulsory way and the amalgamation did eventually take shape before the municipal elections in October 2017, leading to a new division of Estonian municipalities. (See figures 11 and 12)

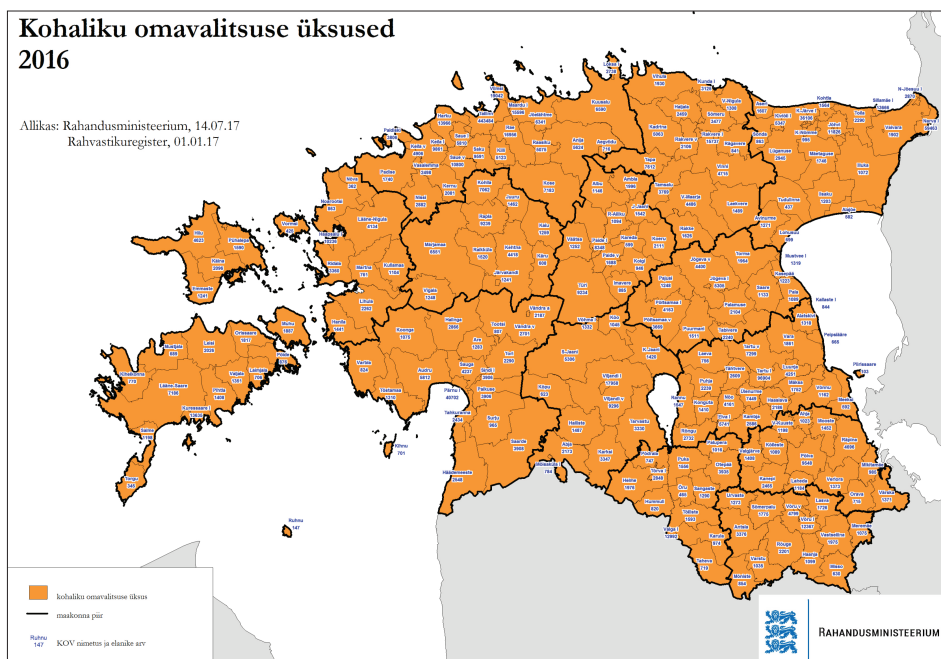


Figure 11: Administrative division Estonia before amalgamation
Source: Rahandusministeerium (2017)

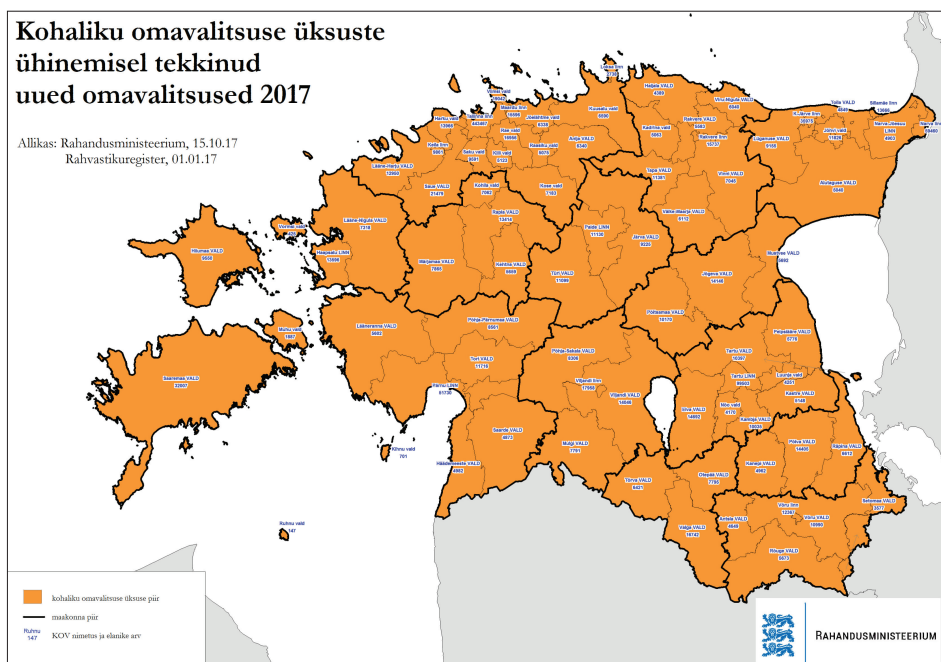


Figure 12: Administrative division after amalgamation
Source: Rahandusministeerium (2017)

With the argument of increased efficiency, municipalities had first been served with a voluntary invitation to amalgamate, which transformed into an obligatory instruction if the municipalities could not agree. Therefore, even though it was portrayed as voluntary, there was still pressure on the local governments to create their own preferred combinations before the national state did so.

For some of the people involved, this amalgamation was seen as a solution for creating a stronger region. The county governor explained that the local non-collaboration among the different local governments was a reason for him being in favour of it. He explained that the individual towns and villages “are weakening ourselves by competing with each other”. (J1) He continued by saying that in regions like these in particular that this has created an atmosphere in which municipalities compete for scarce resources. This happened, for example, when EU funds came to the region for the creation of industrial parks and each municipality was trying to have their own. Instead of competing amongst each other as individual villages and towns, he sees this collaboration as an opportunity to become more powerful. As he explains, merging all the municipalities into one in Järva county would mean that “the government will then have to listen to us and our concerns” (J1). In this way, a merging and combining of strengths is seen as a strategy for bringing more power to the region.

Despite his views, at the local level this amalgamation has also met some resistance. While the regional level would consist of larger and more powerful towns, Järva-Jaani, being one of the smaller towns is afraid that in case of a larger amalgamation they would lose power to the more powerful bigger cities and that money, investments and jobs would get concentrated in the bigger towns.

Another reason local actors in Järva-Jaani preferred independence is the importance of personal contact and connection between a place’s leadership and its inhabitants, as could be seen in Chapter 5. Amalgamation is, in this sense, not only a story of effective and efficient organisation, but is also very much about leaders, followers and legitimacy. Understanding place leadership as centrally about this legitimacy too makes the response of actors in places more understandable.

At the end in 2017, the amalgamation took shape, resulting in two new municipalities consisting of the larger cities of the county and their surrounding villages, and one municipality consisting of all the smaller, former municipalities. This has meant that the local system of legitimacy in Järva-Jaani, combining community leadership and official leadership, is somewhat changed. Similar to the situation in other amalgamated municipalities, administrative leadership since the end of 2017 has been upscaled to the level of Järva municipality. What these administrative reforms show is that place leadership – apart from a functional reorganisation – is also very much connected to questions of legitimacy. In this case, a (practically obligatory) choice to amalgamate raised questions over the legitimacy of leadership, and also creating another playing field with new actors in a regional constellation. Therefore, these changes in scale levels and boundaries have all sorts of consequences for its leadership, some which go beyond a simple defence of place.

Potential alternative networks

Moving beyond a scalar networking along the expected channels of negotiation between municipalities and regional and national level, negotiation via political party lines is, however, also possible despite the constraints described. In the exploratory fieldwork in the wider region of Järva county and in other places of Estonia, it was found that membership of the “right” political party (the party that is in coalition government) does help when asking for funding (E3, J1, J2 & J4). In the case of Järva-Jaani, however, the mayor explicitly chose not to be involved in party politics. He mentioned that because he is unaffiliated he can think and act independently and also stay out of politics where “everybody is fighting everyone” (J5). The school principal also chose not to be involved in such because he wants to stay independent. Additionally, the mayor also does not believe in politics as the solution for municipalities because he has seen that, even for mayors belonging to the “right” party, this has not helped their places. According to him, the problems of the central region of Estonia are not understood, even if pitched by politically connected local leaders. Even though it was, therefore, said to be of importance, it is not seen to be so by all local leaders here. This observation poses the question of how then can these places negotiate the development of their places when negotiation through the official channels, administrations and politics do not seem to help the peripheral places of Estonia advance.

Looking beyond the more obvious links that leaders in Järva-Jaani use, this also points to more unexpected channels that help in its development. As an example, the mayor purposively and frequently uses social media to create more publicity, as explained in Chapter 6. Therefore, this link with social media is seen as an extra resource for Järva-Jaani’s development. Furthermore, he writes a blog to keep his followers informed on what is going there and to be transparent in his daily activities. Relationships are built and valued with the more traditional media too. The national television channels as well the local newspaper, which is a good friend, help to make positive news for Järva-Jaani. Another way in which outside connections are useful is through European funding. Proposals for EU project cash are usually made by the local council and then completed with the help of the county government. There is also a LEADER group active in the region from which they were able to fund the disc golf grounds.

Overall, these other channels all provide options for Järva-Jaani which are creatively sought out when more traditional channels are unavailable. While these have not led to the setting up of a Järva county or Rapla county special programme, they do, in smaller ways, lead to positive development. An example of this creative mix is seen in the following example. At one point, a young girl came to the mayor’s office and asked if there could be a skate park. While it wasn’t possible at that point, eight years later, the mayor got to know that there was a cheap skate park for sale, via his personal connections. Then they launched a crowd funding campaign and succeeded with the help of volunteers to transport it to Järva-Jaani. The combination of the network, human resources and the novel ways of arranging funding shows newer ways of connecting and resulted in this positive outcome.

Concluding remarks

Overall Järva-Jaani can be seen as having limited possibilities in leading in outside relations and actors miss understanding for their problems from the national level. Even though efforts have been made to improve their position (even in a regional effort to improve the visibility of central Estonia), this has not helped them to be included in negotiations over their future, in ways that could be seen, for example, in Kihnu. Despite this, this town was, however, able to creatively use novel ways of connecting in order to create positive change, such as the use of social media and crowd funding. This relational leadership does not fall within the traditional scale-model of nation state, county and local government, but shows a new networked way of getting things done. While the leadership *of* Järva-Jaani, therefore, can be seen as operating in muted “traditional” power relations (and perhaps as an even further diminished power due to the amalgamation), this is compensated for by other channels of influence, such as crowd funding and social media. The worries that are expressed with respect to legitimacy of leadership in the context of administrative reform should, however, not be overlooked.

7.3 Pekela: difficulty in connecting

The connection between state and the region of Eastern Groningen has been one of a different kind. The state is still today in negotiation with Pekela to help them recover economically and deal with their above average unemployment figures. Even though many programmes have been set up, none of them have seemed to be sufficiently effective (Karel 2012).

Dependent relations

Particularly urgent in the previous years has been the trimming down of the social employment agencies. These agencies were the biggest employers in the region, and closing them down would mean a financial catastrophe for the involved municipalities. In response to this, the national government has created a commission and signed an agreement with the province of Groningen and the involved municipalities. Referred to the Akkoord van Westerlee (De commissie Ruim baan voor Oost-Groningen 2015) and intended to cushion the effects of unemployment resulting from this trimming down of the social employment agencies, in 2016 regional directors were appointed to check on its progress. They concluded in their report (Middel and Kremer 2016) that, due to too institutional crowdedness, a lack of leadership, coordination and collaboration with businesses in the region, the Westerlee agreement had not been successful. In the end, a plan was presented in which the two social employment agencies merged into one, which happened in 2017.

As the abovementioned developments show, relations are set up between national and regional/local level officials, but not at all in the same way as could be seen in Kihnu. In the case of Pekela and the wider region of Eastern Groningen,

relations between the national and local are more connected to giving help to a region with high unemployment, while in Kihnu, help was given to secure the maintenance of cultural heritage. In both regions, however, help from the state was crucial. It is a difficult situation that cannot be dealt with locally. As the mayor of Pekela mentioned when discussing unemployment issues, “I cannot do it alone, I need the higher [-ranking] government for that” (P10).

Administrative reform

In some parts of the Netherlands, amalgamations are also on the agenda. In Pekela, this means that a first attempt to amalgamate with its neighbouring municipalities has begun. Even though after negotiations Pekela council voted in favour of amalgamation, the municipality of Veendam voted against, and in February 2017 amalgamation was taken off the agenda for now. In the years following, other options have been tried (including an merger between only Veendam and Pekela), but these have up to now not led to a voluntary solution. Internally, in Pekela, this has led to heated debates. For the parties voting in favour of the amalgamation, the economic perspectives dominated. Furthermore, consultants were hired who also advised amalgamating so as to be able to face more efficiently the problems with which these municipalities are struggling. In the end, only the socialist party voted against the amalgamation. For them, the main argument was that it is not necessary to amalgamate, and with particular regard to their services, they prefer to stay autonomous. One of the socialist party members said that the close connection the local government has to the inhabitants is an important factor. Further, the local mayor mentioned the challenge of keeping good and close relations between government and people, especially when the local government is scaled up:

“How can I make sure that in this really big municipality that the government is not at a distance, but that it is yours and mine, and that it can be held accountable?” (P10)

This reaction resembles the reaction seen in Järva-Jaani in which the arguments in favour of amalgamation for efficiency purposes are opposed to arguments of legitimacy.

Difficult collaboration in the region

Like in Järva-Jaani, there is a history of non-collaboration in the region surrounding Pekela, in which every municipality is said to claim its own “theatre, own village centre, own swimming pool” (P4). A former Pekela councillor mentioned that it has always been difficult to work together in the region, even while the problems facing the region were very “regional” and not bounded to the individual municipalities. One of the main reasons for the failure of the Westerlee agreement was precisely this non-collaboration among the different municipalities.

A good relationship exists with the province. In projects where Pekela is working in more participatory terms with its citizens, the province is willing to

financially support them. On some fronts, the collaboration between the civil servants in the region is also quite well developed. The more executive organisation of the two municipalities of Veendam and Pekela have already joined, which was a more functional merger. On other themes too, for example in the field of maintaining wellbeing in the municipalities, they have common meetings and funding, organised regionally.

Despite the difficult relationships among the municipalities, regional efforts to combat the problems at the regional level are also sought. On 23 March 2016, in the old straw board factory that made Pekela one of the most industrial places in the Netherlands in the twentieth century, a conference was held on starting a regional cooperative in the area. According to one of the leading figures (the person who has his lector instalment on this same day and insisted on this historical location), the region has the potential to shake off its negative image and make itself successful once again. This meeting was, therefore, intended to motivate entrepreneurs, educational institutes and businesses to work together, leading to a new future for the region of North-East Groningen. This should work as a vehicle for keeping young people in the region and move back after higher education. The chairman of the local entrepreneurs' association is one of the initiators and sees this as an opportunity to bring back young people who now leave the region in large numbers for the bigger cities: "The group that is here, and who are sad to find their children without a future here, they are going to other places. Yes, and then you tear this whole area apart" (P4).

New ideas brought up include the building of a "Hemp Republic" in Pekela, which builds on the already existent hemp industry; other ideas include allowing students to be in the region when carrying out research by building working units for them. The initiative is quite ambitious and was a work-in-progress at the time of field work. On 20 December 2018, however, the regional cooperative of South- and East-Groningen was officially established.

In Pekela, the new energy in creating this regional cooperative is not received entirely positively. While the intention is to come closer to the industrial node it once was, this leadership is met with some scepticism. While some "miss a bit the inviting gesture" (P6) towards the local people, being mainly an initiative coming from the entrepreneurs in Pekela, others question the overall idea:

"You must realise that, the same hemp industry which is collaboration with this cooperative has already bought 3000 hectares in Romania and built a factory in Poland, because of labour costs." (P10)

This example shows the inherent relational nature of these industries, and the expectation by this entrepreneur that that the region around Pekela would probably not profit from this type of development because of more favourable conditions in Romania and Poland. Even though he does see potential for reinforcing industries already there, he is more sceptical of new things. In terms of solving unemployment, he also has some doubts: "Because if this factory might at all come here, then an engineer with a higher education is much more interesting

than a worker, because this engineer has to work with all the robots” (P10). The mayor points to the mismatch in supply and demand. Since many people are not theoretically educated, but have enjoyed a more practical education, it is mainly the jobs requiring a theoretical education that are envisaged. Therefore, according to the mayor, the cooperative will most likely not solve Pekela’s unemployment issues. He is thus in line with socialist party thinking which questions how this might benefit all residents and how legitimate the initiative is:

“Of course you gain a lot from visionaries and a future and that’s where we are heading, but if you walk so far ahead and you look back and the people are not anymore behind you.” (P3)

Furthermore, while it is a struggle to survive for a lot of Pekela people, the open-ended relational outward attitude also is seen as a luxury activity which seems far away from their daily “local” problems. As one of the socialist party members also mentioned, “the more difficulty you have to keep it together, the less time and energy you have to change your own community, or to worry about image making for our village” (P3).

Potential alternative relations

Apart from the official lines from local to regional and national government, political party lines are also used. In case of the unemployment issues, local political parties do try to lobby via their national political party colleagues and provincial politicians. The mayor also mentioned that he tries to put population decline on the agenda within his own political party. Other contacts with wider networks have also been important for Pekela. For example, as was seen in the previous chapter, the making of the film *Pekels Goud* was only possible because a camera operator from the region was willing to help out for a reduced fee. Without his willingness to participate at this rate, a film of this quality could not have been made.

Relations with the media are mixed in Pekela. While the local government tells of an open attitude to the media, always willing to talk, the local inhabitants’ organisation has decided to no longer talk to the media after some negative experiences. The local and regional media are also eager to put forward positive news as much as possible. For example, activities from SIEPCO (the industrial heritage NGO), are always widely reported on in the local press. This is also made easier since one of the reporters on this regional newspaper is also a volunteer there.

Concluding remarks

Pekela can be seen as an example of how – in a context in which regional, national and international relations and connections are considered to be of increasing importance – this same networked world also excludes places. Once being one of the industrial powerhouses of Europe, Pekela is now coping with one of the highest unemployment figures of the Netherlands, due to its dependence on this declining industry. This, first of all, again emphasises the non-static nature of

peripherality: being once a central place does not mean it will remain so. Despite this, it also means that being in the peripheral position now can also change. Efforts to change this situation have been made in the meantime, such as the attempt to enhance collaboration via the regional cooperative. Even though these efforts have not been received enthusiastically, it shows an example of how, in a relational way, localities work together in finding new solutions for declining regions.

Connected to the declining industry in Pekela and the consequential socio-economic problems is also the involvement of higher-level governments. While in Kihnu this relationship was more of mutual negotiation, in the case of Pekela the state has tried to help out this region in difficulties. Even though cross-scalar relations are present, it is of a different order than the lobby relations evident in Kihnu.

Another element that came up in field work was the difficulty in comparing perspectives. While, on the one hand, leadership of the municipality was focusing on dealing with the structural difficulties of inhabitants living in poverty, on the other hand, a regional cooperative of energetic entrepreneurs is focusing regional aspirations and networking. This leads to a more critical attitude towards amalgamation and plans for a regional cooperative. People tend to logically deal with their own localised unemployment problems first, and only then perhaps can they can start to think about regional dreams and visions.

7.4 Schoondijke, planned peripheralisation

The case of Schoondijke clearly shows the impact of Dutch planning on local development. It has an interesting history in that between 1583 and 1585 the old village of Schoondijke was destroyed in severe flooding. Schoondijke was rebuilt in 1652 at a strategic regional crossroads. Later on this was made into one of the first roundabouts in the Netherlands (Stockman 2017).

Once planned as an important village for agricultural education, throughout the years it has developed into a place struggling to keep its primary schools open. In the time when Schoondijke was still an agricultural education centre, these agricultural schools attracted many teachers and students either for permanent employment or short-term education. While the teachers became inhabitants, the short-term students were also valuable clients for the baker, the grocery store and other shops. Interestingly, one of the respondents also mentioned that these teachers were most often also active in village life, organising festivities and taking up volunteer positions. Therefore, the decision taken at a higher level to make Schoondijke an education centre of national importance resulted in attracting human resources which are conditional for leadership at local level.

Scaled networks

Due to Schoondijke's position as a village, falling under the administrative jurisdiction of the municipality of Sluis, most of the official relations to the regional

or national level are maintained by the municipality. It depends on the issue as to whether things the competence for arranging and managing those affairs lies at the village level (Schoondijke), the municipality level (*gemeente Sluis*) or at the regional or provincial level. Therefore, in the case of Schoondijke, it can be seen how politics and decision making are somewhat decoupled from the local politics of living together there. Because of the increased distance between local village and the formal local government, on the village scale there is not much room for negotiation. Looking at issues that in the other case studies were important in the development of the places (secondary education, amalgamation etc.), these negotiations are performed here at the municipal level, and sometimes even at the regional or provincial level. In this sense, scale matters a great deal in understanding what type of leadership can be enacted at the local level.

In the municipality of Sluis, practices can be identified that can be understood in a relational approach. There is, for example, a collaboration between entrepreneurs, social care organisations, housing cooperatives and employment agencies that together try to attract new inhabitants to the region. For the local entrepreneurs this is crucial, because the bigger companies have difficulties in finding new employees who want to live there. Furthermore, they visit the emigration fairs showing how close-by a seemingly foreign region can be. There is also a project, connected to the region, directed in particular towards the younger generations, trying to keep hold of the young people who migrate away in order for them to eventually come back and live in their native areas.

As a region, Zeeuws-Vlaanderen and the province of Zeeland as a whole are also lobbying for more opportunities. An advisory council for the municipality of Sluis mentioned that, while the distance between the whole of Zeeuws-Vlaanderen and the rest of the Netherlands, is physically not that great, mentally this distance is much larger. Like in Pekela, this region has a relationship with the national level, but more one of dependence than of opportunity and negotiation. The advisory council mentioned, in this regard, the painful “begging” towards The Hague for help. This happens, for example, in collaboration with other shrinking regions. The latest activity of this group was to reinstitute a measure positive for the shrinking regions, but was made undone by the bigger cities. This shows the negotiations on a national level that exceed the scale level of Schoondijke.

Furthermore, the municipality of Sluis is, in this sense, connected via a membership of P10 (a collaboration between the largest rural municipalities in the Netherlands); the mayor of Sluis was also member of the regional committee. This membership provided the municipality with a network in which the mayor could discuss themes such as maintaining amenities in larger rural municipalities with those dealing with similar issues (S1). Conversely, these connections have not led to any close collaborations between municipalities (S4).

Negotiation at the local level

While Schoondijke has formulated a village mission statement to “work and live in a liveable Schoondijke”, the village council gives itself the aim of focusing on

living, recreation, schools, shops, cafés and social cohesion. While in the chapter in Chapter 5 it was shown that a lot has been practiced in terms of social cohesion already, in other areas such as housing and infrastructure there is some negotiation with the higher-level governments.

An example of a negotiation between Schoondijke and higher level authorities was it received a bypass. In 2013 it was decided at the national level that it should be build. The national executive agency responsible for infrastructure (*Rijkswaterstaat*) explained in 2011 that this new road would be an improvement, because it would “enhance the safety, the traffic flow and the liveability of the users of the road and the residents”. While in the first instance this seems to fit well with the vision that the current village council also holds, this new bypass was, however, not supported by all inhabitants. The local shopkeepers’ association was not happy with the proposals as it would mean decreased footfall for them. While previously tourists driving up to the coast would inevitably pass through Schoondijke and potentially stop to shop, they would now be redirected to this bypass and thus drive past the village. The local shopkeepers then thought of an alternative option in which heavy traffic would be re-directed, but the tourist traffic could still pass through Schoondijke. They circulated a questionnaire among the inhabitants of Schoondijke asking their opinions and, according to one of the local entrepreneurs, 72% of the respondents were in favour of the alternative option. In the end the alternative option was labelled as impossible as it still exceeded the permitted noise levels for traffic. One of the local shopkeepers mentioned that he could really tell that the number of customers went down since the bypass was constructed. One of the volunteers also mentioned the effect it has on the local businesses:

“the only thing we had in tourism now disappeared due to the ring road. Every tourist when he came home from a day trip, the beach goers, they travelled through Schoondijke. The snackbar really had a golden age. Because you have the market, a good space for parking. Everyone knew, at the end of the village square there is the kiosk, and it was loaded with people. In the summertime it was really full. You could not say then, let’s go for some French fries, no, then you could be gone for 45 minutes. Because you could just not enter. But that is gone now.” (S6)

Other respondents, however, also see the positive aspects of no longer having the heavy traffic; further this fits well with the plans for a renewed village square and also gives opportunities for shops and cafes.

This example shows that that future plans of this village Schoondijke do not always align with the plans of higher-level government and that local leadership has reacted to these developments. Even though the final decision was made at the national level to build the bypass (the noise disturbance and road safety was prioritised over the local concerns), the local leadership took the case to court, which resulted in a commitment by the minister that “the municipality of Sluis will take the interests of local shopkeepers into account”. This example has shown the negotiation by local leadership in Schoondijke, which did not lead to a solution with which all inhabitants were happy.

Another example that shows the cross-purposes of local and extra-local plans is the so-called “*bundelingsbeleid*” (“bundling policy”). This spatial planning concept developed at the national level has been adopted in the regional plans of the province of Zeeland since 1997 and since then has categorised the different villages hierarchically: some villages are growth cores with others as non-growing cores. In 2006, the province further specified this policy, labelling villages as carrying statues of “core”, “living cores with urban development zone”, “living core in the national landscape” and (just) “living core”. For the region of Zeeuws-Vlaanderen, this means that 50% of new houses could be built around Terneuzen, 20% in the bigger so-called carrying cores of Oostburg and Hulst, and 30% in the remaining villages. (SCOOP 2009; Provincie Zeeland 2004). The policy stated, however, that regions themselves can make agreements on how many houses can be built in certain areas. The latest Spatial Plans, however, gave again some room for building new houses in the smaller villages: “it remains necessary to facilitate housing in the villages” (Provincie Zeeland 2018, 96). Yet, here again, the regional agreements (in this case on the scale of Zeeuws-Vlaanderen) provide the basis for this.

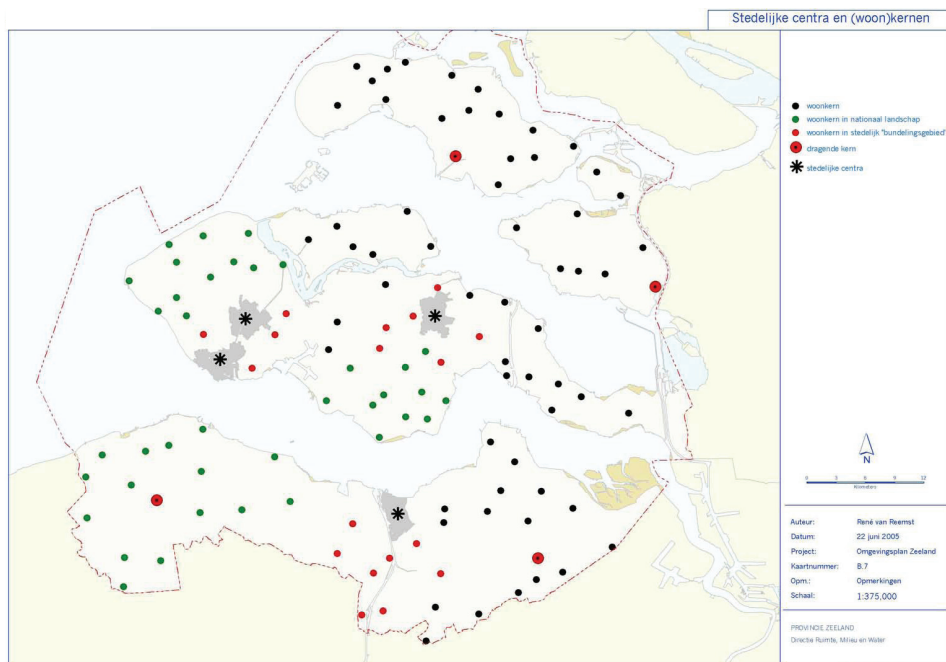


Figure 13: Urban centres and (living) cores of Zeeland
Source: Provincie Zeeland (2006, 146)

For Schoondijke, being labelled as “just” a living core meant that there was only a limited amount of planned new housing possible. The neighbouring village of Ijzendijke was designated as a growing core and thus also got around 100 newly built houses, which is assumed to have stimulated the inflow of people. While looking at the figures from the past year, Schoondijke is actually growing in terms of population with a moderate 1.8% growth.

This topic of allowing new houses to be built, has been current in Schoondijke for quite a while. When this topic came up in the village council meeting, one of the local actors said, “Schoondijke doesn’t perform that badly without new building plots” (S3), the responsible councillors of the municipality answered that it is not the responsibility of the municipality, but of the province. In the latest environmental vision, the province once again reemphasised the importance of cities as the “socio-economic engines of the province” (Provincie Zeeland 2012, 49), but was less concrete housing figures possible in certain regions. Even though the principle of bundling is maintained, this new vision has more room for negotiation between regional stakeholders.

These two examples show that for a village like Schoondijke being a peripheral place with no administrative authority means less room for negotiation is available. Like in Järva-Jaani, where new housing opportunities were also not an issue recognised as relevant for peripheral areas, this is also witnessed in a more institutionalised way in the Netherlands. While for the bypass there was an attempt at voicing the concerns of the community, for the case of planning policy, being officially labelled as a non-growth core, in some ways *the periphery of the periphery*, does not give room for negotiation at the local level. In this sense, a certain peripheralisation can be seen as government imposed. This “planned peripheralisation” is perhaps a different take on peripheralisation as a process being somewhere out there, over which there is no control, but can be linked to institutionalised policy. The new spatial planning vision, the *Omgevingsvisie*, that was developed in 2018 (Provincie Zeeland 2018), could however lead to some possibilities for negotiation. However it remains to be seen whether Schoondijke will be able to profit from this, since the agreement should be made regionally with all the three municipalities of Zeeuws-Vlaanderen (Gemeenten Hulst, Sluis en Terneuzen 2014).

7.4.3 Cross border relations

When looking at the relations emanating from Schoondijke, an important region lies across the border: “Belgium is literally in our backyard” (S1). This closeness has positive effects for the inhabitants of Zeeuws-Vlaanderen in terms cultural activities available; instead of being dependent on the local amenities in Zeeuws-Vlaanderen alone, they have a wide range of opportunities for cultural, educational activities, among others, across the frontier. While people, workers and companies operate more and more across the border, on the other hand however, institutionally there is still a quite rigid border. This is evident, for example, in the healthcare system. Since there are two large hospitals right across the border

in Belgium, they also attract patients from the Netherlands, which makes the hospitals in Zeeuws-Vlaanderen even less profitable than they already were. Further, the high schools struggle already with a low number of pupils, but then also see these decreasing because of students going to Belgium for education.

A concrete example of where the openness of the border to Belgium contrasts with the local practice in Schoondijke is immigration by Belgians, either in second homes or as permanent residents. Because the houses in Schoondijke and other villages near the border are relatively cheap, Belgians move into them. In the villages closer to the coast these are mostly second homes, which means that outside the summer season they often lie empty. In villages like Schoondijke that are a bit farther from the coast, it is less common to have summer tourism. However, there has been an increase in Belgian permanent residents witnessed also in Schoondijke itself, while most of their social life remains in Belgium, where they work and their children go to school. This creates a group “less involved with the village” (S6). Furthermore, in light of the tight housing market in Schoondijke, this leads to more pressure on it.

These border issues show how relations and openness are, on the one hand, empowering people in places. For tourism entrepreneurs this is of course beneficial, and for other people this leads to a decline in locally available healthcare and education. The more mobile students and patients are able to travel to the resource-rich Belgian hospitals and schools, while the less mobile have to worry whether their school can be kept open. This also shows that borders do still play a role in local development, and while, for some, these borders might create opportunities, for others the borders leave them only further behind. While leadership often focuses on relational opportunities, this element of boundedness also clearly shows in which ways territorial boundaries still limit the supposed opportunities resulting from a place leadership focusing on connectivities. Moreover, the extent to which actors can or cannot adopt a more connected strategy depends on resources such as mobility and networks which are not evenly distributed.

Potential alternative relations

In terms of media relations, the respondents were quite hesitant. Even though the regional broadcaster (Omroep Zeeland) sometimes comes by to film the baker, for example, the actors in Schoondijke do not purposively try to attract media attention. The chairman of the village council mentioned that “if you bring in the media, then you should be careful, I sometimes say, because they twist everything you say” (S3).

At the local level, there is also some collaboration with neighbouring villages. Tourism entrepreneurs, for example, are trying to collaborate with each other for tourism purposes. Since one of these entrepreneurs is also active in village social life as a volunteer, these networks also help to collaborate within this sphere. More and more collaboration is initiated with the village councils, with the municipality also supporting collaboration between the villages. For example, the municipality did not have enough money to keep maintain and keep open all the football fields

in all the villages, but since they now are working together with volunteers to do the maintenance, it is possible to keep them open.

Concluding remarks

In the case of Schoondijke, the importance of scales can first of all be witnessed. With an upscaling of many functions to the municipal and regional level, at the village level challenges mostly revolve around beautifying the village centre or organising local activities. This takes away responsibilities and room for negotiation from the directly involved actors and places it with more distant governments.

However, the institutional structure also limits the smaller scale developments that do spring up at the local level, for example, through the bundling policy and the decision to bypass the village. Overall, it seems that the politics of connectivity are decoupled from the politics of propinquity. The negotiations over who gets to build a house in the neighbourhood are not made at the local level, but at a higher regional level. Local leadership therefore has very little influence on these politics of connectivity.

Apart from administrative boundaries between municipalities, which have effects on all the cases studied, Schoondijke also showed in which way national borders affect peripheral places. While the borders create opportunities for actors with certain resources, for others, these borders limit their opportunities. Especially in light of the fact that many peripheral places in the Netherlands are located at borders, the extent to which leadership at borders can profit from this position depends on many factors and deserves more attention.

All in all, Schoondijke seems to have become more of a periphery within a periphery, where the choices that are being made by the municipality of Sluis do not necessarily benefit the village. Even though every village council receives some budget allocation from the municipality for smaller scale developments, this also centres more on local community issues and has less to do with development in the region or so-called leadership *of* place. In the form of planned peripheralisation, local leadership seems to have its hands tied when it concerns the politics of this place and possible futures for the village. It seems that leadership *of* place in the case of Schoondijke is (involuntarily) outsourced to the municipal level.

7.5 Discussion and conclusion on leadership *of* place

Networks enable and constrain

While, in the literature, networks, relations and connectivities are often emphasised as resources for local leadership, this chapter has also shown the other side of the coin, i.e. that networks exclude as well. In Kihnu the right networks and contacts have given the local leadership power to negotiate and provided them with room for exceptions. Looking at the three other cases, however, the access to useful

networks is not given and cannot be easily created. This gives the leadership in these lesser-connected places fewer opportunities to develop in terms of lobbying or to be helped when challenges arise.

This also connects to the relational territorial debate. Even though networkedness is something that actors in places strive for, reaching outwards for connections is not always an option. In these cases, it seems that the geographical territoriality of places is more decisive in contexts where networks of possibility remain out of reach. In this sense, more than only viewing territorial and relational readings of place as theoretical exercises, in the observations from the cases, it can be concluded that it is not a simple choice of whether to have a networked or more territorially or administratively bounded strategy. This is much more structurally defined because the ability to move beyond the scalar restrictions is not equal for all places and cannot be easily managed. While Kihnu could become a networked hub and exercise power in their networks, for other places this option is not on the table. This connects to Herschell's (2010) observation that it is not easy to change the networkedness of certain places.

Another issue that came up when analysing these diverse relational strategies is the importance of alternative networks, such as (social) media. While for some places, institutional networks gave them very limited access to negotiate (Järva-Jaani) or even demotivated local ambitions to attract new residents (Schoondijke), in some cases media and (increasingly social media) can be seen as an emancipating tool to gain access to important arenas. Kihnu's ability to discuss local environmental issues in the national parliament, but also the more modest organisation of Järva-Jaani's skate park and film festival, can be seen as leadership which is making use of the "new" possibilities of media and social media and which thus does not need many pre-established connections. Social media can, therefore, act as an emancipating tool, even for places which have been less connected institutionally or in terms of networks. Interestingly, however, social media seemed to have been used more in the Estonian cases than the Dutch. Explanations for this could lie in the more institutionalised and bureaucratic ways of leadership of place in the Netherlands and the more informal style of influence in Estonia, but this is more a topic for further research.

Structures remain important: 'Planned' peripheralisation

Furthermore, this excluding mechanism is not necessarily a process that is out there, but is also in some ways institutionalised in planning policy. The case of Schoondijke showed that the state seems to steer the "natural" process of peripheralisation by choosing on a regional level which places are invested in and, therefore, on the other hand, also which places are left on their own. In this sense, the future of the village of Schoondijke is to a large extent confined to the parameters of the higher-level governments. This also connects to the article by Haartsen and Venhorst (2010) who talk about the urge in Dutch planning culture to plan and guide everything that might have consequences for space.

Furthermore, being included in the right networks can also provide good opportunities for place leadership. This is shown clearly in the processes of

administrative reform. While all the cases have been involved in these processes, it was only possible for Kihnu to avoid forced amalgamation. Even though their island position was also a crucial factor, the fact that they could directly negotiate with the minister helped them in remaining an independent island municipality.

Legitimacy is essential to place leadership

This topic of amalgamation also points to an issue discussed in previous chapters, that is, the importance given locally to legitimacy. While leadership is, in all the cases, directed at the place level, town, village or municipality, this link between experienced place and the administrative leadership of this place can become distorted in amalgamation procedures and thus the politics of propinquity are decoupled from the politics of connectivity. While pro-amalgamation rhetoric is focused often at efficiency and outcome orientation, in all the cases the choice of whether or not amalgamate had everything to do with questions of legitimacy for the people involved. Pekela, like Järva-Jaani, showed fears of a growing distance between the level where decisions are made and the level where the consequences of these decisions are felt. This again reemphasises the different discourses on how places could be led: in a functionalistic way, towards a more effective government, with a higher focus on processes of legitimacy or could both discourses be emphasised simultaneously?

Legitimacy is also a point when looking at the leadership *of* place more generally. The people who have the connections to the outside world are not necessarily the officially elected and thus legitimate leaders. In this sense, there is a danger of losing connection between the leadership in and of a certain place. When these people become the central actors in development based on outside relations, their power increases, especially if development of the place is increasingly dependent on these outside relations. When moving from a scalar view with legitimisation procedures, towards a more networked leadership, which gives power to people with the right networks, legitimacy by institutional rules gets replaced by networks. Networks that are not always legitimate and in general trend more towards the marketisation of society, and this relationship between the place and its leadership is therefore important to cherish in order not to fall into the danger of placeless leadership (Hambleton 2015a).

Networks as luxury

Apart from the legitimacy question, networking within places combined with networking outside the places (Gray and Sinclair 2005) are often both executed by the same actors. Due to a general scarcity of human resources for leadership roles and limited budgets from local municipalities to hire people to do these jobs, leadership is demanding a high toll from certain actors. The responsibility of outward networking and internal legitimation is also something that takes a great deal of time and, therefore, a strict assessment of the leaders for their lack of negotiation and alignment with all stakeholders would not be fair. Often these leaders are volunteering for a better environment to live in and, therefore, their limited capacity and resources should also be positively acknowledged.

As a final issue, the leadership *of* places is also not always seen as a priority for these peripheral places. Being in a context with structural disadvantages, leaders often chose to focus much more on the most important things for them at that moment before they could begin to think about how networks could be better utilised for the future development of the region. Certain futuristic vision and plans, such as in Pekela, are also perceived as inappropriate when the basic needs of people are still not taken care of. An acknowledgement of these different needs of different people helps to understand certain priorities in leadership.

8. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this study was “to develop a critical approach and understanding of place leadership in peripheral places in Estonia and the Netherlands”. This thesis has done so by showing how leadership processes are taking shape in four very different peripheral places. By using an analytical framework, inspired by the relational place literature, it has focused on constructedness, multiplicity and relationality of places as essential elements in providing this critical understanding of place leadership. Each of these elements will be highlighted in the following sections of this concluding chapter. I will start by answering the research questions (8.1) in these different cases then I will reflect on leadership in the context of its promise for regional development in a context of peripheralisation. This chapter closes with a section on theoretical and policy implications (8.3 and 8.4) and closes with a paragraph on the limitations of the study and suggestions for further research

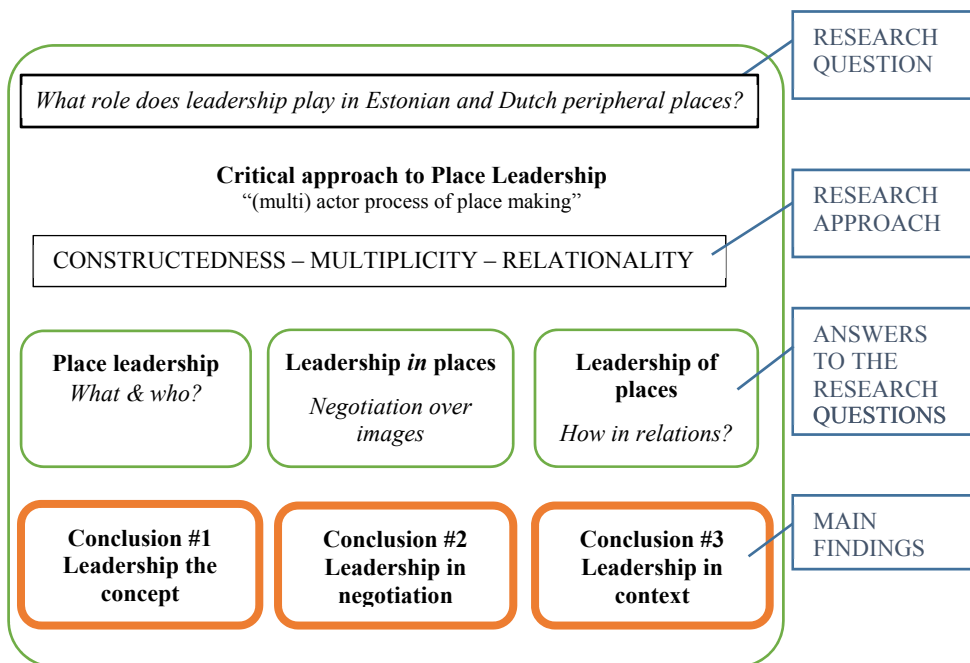


Figure 14: Overview of the thesis: from research questions to conclusions
Illustration by author

8.1 Answers to the Research Questions

Leadership practices and leading actors

The first chapter showed that, beyond the similarities in the studied cases, differences could also be identified. Differences are connected to the availability of human resources, but also on a deeper level with the understanding of leadership. Therefore, this chapter will first elaborate on the more general similarities and differences and then look into the discourse behind leadership.

Diverse practices and diverse actors

In all four cases, leadership practices were identified focusing on finding solutions for developments that are common for peripheralising places. Actors are finding solutions for decreasing population numbers, providing sufficient amenities and, also, many of them were in processes of amalgamation (or had been very recently). It shows the similar challenges these peripheral places face in different regions and countries. Beyond the similarities, differences were found also in their leadership practices. The same diversity in understandings of leadership practice was also found when identifying the actors involved in these processes of leadership. By using an open approach and understanding leadership as a “multi-actor process of place-making” (Mabey and Freeman 2010, 509), a range of different actors were seen as involved in leadership processes. These actors had very diverse backgrounds in every case, from educational leaders to politicians and from museum directors to supporters from outside the region. While the multi-actorness of leadership is often already recognised, this research has also opened up further assumptions on what leadership is or may not be.

Important for all cases: resources and scale

The first and most basic of the findings points to the importance of availability of human resources or so-called slack resources (Beer and Clower 2013; Sotarauta and Beer 2017). While it seems almost too banal to mention, this remains a basic precondition for leadership. Particularly in peripheral places where one of the most important challenges is the outmigration of (often younger) people to the larger cities, the availability of human resources is critical. Depending on the background of the leadership, the availability of resources available for leading actors, also differed. It is therefore important to reflect on these very diverse sources of leadership, as Hambleton (2015) also mentioned. While some of the leaders in the cases were paid for their jobs in service of the place, most of the local leaders are working voluntarily and devote their free time to these practices. The sacrifices taken by leaders in terms of time spent and resources, combined with the dependence of the continuation of these practices on some key actors, makes development in these places quite vulnerable and dependant on individuals. This dependence is particularly relevant for peripheral places in which human resources are scarce anyway. In a similar vein, the scale level that is focused on can also seriously influence (positively or negatively) the opportunities that arise

for local leadership. Returning to the discussion concerning the importance of either relationality or territoriality, territorial scales continue to matter for the type of leadership that can be expected from places (Ayres 2014). These are contextual factors that need to be considered when comparing place leadership with different scale levels in different countries.

Diverse discourse on leadership

The different conceptualisations of leaders and leadership existed alongside each other in field work as well in the literature. In this research, the starting point was a more open-ended processual exploration into the practices and the people who are shaping their places. Leadership was defined here as a “multi-actor process of place-making” (Mabey and Freeman 2010, 509). This more open-ended approach allowed for local understandings to be recognised as leadership as well, moving to a more interpretive reading (Alvesson and Spicer 2012). This research thus moved beyond the oft-used model-like functionalistic account of leadership, and a more processual understanding of leadership could be identified. In this sense, not only leadership leading to economic impacts such as successful GDP growth projects or regeneration after crisis stories could be labelled as such, but also the building of a local skate park or the organising of a dinner with the village can all be seen as leadership practices. The key distinguishing factor in deciding whether to frame processes as leadership or not was in the interpretation of these practices as leadership by the local actors.

The local conceptualisations of leadership thus also reflect the different quadrants of the table by Mabey and Freeman (2010) focusing on the different discourses of place leadership. While, in some places, a functionalistic outcome-oriented understanding of leadership prevailed, in which outcomes mattered most for the local understanding of leadership, in others, the focus was more on the processual understanding of who is legitimate as a leader. More critical understandings were found also in the fieldwork when questions were asked about exclusionary leadership. Looking at the cases, all the four quadrants are filled with key words that came out of the cases. This shows that, depending on the activities that are focused on, place leadership could be understood differently.

Table 11: Applying different approaches to leadership cases

	Duality	Dualism
Dissensus	Dialogic <i>Lack of leadership in Pekela</i>	Critical <i>Exclusionary leadership in Kihnu</i>
Consensus	Constructivist <i>Consensus leadership in Järva-Jaani</i> <i>Community building in Schoondijke</i>	Functionalist <i>Outcome oriented leadership in Kihnu</i>

Illustration by author, after Mabey and Freeman (2010)

It must be said however that while the typology shows the diverse ways of leading, the picture in the field work was not as clear cut as it may seem. Mostly within places, different foci of leadership existed alongside one another, of which some became apparent during the research. This table is, therefore, not a complete overview of how leadership was seen in the different places, but merely provides a starting point for acknowledging diversity in (local) understandings of leadership.

Apart from the different understandings among the cases, some findings were also similar in all cases. Negotiation, dealing with dissensus, and legitimacy were seen as integral parts of place leadership processes. While leadership seemed consensual and rather harmonious at first glance in some cases, taking a second look showed how many leadership processes deal with different forms of negotiation and dissensus.

This corresponds with a shift in literature from a focus on outcome mainly towards attention for more processual understandings. Authors such as Sotarauta (2005) see leadership as a processual concept in which there is also room for the engagement of communities (Collinge and Gibney 2010a; Sotarauta and Beer 2017) and a deeper understanding of leadership for whose interest (Sotarauta et al. 2017). In this, the results connect to Grint (2005):

“any simple notion of assessing leadership by its alleged “results” is doomed to fail: the results of leadership are as contested as the definitions, and we would be better served by considering leadership as a subjunctive verb – as something that may, or may not, have results, rather than something that definitely does or does not.” (2005, 65)

In community leadership literature there is also more attention on this issue. Legitimacy is seen in this strand of literature as evolving around both acceptable processes and the delivery of outcomes (Connelly 2011; Connelly et al. 2006). In this sense, a focus on legitimacy could well involve an outcome oriented leadership too. In this reading therefore legitimacy, in whichever understanding, can be seen as central to place leadership.

Hambleton (2015) connects different legitimacy understandings to the different backgrounds of leadership, calling them “realms of place-based leadership” (Hambleton 2015, 171). While political leadership is legitimised through elections, public leadership through appointment and business leadership might find their legitimacy through their output indicators, these different origins of leadership all serve different audiences. All have a different answer to the question of leadership for whom and, therefore, are important when talking about leadership of place. The point here is to not value one form of legitimisation above the others, but merely to point out that these different understandings of leadership and its legitimisations exist. They exist between places but also within places and, therefore, to truly understand leadership of place, legitimacy should have a central role in leadership studies.

Legitimacy, in this sense, should not be equalled with inclusion. Seemingly less participatory leadership can also still be seen as legitimised. Moreover, the point is to show that legitimacy matters for leaders and followers, and that seeing

leadership as only inclusive and participatory is already a normative and even ideological interpretation of this legitimacy (Kelly 2014). Self-chosen exclusion, as seen in Kihnu and also described by Shortall (2008), is therefore, also a social interaction which should be seen as an essential part of leadership.

In sum, departing from a model-like functionalistic view of leadership, this research has shown that, by answering the question as to what leadership is and by whom it is enacted, deeper questions on the understanding of leadership must first be answered. The main elements that have risen from this research as crucial for peripheral places were the importance of scale and resources, and the constructedness of the concept. This constructedness showed the diversity in understandings and the focus on processes over outcomes only, which leaves an opening for acknowledging negotiation and legitimacy as part of leadership processes.

Leadership *in* places: the example of image making

In this section, the focus is on understanding places as spheres of multiplicity. While multiplicity can be understood and analysed in many shapes and forms, here, image making is analysed as the ultimate example of leadership practices that all peripheral places deal with in some way or another. All the cases studied showed that images mattered and had “real” material consequences, whether idealisation (Kihnu), stigmatisation (Schoondijke) de-stigmatisation (Pekela) or a form of self-stigmatisation (Järva-Jaani). In the cases of stigmatisation, images could even induce more social cohesion within the places and increasing self-respect.

Even though local actors can take an active role in this, as Kihnu for example is doing, other actors also play a role in image making. While in some cases it was a more local strategy, in other places, more distant actors were also involved, such as the national media, government, Unesco etc. Important for all cases, however, was the usage of (older and more novel forms of) media. Access to social media provided an extra opportunity for more in-between places to connect in alternative networks.

The context in which image making could (or could not) be utilised strategically differed between the cases. Having an internationally recognised label or having a national stigma connected to a certain place influences the context in which leadership through image making can be enacted. Furthermore, for those places bearing a certain stigma, it was far more difficult to turn this stigma around into something positive. Since images are made up from all kinds of different sources that reach far beyond the control of the leaders in these places, the possibilities to control these images were seen as limited. Apart from having a certain positive, negative or no label at all, other resources were also important. In order to benefit from images, it was crucial to be connected and, therefore, networkedness was shown to be important in order to be a part of these image making processes. The influence that local actors can have on these images should not be overestimated and a failure to acknowledge these serious limitations will only make the actors in these places more responsible for their circumstances – those that are often beyond the reach of local actors alone.

As a final result, leading through image making is shown to be ultimately about negotiations. These include internal negotiations on whether or not to engage in image making at all, internal negotiations on the content of the image, and also the less controllable vertical negotiation between local leadership and the external actors. Balancing these internal negotiations and vertical expectations is a difficult (Gray and Sinclair 2005), but intrinsic, element of place leadership.

This leads to the conclusion that, based on the four cases, leadership through image making is seen as an important strategy for peripheral places. The extent to which these strategies can however be beneficial for the places depends on contexts, which are not equal for all. Furthermore, since image making is necessarily selective (Boisen et al. 2011), images arising from these places never form the complete story and negotiations on what the story should be are inevitable. A failure to recognise these negotiations misses the complexity of leading in peripheries. It reduces once more the process of leading through image making to a blueprint model in which interests are aligned, collaboration is the norm and contextual factors are by default beneficial. Therefore, a too simplistic account of place leadership thus even runs into the danger of blaming place leaders for not being able to live up to an unrealistic model (Plüschke-Altof & Grootens 2018). Especially when combining this with the importance of these strategies for peripheralising places, place branding and image making can be seen as the last resorts for places in which material resources are not always present. The dependency on these image making strategies, without a critical reflection on the politics behind these images and the importance of crucial contextual factors, is a topic that could receive more attention in scholarship on image making.

Leadership of places

While in Chapter 6, the relations within the places were focused on, in Chapter 7, the focus was mainly on how places are led in connection to their outside relations. The cases have shown, in this regard, that the options for leadership in these places to develop are rather diverse. In a networked periphery, access to important relations are established and upheld, while in other cases it turned out to be more difficult. A crucial factor in relational strategies is having the right networks, which do not always have to be institutional or political networks but can also involve (social) media, personal relations, and sometimes mere coincidental meetings. It is not always easy for local actors in the peripheries to create these networks from scratch and, therefore, networks can be seen as a structurally restricting factor over which local leaders have only limited control.

Models of place leadership that emphasise the need to create links and networks do, however, not often mention the difficulty in creating these links. As also noted by Herrschel (2011), getting admitted to these networks is not easy and, moreover, networks can function as an exclusionary mechanism. Defining an “ideal” leadership for peripheral places (which often lack access to these networks) as necessarily networked thus puts a significant responsibility on local actors for creating opportunities that are not easily achieved.

Moreover, by focusing on leadership as a networked activity only denies leadership in other places without these structural networks and would even blame them for something they cannot easily change. In this sense this chimes with Nagy et al. (2012) when they doubt the opportunities arising from a more networked governance for the peripheries. In particular, when scholarship on local leadership and policy reemphasises these possibilities, the structure behind the exclusion remains uncritiqued and thus the places and actors who cannot connect are blamed for their disconnection. Returning to the table by Herrschel (2011, 90) in Chapter 3, this would mean that places both spatially and socio-communicatively peripheral would fall into a downward spiral from which it is hard to escape. While Kihnu has achieved a move away from this double peripheral location and has been shown to connect to outside networks, the other case studies show that this path is not destined for every place.

The diversity of actors involved in relational strategies is also interesting, as could also be seen in the chapter on image making. Actors who are not always officially legitimised by the local community greatly influence the development of the places. For example, the local media and also external lobbyists have played crucial roles in determining the strategies of these places, while they cannot be seen as officially legitimised leadership. This questions the influence of these more external leaders for the legitimacy of their practices. Actors who have an influence on the development of the places, but not necessarily always work on behalf of these places, might be characterised as place-less leaders (Hambleton 2015b). In these cases, apart from the “successful” networkedness of these leadership processes, it could be argued as to who benefits from these efforts and if leadership is actually speaking on behalf of the community – and if we can even speak of leadership of *place*. In this sense, this third element of the research question, which emphasised the networked nature of leadership, also connects back to the question of legitimacy as discussed in Chapter 5.

Also evident is the importance of the contextual factors surrounding the leadership strategies. Through a somewhat “planned peripheralisation” process, the case of Schoondijke showed that local strategies aimed attracting new residents were restricted by policies designed at a higher level. A similar development could be seen, for example, when looking into processes of amalgamation. All three cases involved in such processes saw the potential restrictions that this could have for their independence. More importantly, place leaders were afraid to lose connections with local inhabitants. By literally enlarging the spatial distance between leadership and the places, legitimacy was perceived as under threat. This finding corresponds to research done by Gerritsen and ter Weel (2014), who find that turnout in local elections in the Netherlands falls by 2.5% after a process of municipal amalgamation. Overall this pointed to the importance of territories and territorial policies for the potential of (relational) leadership. In particular, the places that lacked a networked position seemed to also be excluded in territorial policies favouring larger agglomerations over smaller village developments. In this sense, the places that seemed rejected in a relational grammar could likewise not find a place in the territorial grammar that increasingly favours urban areas.

8.2 Overall conclusions

Overall, this research has shown that when applying a critical and open approach to place leadership, we can move beyond a functionalistic approach to leadership in which disharmonies, negotiations and local understandings of leadership can be brought more into the frame. Furthermore, in this sense, the promise of leadership for peripheral places can be more contextualised. Throughout this thesis, three groups of main conclusions can be found, each focusing on different elements of a critical approach to place leadership. The first group of conclusions are on leadership as concept; the second is about leadership in negotiation; the third focuses on leadership in context. In table 9, the main results from the results chapters are translated to these three main conclusions and, below that, these different conclusions are further explained.

Table 12: Main findings of the thesis and links to main conclusions

Chapter and focus	Main results	Contributes to the overall conclusion:
5 Who & What	Leadership in peripheral places face similar challenges, but constructed differently by different people.	Leadership, the concept
	Scale matters for leadership.	Leadership in context
	Leadership depends on human resources and backgrounds of the leaders.	Leadership in context
	The relations between leaders and followers and legitimacy of leadership are important.	Leadership, the concept
6 Leadership in places	Images are crucial in peripheral places and can have important material consequences.	Leadership in context
	Image making happens through and by a range of unexpected actors who do not always have formal legitimacy.	Leadership in negotiation
	The ability to spread images depends on the networkedness of certain actors.	Leadership in context
	Leadership through image making is a selective process which highlights some images and excludes others,	Leadership in negotiation
7 Leadership of places	Networks enable and constrain.	Leadership in context
	Networks are not easily built,	Leadership in context
	A relational approach in leadership points attention to the legitimization of leadership,	Leadership in negotiation
	Planning policy, favouring some scale levels for development over others, clashes with the local embeddedness of place leadership.	Leadership in context

Illustration by the author

The first group of conclusions focus on the **concept of place leadership**. Leadership can best be understood as a process and is therefore much broader than a clear-cut functionalistic means to an end. While, for some of the cases, result orientation was of great importance, this was not always the case. Due to the constructed nature of the concept of leadership, it is important to understand the discourse used to fill the empty shell of leadership. Taking an open understanding of leadership provides an opportunity to make explicit the normativities that are included in some usages (e.g. on assumed harmony, togetherness etc.).

The second group of conclusions focus more on **leadership in negotiation**. In this group leadership is a set of findings ultimately about the leading in negotiation of place making. This also necessarily implies that practices are inherently concerned with the negotiation of multiplicity and that leadership is not necessarily a harmonious exercise. In all chapters we the issue of negotiation was found crucial in understanding leadership. In Chapter 5, the negotiation over who is legitimate as a leader was crucial in leadership practice. In Chapter 6, one important type of negotiation for place development, image making, was seen in detail. Negotiations over images can be depoliticised and negotiated by a selective group of actors (from within and beyond the places studied). Furthermore, image making is as a strategy particularly difficult to combine with multiplicity. Images with the purpose of branding, marketing or lobbying mainly work well because of the single message which leaves no room for negotiation. Image making can, therefore, be seen as the ultimate example of how place multiplicity is negotiated into one image sellable outside. Furthermore, this is an active choice for some people to show some images at the cost of others. Overall, these findings point to a negotiation over place futures that is difficult to grasp but also essential in defining leadership of (negotiated) place. This was shown in the different cases on the negotiation over co-existing “on the same proximate turf” (Amin 2004, 39) in its literal and physical sense (negotiating space), but also on more mental turf (negotiating images).

The third group of conclusions is more about **leadership in context** of peripheral places. Applying the concept of leadership can be problematic and unhelpful when applied in the context of peripheral places, and might even further blame peripheral places for not living up to unrealistic promises. The first, taken for granted, factor is the essential availability of human resources. Leadership is still very much about the leaders (volunteers, civil servants, entrepreneurs etc.) who are essential in initiating leadership processes. In peripheral places where out-migration is one of the defining factors, the availability of human resources is a serious constraint but crucial for leadership of place to develop. Secondly, the coincidental sellable image is also a factor that some places have, and others do not. Being either a middle-of-nowhere place or a tourist hotspot matters for the development of a successful strategy based on image making. A final main structural factor crucial for place leadership is places’ networkedness. While some authors might state that networkedness is not necessarily a structural factor and that networks can be created, this thesis has shown that it is not so easily achieved. Building networks take time and effort, dependent on both structural factors, such

as availability of time, and human resources. Focusing on the potential of leadership strategies based on resources, such as a positive image, networks and human resources, ignores the difficulty of reaching these resources. Apart from the peripheral context of having fewer available resources, in terms of institutional environment, some contextual factors also limit the opportunities for place leadership. While networks gain in importance, administrative boundaries are still important and do affect the context for peripheral places.

8.3 Theoretical implications

These three groups of conclusions also have implications for theory on place leadership. This section will consider these implications, following the structure of conclusions.

Leadership: the concept

This study started by exploring what is happening in these places, before focusing solely on one type of leader (the harmonious leader or the linking pin or the official leader). While this points to a certain vagueness in defining what can be seen as leadership, this vagueness is exactly what is also witnessed at the local level. Apart from thus labelling certain practices as leadership and others as non-leadership, it is, therefore, crucial to also find out what is actually meant by the concept of leadership. As this research started by taking a dialogical approach to place leadership and used grounded theory, an inductive study made it possible to acknowledge multiple understandings of leadership. Therefore, a process ontology was most useful, as suggested by literature from critical leadership studies:

“[A] process ontology, focused on leadership practices as constructed in interactions – embedded in a cultural context where societal notions of ‘leadership’ are both taken for granted and under re-construction.” (Crevani et al. 2010, 77)

In this process ontology, the concept of leadership is seen as a continuous flow of interaction and not an endpoint as such. The concept is continuously (re)negotiated and allows for different interpretations across contexts.

Similar to what is argued by Alvesson and Spicer (2012) in the context of organisation and management studies, this points to a move towards more critical understandings of leadership of place. This critical approach should thus not solely look into the darker sides of leadership and narrows the understanding to oppression, domination, but one that critically and reflexively works with the concept of leadership. In this sense, the proposed way forward is to follow a so-called “progressive pragmatism” (Alvesson and Spicer 2012, 377). This is an understanding of leadership that works with already existing discourses, but while critical employing these also reconceptualises and bends these existing discourses.

Understanding better the ideas behind the concepts locally also enables research to critically examine researchers' own assumptions on what leadership should or should not entail. In this sense, by critically identifying why certain conceptualisations of leadership are used, reach a critical performativity (Alvesson and Spicer 2012) can be reached. This can also open eyes towards intertwined normative ideas, connected to gender, race, ethnicity and class (Crevani, Lindgren, and Packendorff 2010).

"It is of great importance to continue de-masking and explicitly recognizing how ideologies frame and in turn are supported by leadership studies and the leadership development industry." (Blom 2016, 109)

In this line of study, a more performative critique is possible (Alvesson and Spicer 2012) in which the discourse itself is part of the study. Discourses of leadership – being harmonious and collaborative (Tourish 2014) or always about positive change, and therefore ideological (Blom 2016) – can be made explicit. In this cherry picking of understandings of leadership, it becomes interesting to use this selection of understanding to find out how the concept is constructed in different places. In this sense, not only is leadership often seen in a certain way (outcome-oriented or legitimised through democratic rules) behind these ontologies. In processual conceptualisations of leadership, in which outcomes are also not the prime concern, some processes are valued above others, and participation and shared power are preferred over non-participation and single leaders. Kelly (2014, 915–16) speaks in this regard about leadership as an empty signifier:

"the very purpose of which is not to provide a single meaning, but to create a space through which possible meanings can be negotiated and navigated. In this imaginary scenario, the empty signifier 'leadership' provides the space for an exercise of power in the form of deciding whose interpretation matters most."

While this goes very far from where this research started, it is an interesting avenue for further research. Analysing how the seemingly empty space between our imagination and the concept of leadership gets filled – and who has the power to fill these spaces – could be an interesting way forward in place leadership studies.

Apart from the ability to allow multiple understandings of leadership, this process ontology approach also allows for a deeper understanding into legitimacy questions. As is also found in governance literature, for example Sørensen and Torfing (2018) who look into the democratic potential in public governance networks, this shows that when including legitimacy in the study on how places are led, this legitimacy itself should neither be approached from a model-like viewpoint but also seen as constructed. Legitimacy in this sense "draws on a range of pre-existing norms as well as new ones, only some of which are recognisably democratic, and is more a product of informal practices than formal structures" (Connelly 2011, 930). This connects to the diversity witnessed in the field work, where more formal and more informal practices were also used as

means for legitimacy. In this sense, this research has also confirmed the importance of what is already more emphasised in leadership studies emerging more from social movement literature: the relation between the leader and followers is crucial (Geddes and Sullivan 2011).

In this understanding, less heroic leaders and more mundane practices in peripheral places can also be valued for their contribution to the development of places. With a concept so noticeably interpreted in multiple ways and also used for many different purposes, this research shows it is important to have an open understanding of leadership that is able to recognise many local understandings of this debated concept. Therefore, this research has shown the usefulness of place leadership as a concept for understanding why places develop differently by beginning to understand what is meant by place leadership locally. When using a more dialogical understanding, local comprehension of how human agency is practiced can be analysed and thus better understood. This thesis has shown that, even though still incomplete, by showing more ways of constructing space than only functionalistic place as context for outcomes, we come closer to a more complete understanding of leadership. This is in terms of production of place, which is less normatively steered by the leadership ‘we’ as academics, practitioners or policy makers wish to see as leadership.

In this way, not only leadership itself is normative, but also the development that is envisaged, the places we produce or products of production. Leadership can then, in all its conceptualisations, be more about this production instead of simply about the product.

While some authors have advocated for a radical rethinking of the concept of leadership and for leaving this concept behind altogether (Kelly 2014), other authors have also questioned its usefulness. Other concepts, such as civic engagement or governance are more collective concepts that have, similarly to leadership, grown in usage. Instead of not using the concept of leadership at all, it is important, therefore, to make the normativities behind the concept more explicit. I, therefore, propose using the concept of leadership more critically and, in this way, answer Zoller and Fairhurst’s (2007) call for more dialogue between leadership and critical researchers. In this sense, a critical approach to place leadership can look more into what Sotarauta (2016) identified as seeing place leadership as future seeking and not future defining. This also connects to the emancipatory potential of the concept of leadership, which should not be forgotten (Alvesson and Spicer 2012).

For a more critical account of place leadership, this thesis proposes making some alterations in the usage of the concept that can define place leadership as “a constructed process in which (an) actor(s) consciously work(s) towards place futures on behalf of these places”.

A critical approach to place leadership is, in this sense, ultimately about:

- making explicit the underlying normative assumptions of the concept of leadership.
- focusing on the processes of legitimation between leaders and followers.
- focusing on negotiation as an integral part of leading in places.
- having an eye for structural resources of the context in which leadership emerges.

Leadership in negotiation

Comparing the negotiations on leadership in these different cases, it is clear that it does not fit with the consensual picture that often arises in the literature. Even though there has been attention placed on the relationship between leaders and followers in place leadership literature, the focus has often been on consensus leadership. As can be read in Stough et al. (2001, 177), place-based leadership is “the tendency of the community to collaborate across sectors in a sustained, purposeful manner to enhance the economic performance or economic environment of its region”. Sotarauta and Beer (2017) acknowledge the existing variety in actors, interests and opinions in places; however, the processes of dissensus and negotiation are not explicitly mentioned. The focus in these studies is more on the relevance of engagement, collaboration and aligning visions. Moreover, Sotarauta et al. (2012) mention that leadership should be seen as a collaborative exercise in which wider interests of the place are defended. Even though these authors refer to the coming togetherness of different visions, they have quite a consensual understanding of leadership which could not be completely reflected in the field work described here.

As the previous emphasis on issues of legitimacy and the illusion of taken for granted consensus has shown, this research has demonstrated that the process of leadership automatically becomes a process of negotiations when applying the concept of leadership to place making. Following again the table by Mabey and Freeman (2010), the distinction between consensus- and dissensus-oriented studies on leadership is crucial, especially since the focus is on place leadership it is ultimately about the multiplicity of this place. Therefore, it has also been seen that the unavoidable “same proximate turf essential in understanding places (Amin 2004, 39) is also key in understanding leadership in places. Leadership in places is unavoidably negotiated leadership, since, in the words of Massey (2005), space equals multiplicity; without multiplicity there is no space and, conversely, without space no multiplicity is possible.

Following this approach, place leadership has all to do with dealing with contestation, which is not necessarily a harmonious exercise. Contestation over who is leading, towards what, and which image is being shown, are important negotiations part of an understanding of leadership as a process. This also connects to the article by Sotarauta (2018) who identified five traps connected to leadership in smart specialisation strategies. Apart from showing only the positive results, “there is a need to be aware of the political and social dimensions of

regional development and innovation, and not to approach it purely as a technical or economic procedure” (2018, 197). More attention in leadership studies could therefore be placed on having more of an eye for the *contested arenas* in which leadership is exercised. When we do try to include dissensus in the picture of place leadership, it has the ability to include the politics behind leadership and show who acts in contested arenas and in which ways. In an arena in which not only locally legitimised, but also quite distant actors play a role, leadership is not easy to grasp. Leadership is therefore inherently political as it empowers some leaders over others, prefers some futures over others and also shows certain images at the cost of other images. This research has described these very processes as being an integral part of place leadership. Leadership is inherently political, making choices between different “folds” of space (Pierce and Martin 2015). Scholarship on place leadership could, therefore, also have more of an eye for the inherent political character of place leadership.

Leadership in context

Looking back on the literature of place leadership, some structural factors seem to be taken for granted in the discourse, while the case studies in this research have shown that they cannot. When focusing on leadership in *peripheral* places in particular, the very basic availability of human resources is a critical element for place leadership to develop. In peripheral places where outmigration is one of the defining factors, the availability of human resources is a serious constraint. Furthermore, the certain image or label that some places have developed, being either a middle-of-nowhere place or a touristic hotspot, also matters for the development of a successful strategy based on image making. In addition, the networks, as crucial tools for regional development, are also not easily set up for places. Building networks requires again resources such as time and effort from actors. While, for some of the cases, networks indeed were an enabling factor, in others, networks merely constrained the development of these places and kept them excluded.

Other authors have looked into the consequences of an increased attention for partnerships and networked governance for the maintaining of legitimacy. Hadjimichalis (2019) warns of an excessively easy removal of the “old” democratic norms, while these are, thus far, the most inclusive systems we have. The elements in particular that make partnerships and governance arrangements attractive (informality and flexibility) might appear as exclusionary practices from the perspective of those on the outside (Connelly et al. 2006). Using the concept of placeless leaders (as opposed to place-based leaders), Hambleton warns of the power of market thinking and the creation of a market society (Hambleton 2015a) at the cost of legitimacy and democracy. Furthermore, Nicholds et al. (2017) note that, in the context of smart cities with increasing complexity of actors involved in leadership roles, there is a threat of losing not only the negative but also positive values connected to bureaucracy, such as accountability. They warn against leadership in these complex settings that might

lead “to unhealthy pursuit of self- or party interest or a market-driven agenda” (Nicholds et al. 2017, 257).

These points also connect to the discussion on territorial or relational readings of place. When territoriality seems to lose its importance in particular (in policy and theoretical discourse), and relational strategies and networked strategies gain in importance, this makes the issue of representativeness even more fragile and important. Without stating that representative democracy necessarily harbours inclusive communities, the move towards more networked ways of governance does point to the urgency of securing legitimacy in place leadership. Connelly (2011), in this regard, noted that it is not only the “traditional” formal structures that legitimise leadership, but also the informal practices, such as openness towards the community. The legitimacy question is thus much more about the acceptance of the process of governing. Connelly (2011) also proposed a broader understanding of legitimacy that goes beyond only the understanding of formal democratic structures and also includes more informal practices of legitimisation, like, for example, the community leadership style present in Järva-Jaani.

When the literature continues to showcase these best practice examples like Kihnu, it ignores the structural difficulties of being part of these networks. Furthermore, this would simultaneously responsabilise leaders of these less-networked places for circumstances they cannot easily influence. When relations seem to gain in importance (having in mind the dependency of peripheral places on external funding in particular), issues of exclusion also come more to the fore. The danger in creating a development model based on networkedness is that it is automatically also very exclusionary. As Herrschel (2011) has noted, “the nature of networks means that space gets effectively reduced to a number of narrow avenues of communication and interaction between actors, rather than encompassing two-dimensional territories” (2011, 97).

Overall, this investigation of peripheral place leadership studies has showed that the availability of some resources seen as crucial ingredients for a “successful” leadership story cannot be taken for granted. An acknowledgement of the contexts of these less beneficial contexts could provide a more complete picture of leadership of *all* places.

8.4 Policy implications

Summing up the main conclusions, there is a lesson to be learnt for policy makers dealing with place leadership. Defining what kind of development is needed, and therefore what leadership it wishes to stimulate, is also a political choice for policy makers and should be seen in that light. If the technological and model-like successful examples are showcased in policy, this downplays the importance of more mundane but also *leaderful* practices. The Järva-Jaani case shows how in relatively simple ways that leadership makes it possible to bond communities and create a positive atmosphere. While these goals might not rank well in international lists on regional competitiveness, this says more about the ways we

measure development than about the presence or absence of leadership in these communities. Therefore, when policy stimulates place leadership, it should be clear what outcomes and processes it intends to stimulate, and the normativities and assumptions underlying the concept of leadership should be made explicit.

Furthermore, on the issue of legitimacy, it is important to open the dialogue on what legitimate leadership is. While achieving certain results can be one way of legitimising practices, another crucial factor in place leadership has been legitimacy through connection with followers. When moving to a more networked society in which the former democratic procedures might move into the background, there are important tasks for formal and informal leadership in addressing the connection to their followers. They must always think of the question of leadership for whom.

Connected to the first block of conclusions, place leadership is ultimately about negotiation and, therefore, inherently political. Negotiations over images, over future agendas or local and regional development are all part of place leadership processes. Leadership is ultimately a negotiated exercise. When looking at image making in particular, policy makers and academics should be aware of their role as image makers themselves.

Acknowledging that the emergence of leadership has everything to do with the access to resources is also a crucial point that should be taken into account for policy making on regional development. As noted by Beer and Clower (2013), too much emphasis has been placed on so-called success stories which gives a bias of leadership as something always successful and has less of an eye for the constraints and difficulties that leaders in these places face. When holding on to an understanding of leadership in the privileged and networked sense, and portraying these examples as best practices, the places which lack these beneficial circumstances are blamed for not coping, for not fitting the model. A more diversified understanding of place leadership, which also has an eye for less beneficial circumstances, is therefore a way forward in seeing leadership as a contextual process and not a model-like interpretation of success stories. When imposing a city-like blueprint on the structurally disadvantaged peripheries, these places are being blamed for not living up to unrealistic goals. When visibility, uniqueness and networkedness become defining features of the competition between different places, not all can compete in this race for success. The actors that develop and maintain these models, in which governments also participate, should be more reflective of the effects of setting of these context-blind and sometimes unrealistic goals.

As noted above, human resources are an essential resource for leadership. When discussing leadership, which is dependent on actors, the availability of human resources is critical for an agency-oriented strategy to succeed. Therefore, the possibility of an “absence of leadership” (Beer and Clower 2013, 11) is also a serious threat in areas of high outmigration. Beer and Baker (2012) also note that, in regions of Australia, this lack of human resources is mainly connected to the moving away of public and private sector managers. Therefore, for policy making, it is crucial to also acknowledge the linkages between some policy goals.

Seeing peripheralisation as directly linked to urbanisation, spatial planning and rural-urban relations also means that policies aimed at these different terrains should be thought of integrally. Therefore, when designing regional policy, it is important that urban as well as rural policy are attuned to one another and not made in isolation.

Another important point concerns the institutional context. In the different areas studied, very diverse institutional environments could be witnessed, from a very *laissez-faire* centralised Estonian environment to the more decentralised environment of the Netherlands. While the institutional thinness in Estonia did not automatically lead to disconnected peripheries, neither did the thickness of the Dutch context automatically translate into a beneficial environment for peripheral places. Government planning was shown to limit local opportunities for development in peripheral places. In this way, the ideal of the participation society and self-help ethos clashes with the top-down planned visions of the institutions. In this sense, place leadership can also be hampered by institutional thickness. The challenge would be, in this case, to give places enough flexibility to perform leadership there so as to be able to define their own future while at the same time creating a region supporting the development of places sufficiently. In this regard (Horlings et al. 2018) advise connecting leadership to more place-based institutions, to develop local capacities and delegate powers to the lowest levels possible.

At the other end of the spectrum is Estonia which, in its more centralised form, leaves less room for negotiation for its peripheral places, except for those that have arranged their own networks. In this sense, the institutional context of the places was favourable to networked Kihnu, but less functional for excluded Järva-Jaani. In this sense, the competition between places defines opportunities, even if competition is often on uneven grounds. The institutional environment is therefore influential on the opportunities of place leadership, but not as clear-cut as expected. Looking back at the institutional comparison of the two countries, this study has shown that neither institutional thinness nor thickness were critical in determining the options for place leadership, but cross-country factors such as availability of resources (human, networks, image) are. The overall belief in the self-help ethos, present in both contexts, mattered for the possibilities of place leadership.

Overall, the belief in regional competitiveness and a self-help ethos should be seen as having its limits in both countries. Answering calls for help with a reference to self-responsibility and can-do mentality is not a strategy that would help these most disadvantaged regions. As Tonkens strikingly notes in her research on the self-help belief in care: “the one who needs help, doesn’t get much out of a network” (Vriesema 2018). When the government is pulling back and people increasingly rely on volunteers for their care, there is a higher risk in inequality between villages with active leadership and those without (Steenbekkers et al. 2013). Therefore, policies that further stimulate places that are already well off, through, for example, subsidies for exemplary and well organised citizen initiatives have the danger of further increasing inequality. In particular, when combining

this increasing focus on self-responsibility with the existing structural difficulties that can be witnessed in peripheral areas, areas with cumulative problems of population decline, unemployment etc., a helping hand is justified in order to strive for more equal developments (Team Midterm Review Bevolkingsdaling 2014)

Therefore, policy and society could also think about moving away from the competition framework for place development (Bristow 2005, 2010) and aim towards a more diversified development paradigm in which different places are valued for their different contributions and place-based assets. In this sense, we could move more towards an open understanding of place and space in which the future and, therefore, space is open too (Massey 2005).

8.5 Limitations of the study and suggestions for further research

This study has provided a critical approach and understanding of place leadership by taking an interpretative approach to the concept of leadership. The limitation of this type of study is that it provides no clear-cut answer to the question of how to develop peripheral places and can therefore not be used to find ready-made answers. While this could be read as a limitation, the novelty and specific aim of this research was to provide a more critical understanding of place leadership and this study thus questions the preconceived ideas on what this leadership should look like. Therefore, the results of this study have shown that certain crucial elements should be added in place leadership conceptualisations in order to understand the room for manoeuvre that is (or is not) available for peripheral places in seemingly structurally defined processes of decline and outmigration.

Furthermore, in order to give room for local understandings of leadership, the study had an explorative character. By using a comparative element as well and incorporating a relational element, a certain depth of place leadership was therefore not realised. Therefore, for future research I would focus more on following the actual “acts of locality-making” (Jones and Woods 2013, 39). A study could, for example, take a more relational approach to one place, following a smaller number of leaders around for longer time periods, in order to emphasise even more the relational approach. Even though a fully relational approach would require more time and in-depth ethnographic methods, it could come closer to a relational approach to place leadership.

In terms of research methodology, depending on the research aim, different studies can help to reach a certain “reliable cumulative body of knowledge about place leadership in different contexts” (Beer et al. 2018, 172). It is, however, important to keep in mind the normativities behind the concept of place leadership and be clear on what is meant by the concept of leadership before new and more refined methods are found to measure the wrong things. Blom (2016) for example warns that

“more advanced and sophisticated statistical methods, procedures or and analysis are hardly the solution to make better sense of the elusive phenomenon of leadership. Instead we run the risk of continuing to measure irrelevant things in a more and more rigorous way.” (2016, 110)

Therefore, in further research into place leadership, a critical reflection on underlying assumptions remains crucial for a critical understanding of place leadership.

9. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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10. SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

Kohapõhine eestvedamine ääremaal: Eesti ja Hollandi perifeersete kohtade võrdlusuuring

Sissejuhatus

Viimastel aastakümnetel on teadlased ja poliitikakujundajad täheldanud kõikjal Euroopas suurenevat regionaalset polariseerumist. Linnad kasvavad, samas kui ääremaalised piirkonnad sotsiaalmajanduslikult taandarenevad. Käesolev väitekirj keskendub kohapõhise eestvedamise rollile näiliselt struktuurselt äramääratud ääremaastumisprotsessis. Väitekirj analüüsib eestvedamise pakutavaid täiendavaid arendusvõimalusi tagasihoidlikes ääremaalistes oludes. Uuring läheneb kohapõhisele eestvedamisele kriitiliselt, rakendab kvalitatiivseid meetodeid ja maandatud teooriat (*grounded theory*) saavutamaks järgmist uurimiseesmärki: “arendada kriitilist lähenemist, mõistmaks kohapõhist eestvedamist Eesti ja Hollandi ääremaadel”.

Seda eesmärki aitavad saavutada kolm peamist osist. Esimeseks kriitiline lähenemine, mis võimaldab eestvedamise fenomeni paremini mõista kui vaid järgmist edulugu. Teiseks keskendumine ääremaalistele kohtade olemusele: ebaühtlase arengule ja nn. ääremaastumise raamistikule. Kolmandaks võrdleb uuring Kesk- ja Ida-Euroopat (Eesti) ning Lääne-Euroopat (Madalmaad), mis tagab ühelt poolt (Kesk- ja Ida-Euroopa piirest väljudes) täielikuma ülevaate ääremaastumisest ning teiselt poolt (Lääne-Euroopa piiridest väljudes) võimaldab paremini kontekstualiseerida kohapõhist eestvedamist. Kahe piirkonna kombineerimine võimaldab märgata erinevusi, aga samal ajal otsida ka erinevate geograafiliste piirkondade sarnaseid mustreid.

Ääremaapiirkondade väljakutsete analüüsimisel võib kohapõhine eestvedamine osutada nende kohtade arendamisel paljulubavaks (Beer ja Clower 2013). Keskendumine eestvedamisprotsessidele lubab ääremaastumist paremini mõista. Peamine küsimus, millele vastust otsin on:

Millist rolli mängib eestvedamine Eesti ja Hollandi ääremaalistes kohtades?

Lähtekohaks on kohapõhise eestvedamise kontseptsioon, mida mõistetakse siin kui “paljude tegutsejatega¹ kohalooime protsessi” (Mabey and Freeman 2010, 509). Et väitekirja aluseks on kohaliku eestvedamise protsess ja eestvedajad, siis arvestavad uurimisküsimused kohalike tegutsejate maailma:

- Kuidas eestvedamine rakendub?
- Mis toimub neis kohtades eestvedamise rakendumisel?
- Kes on nende ääremaaliste kohtade eestvedajad?

¹ Mõiste „actor“ tõlgime kui „tegutseja“. See annab paremini edasi selle proaktiivse olemuse kui seni Eestis enam kasutatud „osaline“ või „toimija“ (tõlke toimetaja märkus).

- Kuidas eestvedajad korraldavad läbirääkimisi ja suhteid ning kujundavad sel moel kohti?
- Kuidas nad arvestavad kohtomase mitmekesisusega?
- Kui erinev on eestvedamine eri kohtades?

Rakendades avatud ja vähem normatiivset lähenemist, aitab see väitekirj kohapõhise eestvedamise paremini mõista ja ei piirdu vaid eestvedamisalaste hüpoteeside testimisega. See eksploratiivne uuring põhineb kvalitatiivsetel meetodidel ja neljal juhtumiuuringul Eestis (Kihnu ja Järva-Jaani) ning Hollandis (Schoondijke and Pekela). Analüüs põhineb originaalsel kvalitatiivsel andmestikul: poolstruktureeritud intervjuudel ja osalusvaatlustel. Kaasuste võrdlusanalüüs võimaldab teha kolme liiki järeldusi eestvedamise kontseptsiooni, läbirääkimiste ja konteksti kohta.

Teoreetiline taust. Eestvedamine ääremaastumise tingimustes

Uuring lähtub teoreetilisest diskussioonist ning ääremaastumise ja kohapõhise eestvedamisega seotud probleemistikust. Teooriast kasvab välja analüütiline raamistik eestvedamise rollist perifeersetes kohtades, millest lähtub omakorda uuringu empiiriline osa.

Ääremaastumine ja kohapõhise eestvedamine

Väitekirj tegeleb ääremaastumisest mõjutatud kohtadega. Protsessikeskne lähenemine ei vaatle ääremaalisi kohti staatiliselt, vaid kirjeldab perifeeria loomist “sotsiaalsete suhete ja nende ruumiliste tagajärgede kaudu” (Kühn 2015, 368). Sellise lähenemise puhul ei käsitleta perifeersust ainult kui struktuurimuutuse tagajärge, mille üle ei ole tegutsejail kontrolli, vaid arvestatakse ka ääremaastumise protsessi agentsust. Ruumi ja koha relatsioonilise käsitlemise puhul on olulised esmakordselt Massey (2005) poolt esitatud kolm väidet. Esiteks, ruumid kujunevad konkreetsetes kohtades vastastike suhete põhjal. Eestvedamine on sel juhul suhteid korraldav tegevus. Teiseks, ruumis eksisteerivad koos heterogeensed kooslused: ruumilisus eeldab mitmekesisust ja vastupidi. Eestvedamist võib siin näha kui ühes sfääris olevate vastandlike huvide lähendamist, midagi sellist, mida Amin (2004a) nimetas samale määrale mahtumiseks. Kolmandaks, ruum on pidevas kujunemises ning seda võib vaadelda kui seni loodud lugude kogumit, mille järgmine peatükk on veel kirjutamata. Teiste sõnadega, eestvedamine tähendab kohale avatud tulevikuvisiiooni loomist, olles seega olemuselt poliitiline tegevus. “Et tulevik oleks avatud, peab ka ruum olema avatud” (Massey 2005, 12).

Eestvedamine

Eestvedamist on käsitletud kui regionaalse arengu puuduvat lüli (Rodríguez-Pose 2013). Kuigi see kõlab lootustandvalt paljude maailma kohtade jaoks, on selle täpne tähendus endiselt segane, nagu ka Raelin (2016) rõhutab, et eestvedamine tähendab sageli kõike ning samas mitte midagi. Seepärast on oluline seletada, kuidas seda mõistet on kasutatud uuringutes ning kuidas eestvedamist kui

peaaegu eranditult positiivse tähendusega kontseptsiooni saaks rakendada ilmselt vähem “edukate” ääremaade kontekstis. Vältimaks normatiivsust on vaja teadvustada eestvedamise uuringute epistemoloogilisi eeldusi. Epistemoloogiat mõistetakse siin kui valdkonda, mis käsitleb teadmiste olemust ja viise, kuidas teadmiseni jõutakse (Mabey and Freeman 2010).

Eestvedamist uuritakse eri teadusharudes erineval viisil. Kirjanduses kasutatakse sageli mõisteid juht ja liider kui samaväärseid. Kellerman ja Webster (2001, 487) jaoks on eestvedaja see, kes “loob või püüab luua suuri või väikesi muutusi”. Kotter (1990) eristab juhtimist (*management*), mis püüab luua korda ja järjepidevust, eestvedamisest (*leadership*), mis on vajalik muutusteks ja uuteks arenguteks. Eestvedamist nähakse siin protsessina, kus muutus sünnib eestvedajate ja järgijate koostoimes. Osa teooriaid keskendub nn “Suure inimese” lähenemisele, teised kasutavad käitumuslikku lähenemist (nt transaktsionaalne või transformatiivne eestvedamine) või eestvedamist kriisi tingimustes. Viimasel ajal on käsitletud ka autentset või eetilist eestvedamist (vt täielikumat ülevaadet nt Van Wart (2013) või Avolio jt. (2009). Sealjuures ei pruugi haldus- või organisatsiooniteoorias pärinevad eestvedamise käsitlused olla abiks kohapõhise eestvedamise mõistmisel.

Kui liikuda eestvedamise üldistest teooriatest kohapõhise eestvedamise juurde, on sellel teatud tagajärjed. Kõige olulisem kohaliku ja regionaalarengu kontekstis on kohapõhise eestvedamise vaatlemine mitte üksikisiku tegevusena, vaid mitmetahulise protsessina, milles on palju (formaalseid ja mitteformaalseid) osalisi, kes tegutsevad regiooni piires ja väljaspool seda (Sotarauta jt. 2012). See lähenemine on seotud koha ja ruumi relatsioonilise käsitlemisega, mille puhul kujutlus kohast kui piiritletud territooriumist ei aita mõista seda, kuidas kohad on konstrueeritud (Massey 2004).

Kuigi mainitud kohapõhise eestvedamise käsitlus aitab mõista keerulist keskkonda, millega kohtade juhid peavad hakkama saama, on eestvedamise mõistmiseks kohtadel vaja ka kriitiliselt hinnata normatiivseid eeldusi, mis on selliste eestvedamise käsitluste aluseks. Tourish (2014) on märkinud, et normatiivsed ideed heast eestvedamisest on endiselt populaarsed sellistes olukordades nagu äriline ebaõnnestumine, kliimakriis või muud eriolukorrad. Ka kohapõhise eestvedamise alases kirjanduses on sageli tähelepanu pööratud sellele, mida juhid peaksid tegema (nt taotlema legitiimsust, looma usaldust, moodustama koalitsioone jne.), selle asemel et uurida, kuidas need protsessid toimuvad. Selleks et eemalduda varjatud normatiivsest ja ideoloogilisest kallutatusest, on kasulik tagasi minna eestvedamisteaduse filosoofiliste aluste juurde.

Siin on abiks Mabey ja Freeman (2010), kes eristavad nelja kohapõhise eestvedamise diskursust, mida saab kasutada kohapõhise eestvedamise analüüsi võimaluste leidmiseks. Diskursust “kasutatakse kui analüütilist vahendit eestvedamise olemuse ja olulisuse uurimiseks koha kujundamisel” (Mabey ja Freeman 2010, 506). Nad kasutavad kahte telge, mis tähistavad aluseks olevaid eeldusi: horisontaalne telg tähistab epistemoloogilisi eeldusi (duaalsus või dualism) ning vertikaalne telg tähistab sotsiaalset korda (konsensulik või dissensuslik). Nende telgede kombineerimisel saab eristada funktsionalistlikku, konstruktivistlikku,

kriitilist ja dialoogilist diskursust eestvedamise uurimisel (vt Tabel 2). Väitekirjas lähtub autor dialoogilisest lähenemisest, mille puhul eestvedamist käsitletakse kui paljude osalistega kohaloome protsessi, kus tähelepanu pööratakse pigem eestvedamise protsessile kui juhtidele. Lisaks sellele, konsensust ei eeldata ning läbirääkimisi (erinevate huvigruppide vahel) nähakse kohapõhise eestvedamise vältimatu osana.

Analüütiline raamistik

Toetudes eelmainitud eestvedamise uuringute kriitikale ning mõistes kohapõhist eestvedamist erinevana tavapärasest eestvedamise käsitlest nii oma ulatuse kui epistemoloogiliste aluste poolest, kutsun ma üles operatsionaliseerima kohapõhist eestvedamist, toetudes kolmele väitele koha kohta (Massey, 2005), mis on samal ajal ka aluseks antud väitekirja peatükkidele. Need kolm väidet on keskse tähtsusega mõistmaks kohapõhist eestvedamist ja relatsioonilise lähenemise rakendamiseks kohapõhisele eestvedamisele. Kasutades Massey (2005) kolme ruumi mõõdet kui lähtepunkte (mõistes kohta konstrueeritu, heterogeense ja relatsioonilisena), uuritakse väitekirjas eksploratiivselt, kuidas võiks kohapõhist eestvedamist käsitleda relatsiooniliselt.

Metodoloogia

Vastamaks uurimisküsimustele, olen kasutanud kvalitatiivseid uurimismeetodeid, mis aitavad paremini aru saada tähendusest, kontekstist ning protsessidest. Need meetodid on piisavalt paindlikud, et tegelda ootamatute nähtuste ja mõjudega (Maxwell 2004) ja on kasulikud seetõttu, et nad võimaldavad süviti analüüsida inimeste käitumist ja selle taga olevaid põhjendusi. Minu eesmärk ei ole mõõta eestvedamise tagajärgi, vaid vaadelda eestvedamispraktikaid ja -suhteid ääremaastumise protsessis, selgitada, milliseid tähendusi inimesed annavad neile protsessidele ning võtta arvesse konteksti, milles need protsessid toimuvad. Uuring on eksploratiivne ja kirjeldav, selleks on sobiv kasutada (mitmese) juhtumianaalüüsi metoodikat. Seega rakendatakse Wardi soovitatud (2010, 480) relatsioonilist võrdlevat meetodit, mis “arvestab nende protsesside loomise ja taasloomise taga olevat nii territoriaalset kui ka suhete ajalugu ja geograafiat”, ja mille käigus saab analüüsida ka “sotsiaal-ruumiliste muutuste omavahelisi trajektoore maailma eri paigus” (Hart 2004, 91). See sobib relatsioonilise lähenemisega, mis on antud töö analüütilises raamistus aluseks võetud. Selle võrdleva meetodi puhul pööratakse tähelepanu eri tasandite konstrueeritud loomusele, mitte põhjuslike seletuste mudelite loomisele. Väitekirja tugineb maandatud teooriale, mille puhul ei ole oluline hüpoteeside testimine, vaid pigem uue teadmise ja uute mõistete loomine. Maandatud teooriast lähtuv uuring algab uurimisküsimuse formuleerimisest, millele järgneb andmete kogumine ja analüüs ning lõpuks uue teooria või mõistete formuleerimine (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Corbin and Strauss 1990).

Riigi tasandil võrreldakse selles töös perifeerseid kohti kahes väga erinevas ja väga erineva institutsionaalse ülesehitusega riigis. Kui Eestit võib pidada üheks kõige tsentraliseeritumaks riigiks, siis Madalmaid üheks detsentraliseeritumaks. Ka on Ida- ja Kesk-Euroopa ja Lääne-Euroopa riigid sageli Idaks või Lääneks

lahterdatud, mistõttu ei panda tähele seal toimuvate protsesside sarnasust. Seejärel on selle uuringu eesmärgiks leida “peen tasakaal erinevuse ja erandlikkuse vahel” (Hörschelmann and Stenning 2008, 349). Mõlemad riigid ja nende regioonid on kaasa tõmmatud globaalsetesse võrgustikesse ja suhetesse, ehkki erineval moel.

Kaasused valiti mitme kriteeriumi alusel. Esiteks, kõigis neis ilmnevad probleemid, mis tavaliselt kaasnevad ääremaastumisega: majandustegevuse hääbumine, tööhõive vähenemine, elanikkonna kahanemine ja probleemne juurdepääs (Lang 2011). Uurimiskohad valiti välja pärast eksploratiivseid intervjuusid regioonide ja riigi tasandil. Pool-struktureeritud intervjuud ekspertidega erinevates riigi ja regiooni tasandi organisatsioonides tehti eesmärgiga mõista nende maade vastastikust seotust. Ekspertidid töötasid praegu või on varem töötanud riigi- või regionaalsetes institutsioonides, teadmusasutustes või MTÜ-des, mis tegelevad regionaalse või kohaliku arenguga maapiirkondades (vt lisas 1 respondentide nimekiri). Nende intervjuude põhjal valisin välja erineva võrgustumisega juhtumid. Seejärel valisin välja kohalikud respondendid: liidrid ja teised võtmeisikud. Ma valisin need inimesed välja, keskendudes teatud temale, mida Pierce, Martin, ja Murphy (2011) käsitlevad kui konflikti või probleemi. Selline lähenemine võimaldas mul näha, millised erinevad tegutsejad koonduvad teatud kohapoliitika ümber, ilma et oleks vaja eelnevalt teha oletusi tegevuse ulatuse või territooriumi kohta.

Toetudes eestvedamise ja ääremaastumise alasele kirjandusele lõin oma töö teoreetilise ja analüütilise raamistitu andmete kogumiseks. Taustainfo saamiseks ja juhtumite valiku eel tegin mõlemas riigis esialgsed intervjuud. Kui juhtumid olid valitud, tegin 53 intervjuud inimestega, kes osalevad eestvedamisprotsessides. Iga kaasuse juures intervjuueerisin vähemalt 10 respondenti ja Eestis ma kordasin mõnda intervjuud, et paremini mõista kohalikku konteksti. Ma kasutasin ka teisi (etnograafilisemaid) meetodeid nagu osalusvaatlus ja mitteformaalne intervjuueerimine, et mõista külaelanike praktikaid, suhteid ja diskursusi. Intervjuud transkribeeriti, kodeeriti ja maandatud teooria lähenemist kasutades (Corbin and Strauss 1990).

Eesti ja Madalmaade institutsionaalne kontekst

Võrreldes Eestit ja Madalmaid kui üsna maid on tähtis võrrelda mõningaid üldisi näitajaid, mis iseloomustavad administratiivset struktuuri, maaelu ja regionaalpoliitikat jms. Mõlemas riigis keskendub majanduspoliitika keskuste arendamisele, ent Madalmaades kombineeritakse seda detsentraliseerimisega, samas kui Eestis on täheldatav enam tsentraliseeriv lähenemine. Võrreldes Eesti institutsionaalselt õhukest keskkonda Madalmaade väga tihedalt reguleeritud keskkonnaga, näeme, kuidas need väga erinevad institutsioonid püüavad tegeleda ebaühtlase arenguga. Siiski on olemas ka sarnasusi. Mõlemad riigid liiguvad neoliberaalselt enama omavastutuse, aktiivse kodanikuks olemise ja valitsuse vähema sekkumise poole kohalikul tasandil ning seega ka ääremaades. Mõlemad riigid on inspireeritud uue avaliku halduse (NPM) mõtteviisist, kumbki erineval moel.

Põhitulemused

1. uurimisküsimus. Eestvedamispraktikad ja eestvedajad

Erinevad praktikad ja erinevad tegutsejad

Kõigi nelja juhtumi korral olid eestvedamispraktikad suunatud sellele, et leida lahendusi ääremaadele iseloomulikele probleemidele (vähenev rahvastik, piisavate teenuste pakkumine, ühinemisprotsessid). Sarnasuste kõrval leidsime ka erinevusi eestvedamispraktikates. Eestvedamispraktikate /mõistmise/mitmekesisuse kõrval avastasime samalaadse mitmekesisuse ka eestvedamisprotsessides tegutsetajate seas. Nendel tegutsetajatel on kõigis uuritud kohtades väga erinev taust, alates haridusjuhtidest poliitikuteni ning muuseumidirektoritest väljaspool antud kohta olevate toetajateni.

Ressursid ja mastaap on kõigi kaasuste puhul oluline

Esimene ja kõige olulisem tulemus on inimeste ja nende nn jõuderessursside (*slack resources*) (Beer and Clower 2013; Sotarauta and Beer 2017) olulisus. Eriti ääremaa kohtades, kus üks suuremaid probleeme on (sageli noorte) inimeste väljaränne suurematesse linnadesse, on inimressurss kriitilise tähtsusega. Selle ressursi kättesaadavus eestvedajaile oli erinev, sõltudes liidri taustast. Seepärast on vajalik mõelda väga erinevate eestvedamise allikatele peale nagu Hambleton (2015) on märkinud. Mõned kohalikud juhid said tasu oma töö eest, kuid enamus kohalikke eestvedajaid töötavad vabatahtlikult. Võttes arvesse, et paljud liidrid ohverdavad oma vaba aega ja ressursse, siis nende eestvedamispraktikate kestmine sõltub üksikutest võtmeisikutest ja seetõttu on nende kohtade areng üsna haavatav. Samamoodi võib ka territooriumi suurus, millele keskendutakse, tugevalt mõjutada eestvedamise võimalusi. See tähenda, et territoriaalne ulatus mõjutab antud kohas eeldatavat eestvedamise tüüpi (Ayres 2014). Need on kontekstuaalsed tegurid, mida peab arvestama, kui võrrelda erineva ulatusega kohapõhist eestvedamist eri riikides.

Erinevad eestvedamise diskursused

Nii kirjanduses kui uuringutes võib kohata erinevaid arusaamu eestvedamise kohta. Selles uuringus lähtusin praktikate ja praktikatega seotud olevate inimeste avatud dünaamilisest uurimisest. Määratlesin eestvedamist kui “grupitegutsajatega koha loomist” (Mabey ja Freeman 2010, 509). See uuring läks kaugemale sageli kasutatud funktsionalistlikust arusaamast eestvedamise kohta, nii et eestvedamiseks ei loeta vaid neid tegevusi, mis viivad majanduslike tagajärgedeni nagu SKT tõus või kriisijärgsele taastumisele, vaid eestvedamispraktikateks võib pidada ka kohaliku liuvälja ehitamist või ühise lõunasöögi korraldamist külaelanikele. Otsustavaks sai nende praktikate tõlgendamine eestvedamiseks kohalike tegutsajate poolt, seega liikusime eestvedamise interpretatiivsema käsitluse poole (Alvesson and Spicer 2012). Sageli esinesid antud kohas kõrvuti erinevad arusaamad. Dialoogiline ja avatud lähenemine, mida rakendati selles uuringus,

võimaldas näha neid erinevaid arusaamu üheskoos, välistamata eestvedamise diskursusega mitesobivaid praktika liike.

Lisaks arusaamade erinevusele eri kohtades, olid mõned tulemused sarnased kõigi juhtumite puhul. Läbirääkimisi, lahkarmuste ja legitiimsusega tegelemist peeti kohapõhise eestvedamisprotsessi vältimatuteks koostisosadeks. Kui mõnel juhul tundus eestvedamine esmapilgul olevat konsensuslik ja üsna harmooniline, siis lähemal vaatlusel tulid esile lahkemide erinevad vormid. See on vastavuses kirjanduses täheldatava tähelepanu nihkega tulemustelt protsesside suunas (Sotarauta 2005) ja sügavama arusaamaga eestvedamisest kellegi huvides (Sotarauta jt. 2017). Ka kogukonna eestvedamise alases kirjanduses pööratakse sellele üha enam tähelepanu. Legitiimsuse kujunemist vaadeldakse siin nii aktsepteeritud protsessi kui saavutatud tulemuste kaudu (Connelly 2011; Connelly jt. 2006). Selles tähenduses legitiimsuse arvestamine hõlmab ka tulemusele orienteeritud eestvedamist. Seetõttu võib legitiimsust, ükskõik kuidas seda mõista, pidada kohapõhise eestvedamise seisukohast keskseks mõisteks.

2. uurimisküsimus. Eestvedamine kohtades: mainekujunduse näide

Selles peatükis käsitletakse kohta kui paljude erinevate koosluste kogumit. Kuigi paljusust (*multiplicity*) saab mõista ja analüüsida mitmetes vormides, siis siin analüüsitakse mainekujundust kui parimat näidet eestvedamispraktikatest, millega kõik perifeersed kohad tegelevad ühel või teisel moel.

Kõigi uuritud juhtumite puhul ilmnes, et koha maine on oluline ja sel on “reaalsed” materiaalsed tagajärjed. Idealiseeriv (Kihnu), stigmatiseeriv (Schoondijke), destigmatiseeriv (Pekela) või teatud vormis ennast stigmatiseeriv (Järva-Jaani) imago (kuvand) oli kohtade jaoks oluline. Kuigi kohalikud tegijad võivad siin etendada aktiivset rolli, siis ka kaugemal asuvad tegutsejad osalevad koha maine kujundamisel, näiteks üleriiklik meedia, valitsus, UNESCO jne. Kõigi juhtumite puhul oli oluline (vanema ja uuema sotsiaal)meedia kasutamine. Juurdepääs uuele sotsiaalmeediale andis lisavõimaluse enamatele seni vähetuntud kohtadele liituda alternatiivsete võrgustikega. Eri juhtumite puhul erines kontekst, milles mainekujundust sai (või ei saanud) strateegiliselt kasutada. Kui kohaga on seotud rahvusvaheliselt tunnustatud märk või riigisisene stigma, mõjutab see konteksti, milles eestvedajad saavad mainet kujundada. Kindla stigмага kohtadel oli palju keerulisem seda muuta millekski positiivseks.

Kuna imago moodustub kõikvõimalikest erinevatest allikatest, mida ei ole võimalik kontrollida koha liidrite poolt, tajuti oma piiratust maine kujundamisel. Lisaks positiivsele või negatiivsele kuvandile või imago puudumisele, olid olulised ka teised ressursid. Selleks, et mainest kasu saada, peeti oluliseks hoida suhteid, seega ka võrgustumine on siin oluline. Leidsin, et eestvedamine mainekujundamise kaudu tähendab lõppkokkuvõttes taas läbirääkimisi. Sisemised läbirääkimised selle üle, kas üldse teha mainekujundust ja millist kuvandit endast luua. Vertikaalsed läbirääkimised kohalike liidrite ja väliste otsustajate vahel on kusjuures veelgi vähem kontrollitavad. Tasakaalu leidmine siseläbirääkimiste ja väliste

ootuste vahel on keeruline (Gray and Sinclair 2005), kuid kohapõhisele eestvedamisele olemuslikult omane element.

Nelja juhtumi puhul saab järeldada, et eestvedamine mainekujunduse kaudu on ääremaalistes kohtades oluline strateegia. Mil määral need strateegiad on kohtadele kasulikud, sõltub kontekstist, mis on erinev eri kohtades. Lisaks sellele, kuna mainekujundus on paratamatult valiv ((Boisen jt. 2011) ja kuvandid, mis kerkivad esile nende kohtade puhul, ei ole kunagi täielikud, siis vajavad need läbirääkimist, milline võiks olla koha lugu. Kui ei tunnustata nende läbirääkimiste vajalikkust, siis ei saada aru ka ääremaade eestvedamise keerukusest. Selline vaade võib taandada eestvedamisprotsessi jälle lihtsustatud mudelile, milles huvid on ühesuunalised, koostöö on normiks ja konteksti loovad tegurid eeldatavasti soodsad. On oht, et lihtsustav arusaam kohapõhisest eestvedamisest võib viia koha liidrite süüdistamiseni selles, et nad ei suuda ebarealistliku mudeli kohaselt tegutseda (Plüschke-Altöf ja Grootens 2018). Seda asjaolu tuleb arvestada kohtade ääremaastumisel, kus koha brändimist ja mainekujundust nähakse ühe viimase abinõuna kohtades, kus materiaalseid ressursse ei pruugi alati olla. Sõltuvus mainekujunduse strateegiatest, ilma kriitiliselt reflekteerimata selle taga olevaid poliitikaid ja oluliste kontekstuaalsete tegurite tähtsust, väärib enamat tähelepanu mainekujunduse uuringutes.

3. uurimisküsimus. Kohtade eestvedamine

Kui 6. peatükk vaatles suhteid kohtade sees, siis 7. peatükis pööratakse peamist tähelepanu sellele, kuidas kohtasid juhitakse seoses nende kohaväliste sidemetega. Kaasuste analüüs selles osas, et arenguprotsesside eestvedamise valikud on üsna mitmekesised. Keskse tähtsusega relatsioonilistes strateegiates on omada õigeid võrgustikke, mis alati ei pruugi olla institutsionaalsed või poliitilised võrgustikud, vaid võivad sisaldada ka sotsiaalmeediat, isiklike suhteid ja mõnikord juhuslike kohtumisi. Kohalikel tegutsejatel ääremaal ei ole alati lihtne luua selliseid võrgustikke nullist alates, seetõttu tuleb võrgustikke vaadelda kui struktuurselt piiravaid tegureid, mille üle kohalikel liidritel on vaid piiratud kontroll. Kohapõhise eestvedamise mudelid, mis rõhutavad sidemete ja võrgustike loomise vajadust, tõdevad harva raskusi nende sidemete loomisel. Ka Herrschel (2011) on märkinud, et ei ole kerge olla vastu võetud neisse võrgustikesse ning võrgustikud võivad isegi toimida välistava mehhanismina. Kui määratlenda “ideaalset” perifeersete kohtade põhist eestvedamist (kus sageli puudub juurdepääs välisvõrgustikele) kui paratamatult võrgustunud, asetab see suure vastutuse kohalikele tegutsejatele luua selliseid võimalusi, mida ei ole kerge saavutada.

Kui keskenduda eestvedamisele kui vaid võrgustunud tegevusele, ei tunda eestvedamist ära teistes kohtades, kus selliseid struktuurseid võrgustikke ei ole ja isegi süüdistatakse liidreid milleski, mida nad ei saa kergesti muuta. See on kooskõlas Nagy, Nagy, ja Timári (2012) kahtlusega, et kas enam võrgustunud valitsemine annab ääremaa kohtadele uusi võimalusi. Eriti siis, kui kohaliku eestvedamise ja poliitika uurijad üha uuesti rõhutavad neid võimalusi ning ei vaatle kriitiliselt välistamise struktuurset loomust ning seetõttu süüdistavad kohta ja tegijaid, kes ei suuda sidemeid luua, nende isoleerituse pärast. Minnes tagasi

Herschel (2011, 90) tabeli juurde 2. peatükis, tähendaks see, et kohad, mis on nii ruumiliselt kui sotsio-kommunikatiivselt perifeersed, langevad alanevasse spiraali, millest on raske välja pääseda.

Huvitav on ka tegutsejate mitmekesisus, kes osalevad relatsioonilistes strateegiatel, nagu ilmneb ka peatükis mainekujunduse kohta. Tegutsejad, kes alati ei ole kohaliku kogukonna poolt ametlikult tunnustatud, mõjutavad tugevalt kohtade arengut. See seab küsimuse alla väljaspool kohta asuvate liidrite mõju nende praktikate legitiimsusele. Tegutsejaid, kellel on mõju koha arengule, kuid tingimata ei tööta nende kohtade nimel, võib iseloomustada kui ilma kohata liidreid (*placeless leaders*) (Hambleton 2015b). Neil juhtudel tuleks eestvedamisprotsesside “eduka” võrgustumise kõrval mõelda ka sellele, kes saab neist jõupingutustest kasu, kas liidrid tegelikult räägivad kogukonna nimel ja kas me üldse saame siin rääkida kohapõhisest eestvedamisest. Ses mõttes selle uurimisküsimuse kolmas element, mis rõhutas eestvedamise võrgustunud loomust, seostub uuesti legitiimsuse küsimusega, mida käsitleti 5. peatükis.

Samuti on ilmne eestvedamise strateegiaid ümbritsevate kontekstuaalsete tegurite tähtsus. Läbi “planeeritud” ääremaastumise protsessi näitas Schoondijke juhtum, et kohalikud strateegiad uute elanike ligimeelitamiseks olid piiratud kõrgemal tasandil kujundatud poliitikate poolt. Samasugust dünaamikat näeme, kui vaatame omavalitsuste ühinemisprotsesse Eestis. Kõigi kolme juhtumi puhul, mis olid haaratud ühinemisprotsessi, nähti selles potentsiaalseid piiranguid iseseisvusele. Kohtade liidrid kartsid kaotada sideme kohalike elanikega. Suurendades sõna otseses mõttes ruumilist distantssi liidrite ja kohtade vahel, tajuti legitiimsust ohustatuna. See viitab territooriumide ja territoriaalsete poliitikate olulisusele (relatsioonilise) eestvedamise potentsiaali suhtes. Territoriaalsete poliitikate puhul, mis eelistasid suuremaid asulaid väiksemate külade arendamisele, kalduti ignoreerima just neid kohti, mis ei olnud võrgustunud. Sel kombel kohad, mida tõrjuti suhete süsteemis, ei suutnud leida endale kohta ka territoriaalses süsteemis, kus jätkuvalt eelistatakse linlikke alasid.

Üldised järeldused

Selles väitekirjas võib leida kolme laadi järeldusi, millest igaüks puudutab kohapõhise eestvedamise kriitilise käsitluse erinevaid elemente. Esimene järelduste grupp puudutab eestvedamise mõistet, teine – eestvedamist läbirääkimistes ja kolmas keskendub eestvedamisele kontekstile. Tabel 9 esitab peatükkide peamised tulemused.

Teoreetilised järeldused

Eestvedamise kontseptsioon

Et selle uuringu aluseks on võetud dialoogiline lähenemine kohapõhisele eestvedamisele, võimaldas see kasutada erinevaid eestvedamise lähenemisi. Seejuures on rakendatud protsessikeskset ontoloogiat, mille puhul eestvedamist vaadeldakse kui vastasmõjude pidevat voolu, aga mitte kui teatud lõpp-punkti. Eestvedamise mõiste üle toimuvad pidevad vaidlused ja ümbermõtestamised ning sellel võib eri kontekstides olla erinev tähendus. Saab välja tuua eestvedamise harmoonilise ja

koostöise (*collaborative*) (Tourish 2014) või alati positiivsete muutusega seotud ja seetõttu ideoloogilise diskursuse (Blom 2016). Teades eestvedamise erinevaid määratlusi on huvitav avastada, kuidas seda mõistet konstrueeritakse eri kohtades. Kelly (2014, 915–16) kirjutab eestvedamisest koguni kui tühjast tähistajast (*empty signifier*).

Protsessikeskne lähenemine võimaldab mitte ainult aktsepteerida erinevaid arusaamu eestvedamisest, vaid see aitab ka sügavamalt mõista legitiimsuse probleeme kohapõhises eestvedamises, millele osutatakse ka sotsiaalsete liikumiste alases kirjanduses (Geddes and Sullivan 2011). Kui mõistame paremini, millised ideed seostuvad nende mõistetega lokaalsel tasandil, suudame kriitiliselt hinnata ka uurijate eneste eeldusi selle kohta, mida eestvedamise mõiste peaks hõlmama. Kui suudame seletada, miks kasutatakse teatud arusaamu eestvedamisest, võime jõuda teatud kriitilise performatiivsuseni (Alvesson and Spicer 2012). Üks huvitavaid uurimisküsimusi edaspidiseks kohapõhise eestvedamise alal on analüüsida, kuidas täidetakse näiliselt tühi ruum meie kujutluse ja eestvedamise mõiste vahel ja kellel on võim seda ruumi täita. Selles mõttes on normatiivne mitte ainult eestvedamine, vaid ka kavandatav areng. Sellise arusaama kohaselt puudutab eestvedamine oma eri tähendustes rohkem uue loomist kui eestvedamist.

Seepärast soovin kasutada eestvedamise mõistet kriitilisemalt ja vastata Zoller ja Fairhurst'i (2007) üleskutsule dialoogiks eestvedamise ja kriitiliste uurijate vahel. Selles tähenduses saaks kohapõhise eestvedamise kriitiline käsitlus sügavamalt uurida seda, mida Sotarauta (2016) nimetas tuleviku otsinguks, erinevalt tuleviku määratlemisest. See seostub enam ka eestvedamise mõiste emantsipatoorse potentsiaaliga, mida ei tohiks unustada (Alvesson and Spicer 2012). Kohapõhise eestvedamise kriitilisemaks käsitluseks pakutakse antud väitekirjas kohapõhise eestvedamise järgmist määratlust: "konstrueeritud protsess, milles tegutsesja(d) teadlikult töötab(vad) koha tuleviku huvides".

Kriitiline kohapõhine eestvedamine selles mõttes tähendab:

- eestvedamise kontseptsiooni aluseks olevate normatiivsete eelduste välja-toomist;
- keskendumist legitimeerimisele protsessijuhtide ja alluvate (eestvedajate ja järgijate) vahel;
- keskendumist läbirääkimistele kui kohapõhise eestvedamise integraalsele osale;

konteksti ja struktuursete ressursside hoomamist, millest võrsub eestvedamine.

Eestvedamine läbirääkimisten Selle uuringu teine oluline järeldus on, et kui rakendada eestvedamise mõistet kohaloomele, muutub eestvedamise protsess automaatselt läbirääkimiste protsessiks. Kuna tähelepanu on kohapõhisel eestvedamisel, tähendab see ka vajadust arvestada koha mitmekesisusega, mistõttu on esmatähtis kohtade ja ka kohapõhise eestvedamise mõistmisel hoomata "sedasama kohalikku mätast" (Amin 2004, 39). Kohapõhine eestvedamine on vältimatult eestvedamine läbirääkimiste kaudu, sest Massey (2005) sõnul ruum

tähendab mitmekesisust, ilma milleta ei ole ruumi ja vastupidi – ilma ruumita ei ole mitmekesisus võimalik.

Eelnevast lähtuvalt tegeleb kohapõhine eestvedamine eelkõige vaidlustega, mis ei pruugi toimuda harmooniliselt. Vaidlused selle üle, kes juhib ja mille poole ning milline koha kuvand on esiplaanil, on olulised läbirääkimiste teemad ja on protsessipõhiselt mõistetud kui eestvedamise koostisosad. See on seotud Sotarauda (2018) artikliga, milles autor eristas 5 eestvedamise lõksu nutika spetsialiseerumise strateegiates. Kõrvuti vaid positiivsete tulemuste näitamisega, “on vaja olla teadlik regionaalse arengu ja innovatsiooni poliitilistest ja sotsiaalsetest dimensioonidest ning mitte käsitleda seda vaid kui tehnilist või majanduslikku protseduuri”. Eestvedamise uuringutes tuleks enam tähelepanu pöörata vaidlusalastele aladele, milles eestvedamist teostatakse. Kui püüame tuua kooskõla puudumise kohapõhise eestvedamise pilti, saame arvestada ka eestvedamise taga olevat poliitikat ja näidata, kes ja kuidas toimib vaidlusalastel aladel, kus rolli mängivad mitte ainult kohalikult legitimeeritud, vaid ka kaugemal asuvad tegutsejad – ei ole kerge eestvedamisest aru saada. Eestvedamine on seega oma olemuselt poliitiline, sest ta jõustab teatud liidreid teiste arvel, eelistab teatud tulevikku teiste tulevike arvel ja esitab teatud kuvandeid teiste kuvandite arvel. Selles uuringus on neid protsesse kirjeldatud kui kohapõhise eestvedamise vältimatuid koostisosasid. Kohapõhise eestvedamise uuringud võiksid seetõttu enam märgata selle olemuslikult poliitilisest iseloomu.

Eestvedamise kontekst

Kolmas põhijäreldus puudutab eestvedamise konteksti. Eriti kui vaadeldakse eestvedamist ääremaalistes kohtades, on kohapõhise eestvedamise eduks kriitilise tähtsusega inimressursi kättesaadavus. Ääremaal, kus väljaränne on tõsine probleem, on inimressursi nappus tõsiseks piiranguks. Lisaks sellele mõjutab koha maine, sõltuvalt sellest, kas see on “koht pärapõrgus” või turismimagnet, mainekujundusstrateegia edukust. Ka võrgustikke peetakse regionaalse arengu keskseks ressursiks, kuid väitekirjas on näidatud, et neid ei ole alati kerge luua. Võrgustiku loomine nõuab samuti ressursse, aega ja tegutsejate jõupingutusi. Mõnedel juhtudel olid võrgustikud tõepoolest jõustavaks tingimuseks, teistel juhtudel võrgustikud piirasid kohtade arengut ja hoidsid neid isoleerituna.

Tugevalt võrgustunud eestvedamisel olid tagajärjed ka legitiimsusele. Hadjimichalis ja Hudson (2006) hoiatavad selle eest, et mitte liiga kergelt loobuda “vanadest” demokraatlikest normidest, sest siiani on need kõige kaasavamad süsteemid, mis meil on. Eriti need elemendid, mis teevad partnerluse ja halduskorralduse atraktiivseks (mitteformaalsus ja paindlikkus) võivad osutada välistavateks praktikateks nende silmis, kes jäävad väljaspoole (Connelly jt. 2006). Samamoodi hoiatab Hambleton (2015) selle eest, et kasutades ilma kohata liidrite (placeless leaders) mõistet (vastandina kohapõhistele liidritele), võib turupõhine mõtlemine ja turuühiskonna loomine toimuda legitiimsuse ja demokraatia arvel. Lisaks märgivad Nicholds jt. (2017), et nutikate linnade kontekstis, kus liidripositsioonil olevate tegutsejate jaoks keerukus kasvab, on oht, et kaovad mitte ainult negatiivsed bürokraatiaga seotud nähtused, vaid ka

positiivsed nagu läbipaistvus ja vastutus. Nad hoiatavad selle eest, et liidrid sellistes komplekssetes tingimustes ei juhinduks “ebatervest isiklike js parteihuvide taotlemisest või turuloogika agendast” (Nicholds jt. 2017, 257). Eriti siis, kui territoriaalsus näib kaotavat oma tähtsust (poliitikas ja teoreetilises diskursuses) ja relatsioonilised ja võrgustunud strateegiad muutuvad üha tähtsamaks, muutub esindatuse probleem veelgi hapramaks ja tähtsamaks. Selgelt välja ütlemata, et esindusdemokraatia kaitseb alati kaasavaid kooskondi, liikumine enam võrgustunud valitsemise poole osutab vajadusele kindlustada kohapõhise eestvedamise legitiimsus.

Kui kirjanduses jätkub nende parimate praktikate eeskujuks toomine, kohustatakse sellega vähem võrgustunud kohtade liidreid vastutama tingimuse eest, mida neil ei ole kerge mõjutada. Võrgustumisel põhineva arengumudeli loomise oht on selles, et see on automaatselt samas ka väga välistav. Nagu Herrschel (2011, 97) on märkinud: “Võrgustike olemus tähendab seda, et ruum tegelikult taandatakse kitsasteks suhtlemis- ja vastastikmõju teedeks tegutsejate vahel, selle asemel et see oleks kahemõõtmeline territoorium”. Antud ääremaaliste kohtade eestvedamise uuring näitas, et mõnede “eduka” eestvedamise seisukohalt esmatähtsate ressursside kättesaadavust ei saa käsitleda endastmõistetavana. Selliste vähem soodsate olude märkamine parandaks *kõigi* kohtade eestvedamist.

Poliitikasoovitused Põhijärelduste kokkuvõtte lubab anda soovitusi poliitikakujundajatele, kes tegelevad kohapõhise eestvedamisega. On tähtis välja öelda, mis laadi arengut kavandatakse eestvedamist stimuleerides, sest need on poliitilised valikud. Kui poliitikas tuuakse eeskujuks tehnoloogilised ja mudeli-laadsed edulood, alahinnatakse maalähedasemaid, kuid samuti eestvedamisrohkeid praktikaid. Kui poliitika stimuleerib kohapõhist eestvedamist, peaks olema selge, milliseid tulemusi ja protsesse see kavatseb ergutada ja tuleks välja öelda, millised normatiivsed eeldused on eestvedamise mõiste aluseks. Tuleks avada legitiimsuse eestvedamise dialoog. Kui teatud tulemuste saavutamine võib olla üks tee praktikate legitimeerimiseks, siis teine tähtis tegur kohapõhises eestvedamises on legitiimsus läbi sidemete oma järgijatega. Liikudes enam võrgustunud ühiskonna poole, milles endised demokraatlikud protseduurid võivad jääda tagaplaanile, on formaalse ja mitteformaalse eestvedamise ees liidrite oluline ülesanne pöörata tähelepanu sidemetele oma järgijatega ning seejuures alati mõelda küsimusele: eestvedamine kelle jaoks?

Regionaalarengu poliitika kujundamisel on tingimata vaja arvesse võtta, et eestvedamise tekkimine on alati seotud ligipääsuga ressurssidele. Nagu on märkinud Beer ja Clower (2013), on liiga palju tähelepanu pööratud nn. edulugudele, mis kujutavad eestvedamist kui alati edukat ning puudutavad vähem piiranguid ja raskusi, millega liidrid neis paigus silmitsi on. Kui endist viisi mõista liidriks olemist privilegeeritud ja võrgustunud tähenduses ja kujutada neid eeskujusid kui parimaid praktikaid, hakatakse süüdistama kohta, kus need soodsad tingimused puuduvad, mittehakkamasaamises ja mudelisse mitte sobitumises. Mitmekülgsem arusaam kohapõhisest eestvedamisest, mis suudab näha ka vähemsoodsaid tingimusi, on seetõttu edasimineku mõistmaks eestvedamist kui kontekstuaalset protsessi ning mitte kui mudelipõhist edulugude tõlgendust.

Kui rääkida tegijatele toetuvast eestvedamisest, siis on kriitilise tähtsusega inimressursi kättesaadavus, et agentsusele orienteeritud strateegia õnnestuks. Seetõttu “eestvedamise puudumine” (Beer and Clower 2013, 11) on tõsiseks ohuks kohtades, milles on palju väljarännet. Poliitikakujundamisel on seetõttu tähtis ka teadvustada seoseid teatud poliitika eesmärkide vahel. Nähes ääremaastumise otsest seost linnastumisega tähendab samas, et linnapiirkondade arengule suunatud poliitikatel on tagajärjed ka teiste alade jaoks. Seetõttu on regionaalpoliitika kavandamisel oluline, et nii linna- kui maapoliitikad oleksid vastavuses ning mitte isoleeritud teineteisest. Ühitades need poliitika eesmärgid, saab ka regionaalpoliitikat teostada relatsioonilisemal moel. Oluline on ka institutsionaalne kontekst. Uuritud kohtades olime tunnistajaks väga erinevale institutsionaalsetele raamistikule, alates tsentraliseeritud ja *laissez-faire* Eestist kuni Madalmaade detsentraliseerituma keskkonnani. Õhuke institutsionaalne raamistik Eestis ei viinud aga automaatselt isoleeritud ääremaastumiseni ning ka Madalmaade institutsionaalne tihedus ei loonud automaatselt ääremaal soodsat keskkonda. Institutsionaalne keskkond on seetõttu kohapõhise eestvedamise jaoks pigem oluline võimalus kui määrav tingimus, nagu on arvatud. Uuringutulemused näitasid, et mõlemas riigis esinevad tegurid nagu ressursside kättesaadavus (inimesed, võrgustikud, kuvand) ja üldine usk enese hakkamasaamisse olid olulised kohapõhise eestvedamise võimaluste jaoks, sõltumata institutsionaalsest keskkonnast. Sellisel juhul oleks vaja anda kohtadele piisavat paindlikkust, et kohapõhine eestvedamine suudaks ise määratleda nende kohtade tuleviku, samal ajal kujundades regiooni, mis piisavalt toetaks kohtade arengut. Selles suhtes soovitakse (Horlings jt. 2018) seostada eestvedamine enam kohapõhiste institutsioonidega, arendada kohalikku võimekust ja delegeerida võim võimalikult madalale tasandile.

Üldiselt tuleks mõlema riigi puhul vaadelda usku regionaalsesse konkurentsivõimesse ja ise hakkama saamiseni kui piiratud strateegiat. Kui valitsus tõmbub tagasi ja inimesed toetuvad üha enam hoolekandeteenuste osas vabatahtlikele, suureneb ebavõrdsus nende külade vahel, kus on aktiivsed liidrid, ja nende vahel, kus liidreid ei ole (Steenbekkers jt. 2013). Selles valguses võivad poliitikad, mis on suunatud selliste kohtade arengule, mis juba on edukad, veelgi süvendada ebavõrdsust. Eriti siis, kui omavastutuse rõhutamine toimub koos olemasolevate struktuursete raskustega, muutub tõsiseks probleemiks kasvav ebavõrdsus, mida veelgi süvendab tähelepanu edule ja selle stimuleerimine (Team Midterm Review Bevolkingsdaling 2014). Seetõttu peaks ühiskond ja poliitikud hakkama mõtlema sellele, et loobuda konkurentsipõhisest raamistusest kohtade arengus (Bristow 2005, 2010), milles on ära määratud teatud arenguparadigma. Kohapõhine eestvedamine on selles mõttes võimalus töötada koha uue (määratlemata) tuleviku suunas. Selleks et tulevik ja ruum oleks avatud (Massey 2005), peab ka kohapõhine eestvedamine olema avatud.

11. CURRICULUM VITAE

Name Gerdien Margreeth Grootens
Date of Birth 01.04.1989
Nationality Dutch
Email martiene.grootens@gmail.com

Education

- 2014–... Doctoral studies, University of Tartu, Estonia
PhD thesis title: “Leadership of peripheral places: a comparative study of leadership processes in Estonian and Dutch peripheral places”
Secondment at VNG International in The Hague, The Netherlands
- 2011–2013 MSc in International Development Studies, Wageningen University, The Netherlands
Major in Development Sociology, specialisation Rural Sociology
Minor in Recent Western Sociology (University of Tilburg, The Netherlands) and minor in Migration and Integration Studies (University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands)
Msc thesis title: “Practicing Agency in Changing Structures”
- 2007–2010 BSc in International Development Studies, Wageningen University, The Netherlands
Major in Development Economics, minor in Disaster Studies
Bsc thesis title “From Resource curse to Resource Blessing”
- 2000–2007 Pre-university secondary education, Vechtdal College Hardenberg
Specialisation: Economics and Society. Extra optionals in French and History

Employment

- 2018–... Policy advisor, Province of Zeeland
- 2014–2017 University of Tartu, Early Stage Researcher
Part of the Marie Curie Initial Training Network, RegPol² project – Socio-economic and Political Responses to Regional Polarisation in Central and Eastern Europe.
- 2009–2014 Diverse jobs: Pharmacy employee, Bennekomse Apotheek, Bennekom, Kiosk employee, camping de Roos, Ommen

Internships and Voluntary Work

- 2017 Volunteer with local care cooperative “Anna Zorgt”
- 2013–2014 Internship with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Kingdom Relations, The Hague, The Netherlands
- 2014 Volunteer with Voorleesexpress, Ede, the Netherlands
- 2006–2007 Volunteer Refugee Council, the Netherlands

Other Academic Activities

- 2014–2017 Supervision of BA thesis (successfully defended)
- Teaching of Bachelor course “Human Resources Management and Organization Behaviour”

12. ELULOOKIRJELDUS

Nimi Gerdien Margreeth Grootens
Sünniaeg 01.04.1989
Rahvus hollandlane
E-post martiene.grootens@gmail.com

Haridus

- 2014–... Doktoriõpe, Tartu Ülikool, Eesti
Doktoritöö: Kohapõhine eestvedamine ääremaal: Eesti ja Hollandi perifeersete kohtade võrdlusuuring
- 2011–2013 MSc rahvusvahelise arengu uuringutes, Wageningeni ülikool, Holland
Peaaine arendussotsioloogias, spetsialiseerumine maapiirkondade sotsioloogiale
Kõrval erialad kaasaegses läänesotsioloogias (Tilburgi ülikool, Holland) ja rände- ja integratsiooniuringutes (Amsterdami ülikool, Holland)
Magistritöö “Harjutusagentuur muutuvates struktuurides”
- 2007–2010 BSc rahvusvahelise arengu uuringutes, Wageningeni ülikool, Holland
Peaaine arenguökonomika ja kõrval eriala katastroofiuringud.
BSc lõputöö “Ressursi nuhtlusest ressursside pühitsemiseni”
- 2000–2007 Ülikoolieelne keskharidus, Vechtdali kolledž Hardenberg
Spetsialiseerumine: majandus ja ühiskond. Lisavalikud prantsuse keeles ja ajaloos

Töökogemus

- 2018–... Zeelandi provintsi poliitiline nõunik
- 2014–2017 Tartu Ülikooli nooremteadur
Osa Marie Curie koolituse põhivõrgustikust, RegPol² projekt – Kesk- ja Ida Euroopa piirkondliku polariseerumise sotsiaal-majanduslikud ja poliitilised vastused.
- 2009–2014 Teised ajutised töökohad: Apteegi töötaja, Bennekomse Apotheek, Bennekom, Kioski töötaja, Camose de Roos, Ommen

Praktikad ja vabatahtlik töö

- 2017 Vabatahtlik kohalikus hooldusühistus “Anna Zorgt”
- 2013–2014 praktika sise – ja kuningriigi välissuhete ministeeriumis, Haag, Holland
- 2014 Vabatahtlik Voorleesexpressiga, Ede, Holland
- 2006–2007 Vabatahtlike Pagulaste Nõukogu, Holland

Muu akadeemiline tegevus

- 2014–2017 bakalaureusetöö juhendamine (edukalt kaitstud)
- Bakalaureuseõppe “Personalijuhtimine ja organisatsiooni käitumine” õpetamine

Appendix 1: Overview of interviews and participatory observations

1.1 Table with interview respondents for the exploratory phase

Respondents in Estonia

ID	Function	Sector	Level
National level			
E1	Former policy maker & current academic	Government & Academic	National
E2	Policy officer Regional Policy (Ministry of Finance)	Government	National
E3	Regional and local development consultant	Consultancy	National
E4	Formerly involved in the Rural Movement	NGO	National
E5	University of Tallinn	Academic	National
E6	University of Tartu	Academic	National
Regional Level			
J1	County governor	Government	Regional – Järvamaa
J2	Regional development officer	Government	Regional – Järvamaa
J3	Local government association	Government	Regional – Järvamaa
J4	LEADER representative	NGO/private sector	Regional – Järvamaa
P1	Regional development officer	Government	Regional – Pärnumaa

Respondents in the Netherlands

ID	Function	Sector	Level
National level			
N1	Association of local municipalities	Government	National
N2	National programme against shrinkage	Government	National
N3	University of Groningen	Academics	National
N4	University of applied sciences	Applied research	National
N5	University of Groningen	Academics	National
Regional level			
Z1	Regional research institute	Applied research	Regional – Zeeland
Z2	Regional policy advisor	Government	Regional – Zeeland
G1	Knowledge network	Applied research	Regional – Groningen
G2	Regional policy advisor	Government	Regional – Groningen
G3	Regional policy advisor	Government	Regional – Groningen

Apart from the interviews with people from academia, regional government and knowledge institutes, I also visited several meetings organised by knowledge institutes and policymakers in as well Estonia as in the Netherlands. These meetings were often in the native language and therefore it was difficult to gain much additional input in the Estonian meetings. However, they helped in meeting people and getting a more overall picture in the exploratory phase of the research.

1.2 List of respondents from Case Study Kihnu

Respondent nr	Date	Main field(s)
Interviews		
K1 (2)	Apr 15 Dec 15	Regional government
K2 (2)	Apr 15 Jan 16	Former local government, national government, current private sector
K3 (3)	Apr 15 Jan 6 Aug 16	Local government
K4 (3)	Apr 15 Jan 16 Aug 16	Culture, entrepreneurship, education, politics
K5	Jan 16	Ministry of Culture
K6	Jan 16	Culture, education
K7	Jan 16	Former “first lady” and academia
K8	Jan 16	Education
K9	Jan 16	Local politics, entrepreneurship
K10	Jan 16	NGO
K11	Jan 16	Entrepreneur, active volunteer
K12	Feb 16	Culture, NGO, national politics
K13	Aug. 16	Entrepreneurship
Participant observation		
K14	Dec 16	Kihnu Cultural Space Meeting
K15	Jan 16	Women knitting group
K16	Jan 16	Participatory observation, ministry visit to Kihnu
K17	July 16	Participatory observation at Kihnu mere pidu

1.3 List of Respondents from Case Study Järva-Jaani

Respondent nr	Date	Main field(s)
Interviews		
J1	Feb 16	Regional government
J2	Feb 16	Regional government
J3	Feb 16	Local government association
J4	Feb 16	LEADER representative
J5 (2)	Mar 16 Aug 16	Local government, NGOs, active citizen
J6	Mar 16	Culture, NGO, active citizen
J7	Mar 16	Youth work, NGOs church
J8	Mar 16	Education
J9	Mar 16	Culture, NGOs, education
J10	Jun 16	Church
Participant observation		
J11	Feb 16	Participant observation, Cultural Crossroads Järvamaa and Raplamaa
J12	Jun 16	Participant observation, Järva-Jaani street festival
J13	Aug 16	Participant observation, Järva-Jaani film festival

1.4 List of Respondents from Case Study Schoondijke

Respondent nr	Date	Main field(s)
Interviews		
S1	Nov 16	Local government
S2	Nov 16	Education
S3	Dec 16	Village council
S4	Dec 16	Advisory commission
S5	Jan 17	Village Council
S6	Jan 17	NGO volunteer
S7	Jan. 17	NGO volunteer, entrepreneurship
S8	Jan 17	Entrepreneurship
S9	Feb 17	Volunteer
S10	Feb 17	Volunteer
Participant observation		
S11	Dec 16	Local government council meeting, Sluis
S12	Jan 17	Village council meeting, Schoondijke

1.5 List of Respondents from Case Study Pekela

Respondent nr	Date	Main field(s)
Interviews		
P1	Feb 17	Applied Research
P2	Feb 17	Local government
P3	Mar 17	Local politician
P4	Mar 17	Entrepreneurs' association
P5	Mar 17	Local government
P6	Mar 17	NGO, volunteer
P7	Apr 17	Former local government, volunteer
P8	Apr 17	Civil servant
P9	Apr 17	NGO, local media
P10	Jun 17	Local government
P11	Jun17	NGO
P12	Jun 17	NGO, volunteer
Participant observation		
P13	Feb17	Excursion around Pekela, visiting the region and a company
P14	Mar 17	Conference Sustainable cooperative enterprise, Pekela

Appendix 2: Topic guides for the interviews

Topic guide exploratory interviews on regional and national level

Respondents: Experts on the national level or regional level. These experts were currently or previously involved in national or regional institutions, knowledge institutions, or NGOs dealing with regional, local development of rural or non-metropolitan regions and places.

Introduction: explaining the research and asking for consent

Could you shortly introduce yourself and your involvement with regional or local development?

Topics to be discussed:

1. Regional development, shrinkage, regional polarisation on the agenda on the national, regional or local level?
2. Relations from national level to different regions and localities
 - a. Which regions are more or less connected than others?
 - b. Why is this difference in connection?
 - c. What is the nature of these relations?
3. Relations from the local/regional level to the national level (lobby)?
4. Collaborations between regions?
 - a. Who is collaborating and how is this contact?
5. Which actors are mostly seen as leading in these local development processes?
 - a. Who are they?
 - b. What background? (official, NGO, private?)
 - c. On which level: local, regional, national?
6. In which way do these people lead?
7. What are their constraints?
8. What future developments important for regional development?
9. Any meetings to attend, literature to read, people to speak to?

Thank you for the interview!

Topic guide for interviews in the localities

Respondents: individuals from different perspectives (business, NGOs, government) with an involvement of the locality. Similar questions were asked to actors closely involved in leadership practices and more distant actors. The topic list was adjusted, depending on the respondent.

Introduction (Introduce the research and ask for consent)

1. Short introduction and relation to this locality?

Exploring peripheralisation

2. Most urgent issues for the development of this locality? Where are the challenges? And what are the opportunities?

Probing options: Economic processes (labour, (dis)investments and (un)employment), Social (out)migration, Cultural, Ecological, Collaborations, Networks, Other important developments for the locality?

3. Peripherality of the locality? Which elements make this locality peripheral?

Practices of leadership

4. Practices on the abovementioned topics?
5. Which people or groups of people are involved in these practices?
6. What is your contribution to the abovementioned challenges/ or developments?
7. What are your (other) activities for this locality?
8. Which resources do you use to do this?
 - a. Human resources: skills/networks/status
 - b. Non-human resources: money, time
9. What motivates you to do this?

Actors

10. Who would you say are in general important for the development of this locality? (discuss per person) (bring about change, positively, negatively?/influence)
11. Why are they important? Do you see this person as a leader? Why? Why not?
12. What do they do on the topics we just mentioned? What do they say?
13. Which resources do they use?
 - a. Human resources: skills/networks/status/institutional environment
 - b. Non-human resources: money, time
14. How are these people perceived in the community?
15. How are they perceived outside the community?

Relations

16. Collaborations With whom (most)? With whom not? For what purposes?
17. On which different geographical or political-administrative levels?
18. Important of political parties?
19. Importance of public administrative institutions?

20. Important are other organisations? (LEADER, Kodukant, Local NGOs?)
21. (in)dependence is the locality from its outside relations? How much freedom is there to make decisions on the local level?

Perception

22. Perception of this locality for people outside, why do you think this?
23. How has this image been constructed?
24. Who is contributing to this image?
25. What do people in the locality think of this image? Try to change it? Try to keep it?

Future

26. Where do you see the major challenges for the development of the locality in the next five years?
27. Which developments do you expect to occur in the next five years? In terms of:
 - a. Economic processes (labour, (dis)investments and (un)employment)
 - b. Social (out)migration
 - c. Cultural development
 - d. Ecological development
 - e. Collaborations? Networks?
 - f. Other important developments for the locality?
28. What do you think is likely?
29. What do you hope? Why?

Closing

30. Is there anything else that you think is important to mention, which we haven't covered?
31. Are there people you think we should talk to that are also important for the locality?
32. Are there any meetings which would be good to attend in this locality?

Thank you for the interview!

Appendix 3: Information sheet and consent form



Information sheet

January 13, 2016

This interview is part of my PhD project at the university of Tartu and part of a larger study on development processes in Central and Eastern European countries. This PhD project has started in September 2014 and will end in September 2017. Overall I will be looking at the practices of local leaders in the development of Estonian regions and compare these to experiences of local leaders in Dutch regions.

The interview will be taped with a recording device and transcribed afterwards, i.e. the audio file will be transformed into a written text. I will ask you for taping permission prior to the interview. The audio file will be securely stored and only accessible for the researcher. For scientific analyses of the interview, information that may lead to identification of individuals will be amended or removed. In scientific publication only sections of the interview can be quoted.

Participation in the study is voluntary. You have the opportunity to terminate the interview, reject further interviews and to withdraw your consent of taping and transcribing the interviews(s) at any time. Should you have any questions regarding the research project or the interview itself, please contact Gerdien Margreeth Grootens (martiene.grootens@ut.ee). In the further course of the project I am happy to inform you about the (intermediate) research results.

I am conducting the research as a member of staff at the University of Tartu, faculty of Economics and Business Administration. The research has received funding from the People Programme (Marie Curie Actions) of the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme FP7/2007-2013/ under REA grant agreement n° 607022.

Many thanks in advance for your understanding and your research support!

Contact Details

Gerdien Margreeth Grootens
martiene.grootens@ut.ee
+372 5633 7870

CONSENT FORM**January 13, 2015**

Research Project: RegPol² - Socio-economic and Political Responses to Regional Polarisation in Central and Eastern Europe
Sub-project: Working Title: Public leaders shaping peripheral regions
Institution University of Tartu
Researcher Gerdien ~~Margreeth~~ Grootens

	Please initial box	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I hereby declare my consent to participate in the study mentioned above	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I agree that my data gathered in this study may be stored (after it has been anonymised) and may be used for future research.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Please tick box	
	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

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