

Leading on the map

Comparing practices and relations of public leaders in peripheral places
of Estonia and the Netherlands

MARTIENE GROOTENS

3RD REGPOL² SCHOOL, 19-23 SEPT. 2016, VEĽKÁ LOMNICA, SLOVAKIA

SUPERVISORS

MAAJA VADI

GARRI RAAGMAA

LUMMINA HORLINGS (UNIVERSITY OF GRONINGEN, NL)



Introduction to the research

Key points from literature review – (Agency)

- Leadership as the **missing link** in regional development (Rodríguez-Pose 2013).
- Beyond positivistic leadership models → analyse the process of leading (Liddle 2010; Mabey and Freeman 2010)
- Leadership, understood as

“the process in which actor(s) consciously shape certain places, in which places are seen as inhomogeneous, relational and produced (regardless of where these actors are located).”

Introduction to the research

Key points from literature review (Structure)

- Peripheralisation as a **process**: relational, process-centred, multidimensional, multi-scalar and temporal
- With a focus on socio-political peripheralisation → emphasising the role of human agency (Kühn 2015)
- Connects to a relational approach to places (Massey 2004; Amin 2004)
- Comparing contexts without cultural determinism (Thelen 2011; Stenning & Hörschelmann 2008)

Introduction to the research

Main research question:

What role do public leaders play in processes of (de)peripheralisation in Estonian and Dutch peripheralised places?

- 1: **WHO?** Which actors are involved in the shaping of the locality?
- 2: **WHAT?** What strategies do public leaders exercise for their localities?
- 3: **HOW?** Which resources do they use for these strategies and how do they use these?
- 4: **HOW DIFFERENTLY?** How do different leaders do it differently? And how can we understand these (differing) roles of public leaders in the peripheralisation process?

Research methodology

Comparative case study:

Island Kihnu & Järva-Jaani (Estonia)

Zeeuws Vlaanderen and/or Oost-Groningen (the Netherlands)

- Literature Review
- Exploratory field work with national/regional actors
- 2 case studies
 - Identifying leaders
 - Following up on leaders (multiple interviews, participatory observations)

Case Selection

- Perceived as peripheral (socio-communicative/political/economic/spatial)

- BUT showing agency:

Kihnu

Järva-Jaani

		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

Combination of different understandings of peripherality by Herrschel (2011, 90)

Research Results - Estonia

Exploratory interviews at regional, national, local level

22 semi-structured interviews

4 participatory observation



First Results - Actors

Different actors operate as leaders, often working in a coalition of the “willing”.

Also actors outside the locality can join these coalitions (lobbyists)

In these coalitions, others are automatically left out

First Results – Strategies (I)

Visibility practices, getting places on the map

“We don’t think about middle Estonia, and I feel it” (JJ6)

“We are an island it will make us a peripheral place, but still it will in some way put us in the centre of... everything, sometimes” (K1)

“We are like trying to be like small centre, but we are not big, but doing this interesting stuff.” (JJ1)

Why visibility?

“..because of this publicity I gain more friends, more connections and this is easier to develop this Järva-Jaani. When I have some problems, it is easier to find some solutions, I think. “ (JJ1)

“I think if different country sides in Estonia would use the same methodology, I think the Tallinn, the Tartu would look at it a different way.(JJ2)

First Results – Strategies (II)

Consequences of visibility

This externally oriented active agenda sometimes can sometimes lead to friction

*“ It is better if the main basic existential problems of island, nature, natural resources, lifestyle, you know, behaviour, is discussed by community and decided by community. Yeah, it is hard, it takes more time. **But community is not an enterprise.** In an enterprise, owner must decide very fast, and he is a owner, he is taking risk over his ownership, but head of municipality is not owner of the municipality, he is a public servant. “ (K4)*

“camera is like an evil eye, it ruins everything” (K2)

“ Sometimes in summer she [teacher] doesn't put on her national clothing to not stand out. The attention can be positive, but also negative and ruin your mood for the whole day. “(K5)

First Results - Strategies (III)

Stigmatization?

"I think this doktor Silva and naabriplika are very important right now. During this whatever this political decision might be, this is very important, because this shows that Järva-Jaani is willing and Järva-Jaani wants to develop and we are doing whatever it is to be in the big picture, to be in the big plan" It is an instrument how to make yourself visible." (JJ2)

Some people think that doctor Silva is not good for JJ, because all this activities they do, all these activities are in Järva-Jaani. The name is Järva-Jaani in this place, but in our doctor's centre, pereartsikeskuses, there are good doctors, very good doctors" (JJ6)

Positive image hides material difficulties

"Others shouldn't think that they are getting a lot of funding and support, it is not true, it is not true. Even if you are living in the small island, everything is much more expensive" (K2)

"we are shining outside yes, but we are from inside we are empty" (K2)

"the image they have is the image we have put in front of them. And let 's say if we put a new image now, with a new campaign now in their face, then that is exactly what they are seeing. If we want them to see how poor we are, or how much trouble we have, then it is possible. And then that's what they see. But no one wants to do that" (K2)

First Results - Strategies (IV)

Active participation as the norm

“So I really participate in every event in JJ, because first of all I am the school principal. It is my example for the students, how everything should be done.” (JJ2)

“There is no point in just wining, it will not take you anywhere” (JJ3)

if you have any active people who want to live on a small island, then send them here. (K1)

“If you want to work and if you want to do something than they are like always something to do, always. It depends on you, on what kind of person you are.”(K3)

Activities as positive image building inwards:

“maybe it is attitude like good virus, for youngster also.” (JJ1)

First Results - Resources

Importance of links to media:

“And we can't get to the main program, but Setomaa gets, because they have 2 reporters from groups from Setomaa. “ (K1)

“I have good contacts with local Estonian TV 2, TV 3. And their local journal is good friends for me. and they trying always make news like positive (JJ1)

Estonia is not so big. You know if I am member of party, I know our leaders, I can go and talk with them, it is not a problem for me, small person. I can do it. (JJ5)

And status/image of the place becomes resource in itself

“and we have achieved that there should be some kind of exception...” “...it was quite surprisingly that this was written in the law so easily in that way” (K1)

“Kihnu, it is like a business card: I'm from Kihnu, please help.” (K1)

First Results - Comparison

RQ.4. How do different leaders do it differently? And how can we understand these (differing) roles of public leaders in the peripheralisation process?

Differences in structural environment

“ But 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 fuzz about it, and everybody will be writing to press and so on and so on and they have to deal with it “ (K1)

“Our biggest concern or trouble is, that nobody hears our voice in Tallinn” (JJ7)

And Agency:

*“It is just sometimes living in the moment maybe. It is not a strategy what you have to enjoy and the development is also something you don't have to plan. We would do this, when the opportunity comes, you just have to do it. It is like skate park. We had some years ago this plan with this opportunity game, just to push up the battle and make this happen and you don't have to be this in development planning, that we have in this year, we have to do this film festival. This film festival also, **let's do it, ok, let's do it.** You don't have to ask from the local government council. Do we have to do this, no, we don't have in this paper right now. When we look only in the paper, we don't do many beautiful things, I would say... (JJ1)*

Questions?
