

# **Unraveling Banners of Resistance**

*A case-study on the sustainable energy transition in Wijnjewoude  
(Friesland, The Netherlands).*

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> *Cover illustration: an abstract representation of Wijnjewoude's geography*

# Abstract

This thesis explores social, historical, and political processes behind the banners of resistance regarding the sustainable energy transition in Wijnjewoude. Wijnjewoude Energie Neutraal (WEN) is a bottom-up citizens' initiative in the Frisian village Wijnjewoude that aims to make their village energy neutral in 2025. The state has chosen them as one of the pilot projects in order to become a gas-free neighborhood. With a 4.3 million euro subsidy, they have the freedom to shape the local energy transition by themselves. However, noticeable local resistance regarding the envisioned sustainable energy infrastructures by WEN obstructs the transition. I uncover this resistance by focusing on anthropological debates regarding energy ethics on different scales, infrastructures as active social and political sites, and via the concept of energy democracy. This case study provides answers on how the sustainable energy project WEN is negotiated and contested upon in Wijnjewoude, Friesland (The Netherlands), via the theoretical local cultural concepts of *draagvlak* and *Mienskip*. It demonstrates a local-specific example of what we should focus on when we aim to implement sustainable energy transitions with limited contestation.

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This thesis holds the story of Wijnjewoude. A village that has not only been my research field, but also my home for a few months. A village that holds an interesting and educative story regarding sustainable energy transitions, of which we are able to learn from the challenges of implementing energy change in the Netherlands. But also a village that exists by inspiring, warm-hearted humans who collectively create a diverse community.

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# Glossary

## *Wijnjewoude*

Wijnjewoude is a village located in the southeast of Friesland, under the jurisdiction of the municipality Opsterland; with 2.015 inhabitants.

## *WEN*

Wijnjewoude Energie Neutraal (WEN) is a local bottom-up initiative that is ambitious to make the Frisian village Wijnjewoude energy neutral in 2025. The organization consists of 285 members, who are – mostly – local volunteers. WEN aims to make their village self sufficient by the use of a mono-manure fermenter, a solar field and by responsible behavior.

## *Klein Groningen*

Klein Groningen is an unique neighborhood in Wijnjewoude. Because even though the neighborhood belongs to the village, it is geographically as well as socially separated. Klein Groningen is located on the west side of the village. The new sustainable infrastructures will most likely be placed near their neighborhood.

## *Klein Groningen*

Besides being a neighborhood's name, Klein Groningen also refers to the second resistance group against Wijnjewoude Energie Neutraal. Their goal is to stop the envisioned mono-manure fermenter.

## *Westkant geen Mestkant*

Westkant geen Mestkant (Westside, not a manure side) is the second resistance group that aims to stop the envisioned mono-manure fermenter by WEN. The groups was founded in 2017 and consists of six members. The members of the group are based in or near Klein Groningen and thus near the possible location of the mono-manure fermenter.

## *PAW*

Proeftuin Aardgasvrije Wijken is translated as a Pilot Project of Gas-free Neighborhoods. It includes a sustainability program of the Dutch state, in which subsidies are given to villages that present a detailed plan in order to become energy neutral, whether initiated by local citizens or the municipality. WEN has been chosen to become such a pilot project and has been provided a 4.3 million euro subsidy.

## *RWZI*

The RWZI refers to a local sewage plant (Riool water Zuivering Installatie) that had been shut down about twenty years ago. Since then, the infrastructure has not been used and has become a vacant lot. WEN bought the location in 2019. The municipality has adjusted the zoning plan as to provide the location with a permit regarding the production of sustainability energy.

## *Mienskip*

*Mienskip* is a Frisian word indicating the concept of togetherness: accomplishing something together as a community. It holds the belief in using skills and knowledge of all citizens of a village, to become independent on to other villages.

## *RES*

Regional Energy Strategies 1.0 (RES 1.0) is regional plan concerning “the capacity of MW (and expected MWh) for renewable energy on land, its effects on energy infrastructures, simultaneously taking into account spatial, environmental quality and public support, weighed against other interests” (Rijksoverheid 2018).

# Introduction

*A sense of ease strikes my mind as I click my black cycling shoe in the pendulum. It is a quiet morning in March, and there are only a few cars passing by. Cycling has become a healthy outlet since I have been doing research in Wijnjewoude, a village in Friesland. The new contacts, excessive information, and stories of citizens can be quite overwhelming. I am back in Utrecht for a day to pick up some stuff, and luckily I had just enough time to go for a ride. I pull the pendulum to get my bike moving and cycle down the Catharijnesingel. Since I have started this research, I have become heavily aware of the invisible infrastructures around us. I see people driving cars, using petrol. I see people drinking water from the pipes below us. And through a window, I see a young couple cuddling on a velvet navy blue couch. The warm evening sunlight softly lightens their wall. I bet their house feels warm and cozy, facilitated by the gas pipes running through the old building. The accessibility and inevitability of these facilities have become crystal clear to me.*

*From Utrecht, I continue my ride toward the west. The gray cycle path in front of me is surrounded by a typical Dutch landscape and disappears on the horizon. The blue sky nicely contrasts the green apple yards on my right side. The trees just started to blossom, and the white flowers make spring feel alive. My bike runs smoothly down the road and the tailwind makes it feel like I am moving effortlessly. A white banner with bold black letters at the side of the road catches my eye, as I ride past the yards. ‘No wind turbines here!’ Another banner is stuck behind someone’s kitchen window. I am forced to slow down to be able to read the banner correctly. ‘We say no to solar panels!’ ‘Ah another case’, is the first thing that strikes my mind. It is one of the banners I frequently see throughout the Netherlands: banners of citizens that protest against sustainable energy infrastructures or local sustainable energy corporations. I wonder who are the people behind those banners. Why do they resist these transitions? And what precisely do they resist against?*

## Understanding the stories behind these protests

In order to reach the Paris Agreement, the Dutch government has created a sustainability goal for 2030, intending to produce 70% of all electricity and 27% of all energy sustainably (Rijksoverheid 2020). Subsequently, as to achieve this goal, all Dutch municipalities have to have an alternative and sustainable gas plan at the end of 2021, as part of the so-called Regional Energy Strategies 1.0 (RES 1.0). A regional plan concerning “the capacity of Mega Watt (and expected Mega Watt-hours) for renewable energy on land, its effects on energy infrastructures, simultaneously taking into account spatial, environmental quality and public support, weighed against other interests” (Rijksoverheid 2018). In this way, Dutch municipalities are in charge of the national energy transitions. Thus, the global Paris agreement considerably influences different scales, from local and national climate policies to regional strategies, to specific

municipal implementation plans.

In order to reach such sustainability goals, scientists, states and entrepreneurs have stated questions about which energy sources ought to tackle the increasing energy consumption. According to Smith & High (2017), future hopes on renewable energy technology seem to answer these questions regarding sustainable energy production - e.g., technologies like solar and wind power and systems that prevent already discharged emissions from reaching the atmosphere. These technological methods should provide us with sustainable energy systems that can help humans with their energy needs while reducing their impact on the planet.

However, citizens of the Netherlands do not seem inherently satisfied with the efforts of the state to meet these national sustainability goals. Dieperink & Boon (2014) state that the Netherlands has seen an increase of bottom-up initiatives that focus on sustainable energy over the last decades. They argue that this growth is based on a change in social responsibility and awareness. The lack of consistent policies and the incompetence or unwillingness of the national government have vested interest and have fueled and amplified the motivation of civilians to establish bottom-up projects (Dieperink & Boon 2014). Yet, this increase in sustainable energy projects goes hand in hand with rising local resistance towards energy projects. When searching for resistance towards sustainable energy transitions, online and offline protests can be found concerning energy projects in Amsterdam, Meeden, Driemond, IJburg, Beuningen, Neede, Essen and more Dutch towns. According to Rasch & Köhne (2017) energy resistance is commonly based on a lack of top-down communication and a feeling of neglected bottom-up influence. However, when looking at bottom-up initiatives concerning sustainable energy co-operations, there is a significant amount of citizens’ influence.

Nevertheless, these bottom-up initiatives have met resistance and caused friction among the population. Howe (2015) emphasizes the importance of studying the new policies and projects that pursue this planet-preserving ideal from a social science perspective. With this, she states that we should not solely focus on the state’s power regarding energy transitions, but as notably on local and regional efforts of communities on, or resistance towards, sustainable solutions. Anthropology can make and has made, telling contribution in understanding the pathways of energy transitions by uncovering the relation between innovations and developments, social resistance, notions of justice, political actions and cultural understandings (Howe, 2015). Anthropology can show how local and global processes are connected, what planet-serving projects cause and how local populations vision them. This information is of importance for overcoming fault lines in processes of local, regional or national sustainable energy transitions (Howe 2015).

A helpful notion to analyze these energy transitions is the concept of energopowers by Dominic Boyer. He argues that energy – whether sustainable or fossil-fueled – holds a considerable amount of power over human life. Therefore, he states that energopowers (exploiting energy and fuel) are heavily intertwined with biopower, which refers to the “management of life and population” (Boyer 2014). No matter what aspect of biopower we analyze closely, we will not find one institutionalized facet of human life with any extensional ability without electricity. Boyer (2014, 20) argues that “there could have been no consolidation of any regime of modern biopower without a parallel securitization of energy provision and synchronization of energy discourse. In this respect, biopower has always plugged in” (Boyer 2014, 20). With this statement, he argues that energy and management of life and population are always intertwined. Energy holds power over life and population as our daily activities would not be possible without it and vice versa. Thus, energopowers provide a lens through which modern power can be analyzed, which envisions political power structures via electricity and fuel.

Local sustainable energy transitions provide a new spectrum in which energopowers can be studied. Scheer (2004) states that local energy transitions can create a shift in the excessive, ineffective supply chains of carbon and nuclear energy systems. In his view, locally produced sustainable energy methods would shape a somewhat decentralized energy infrastructure that shifts contemporary political- and economic structures. “Only a solar global economy can satisfy the material needs of all mankind and grant us the freedom to re-establish our social and democratic ideals,” Scheer (2004:32) argues. As the literature above has shown, that we have entered an epoch in which local energy transitions are increasing. If it had developed similar effects to Scheer’s vision, this would have led to an utopic world of decentralized economic and political systems, and an increased quality of democracy. However, a single bike ride through the surroundings of Utrecht reveals the energy transition as anything but utopia; Rather, it is the cause of much conflict and contestation.

Therefore, within this thesis, I want to find out on a small scale what the national resistance against bottom-up energy transitions is based on - A research that uncovers this new spectrum of sustainable energopowers. For that reason, I have researched the bottom-up energy transition in Wijnjewoude, called Wijnjewoude Energie Neutraal (WEN).

## **Wijnjewoude Energie Neutraal (WEN)**

Wijnjewoude Energie Neutraal, literally translated as Wijnjewoude Energy Neutral, is a bottom-up citizens’ movement that aims to make Wijnjewoude energy neutral and self-sufficient by 2025. The village Wijnjewoude is located in Friesland, The Netherlands. A group of local citizens has founded the co-operation WEN in 2015, which nowadays counts 285 members. The co-operation consists mainly of volunteers, and a few employees on pay role. The citizens are motivated by their ambition to combat climate change and create a greener world for future generations. They are done with waiting for national politics to handle adequately respecting climate change. Their goal is to neutralize 40% of Wijnjewoude’s energy usage by generating sustainable energy and gas within

the village and neutralizing the other 60% of electricity locally being used by responsible energy behavior concerning one’s energy usage and individual technological innovations. In order to change this behavior, WEN provides free energy coaches – who are local volunteers - that give personal advice concerning one its energy usage. Furthermore, they aim to realize a sustainable energy park. Therefore, the co-operation has bought a location in Wijnjewoude, called the RWZI, which has functioned as a former water treatment plant. They aim to use this vacant lot for sustainable energy infrastructures. This place is chosen because of its location. It is located at the edge of Wijnjewoude and the first neighbors live within two hundred meters of the park. Thereby, the municipality has already assigned this location with permits regarding sustainable energy production in 2019 by adjusting the local zoning plan.

The energy park should produce local gas- and electricity by using a solar field and mono-manure fermenter. While the realization of the mono-manure fermenter is still in its initial phase, the plans regarding the solar field are already well advanced. In March 2021, WEN received the subsidy of the municipality in order to develop a solar field as large as 1,5 hectares. WEN intends to realize the solar infrastructure in 2022.

Over the past years, resistance has risen regarding the construction of the infrastructures that are envisioned by WEN. These infrastructures have become the locus of a local conflict in Wijnjewoude. The resistance has manifested in two local action groups called ‘Westkant geen Mestkant’ and ‘Klein Groningen’ that actively try to obstruct the realization of WEN’s plans. The recent conflict has influenced the village’s living pleasure and social relations and obstructs the bottom-up sustainable energy transition’s progress.

To get a clear understanding of the situation in Wijnjewoude, this research aims to answer the following question: *How is the sustainable energy project WEN negotiated and contested in Wijnjewoude, Friesland (The Netherlands)?*

In the following chapters, I will analyze the energy transition by the use of ‘opponents’ and ‘proponents’ of Wijnjewoude Energie Neutraal, wherein volunteers of WEN represent the proponents and Klein Groningen and Westkant geen Mestkant represent the opponents. This dichotomy is effective for me in order to write a precise analysis of the local situation. However, these categories can be problematic as actual perspectives are not this black and white. People may shift between categories or agree on the arguments of both parties. Nevertheless, I will use this terminology in order to create an recognizable and clear examination.

The data that I have conducted during my research demonstrates how the imagined infrastructures of Wijnjewoude Energie Neutraal are the locus of local resistance. However, this resistance does not derive from the technological aspect or materiality of these infrastructures but from social and historical patterns reproduced by their negotiation and construction. The thesis shows the complexity of local, sustainable energy transitions – A complexity that derives from the cultural and historical aspects of the transition that surpasses the infrastructural component. Therefore, this research

provides an understanding of local resistance against energy transitions and can be used in future projects to prevent or reduce opposition or create a certain degree of compassion between contrasting perspectives. State actors and energy co-operations may take these insights into account during the realization of their sustainable energy initiatives.

## Methods

In order to conduct the data concerning this research question, I have conducted fieldwork in Wijnjewoude for three months. The negotiation process within the village could best be studied through ethnography, as this type of research primarily focuses on understanding the narratives of all research participants. It is a method that is based on a trust relationship (rapport) between the researcher and the respondent (Madden 2017). Over these three months, I have tried to create rapport with the residents. These trust relationships have created safe spaces for the respondents in which they felt comfortable to share their experiences and thoughts about sensitive subjects.

During my stay in the village, I have stayed in an Airbnb, which used to be the former school building. This location is centered in the center of Wijnjewoude made me able to connect with one of my first participants. I stayed here from January 2021 till April 2021, together with my co-researcher Lindsey Biegel. We both have researched the sustainable energy transition of Wijnjewoude, and we have conducted fieldwork in collaboration. Yet, we have interpreted the data independently and have written our thesis individually.

My research population includes the citizens of Wijnjewoude and the counselors of municipality Opsterland and several stakeholder parties. In order to create a coherent understanding of the situation, I have actively contacted proponents, opponents, and neutral-positioned citizens of the energy transition. All research participants were white adolescent males and females who were working or retired. All of them were connected to Wijnjewoude in a certain way, whether by their profession or residence.

In order to achieve data triangulation and validity, my ethnographic fieldwork existed of multiple research methods. The main methods I have used are participant observation, interviews, sensory ethnography, and historical analysis. According to DeWalt (2010), participant observation is a method in which the researcher tries to become familiar with the unfamiliar and tempts to unravel and understand all aspects of a specific culture. The researcher takes part in his or her research population's everyday life and tries to become an observant insider (DeWalt 2010). I have carried out participant observation by living in the village and participating in meetings of WEN and the municipality. Every week I have attended multiple online meetings that provided me with information about political processes and the culture and plans of WEN. I was allowed to think along and participate in these meetings, which allowed me to experience the world from WEN's meaning of the landscape.

Furthermore, I also used sensory ethnography. According to Pink (2015), the researcher tries to use the multisensorial aspects of experience, perception, knowledge, and practice within sensory ethnography. The ethnographer does not solely participate in the lives of its research population but aims to live their lives themselves by making use

of all its senses. Knowledge is extended by using smell, sound, feelings, and sight (Pink 2015). This method enabled me to see, hear, smell and feel the presence of specific infrastructures and the contemporary surroundings of the village. I have documented my sensory experiences in field notes, but also by voice recordings.

In addition to this method, I have conducted interviews. Despite the rather informal daily conversation I had, I have conducted broad and in-depth interviews with the citizens of Wijnjewoude as well. Those interviews were semi-structural, which are – according to Bernard (2006) – interviews that are based on an interview guide (a topic list). The interviewer is prepared and competent, yet leaves space for the interviewee and the interviewer to expand on specific subjects or touch upon new subjects (Bernard 2006). I have conducted these semi-structural interviews with opponents, proponents, neutral-sided citizens, stakeholders, and the founders of WEN to understand their vision more in-depth. The semi-structural interviews created the opportunity to expand on unclarity or insights that were gained during participant observation.

I have used archives and books respecting the village and the Frisian culture to create a coherent overview of the sustainable energy project. I have carried out a historical analysis of Wijnjewoude and its citizens to see all developments and information in a broader contextual framework.

As the local conflict is a sensitive topic that actively influences the lives of the residents, it is essential to ethically use the data I have conducted to not increase the conflict. Therefore, I have anonymized all my research participants by using different names, creating fictive characters, and switching personal backgrounds. In this way, I have grasped all the individual stories that shape the conflict in Wijnjewoude but translated them in a way that will not harm the citizens of the village. An exception is made within the last chapter that analyses the political aspect of the energy transition. In this chapter, the real names of counselors and aldermen are used, as the information and quotes I have used are publicly accessible. This data can be found on the online archive of municipality Opsterland.

## COVID-19 and gaining access

The COVID-19 pandemic has influenced the data I have been able to collect. Due to the virus, it has been challenging to connect with residents of the village. Where one usually meets people during local gatherings, in a restaurant or other ordinary activities, I had to contact all research participants via e-mail. This online communication made it more challenging to build rapport or an informal relationship, as it made me introduce my research during the first acquaintance. Thereby, many citizens did only want to meet in person once, especially research participants of the opposition. Yet, I am grateful for all face-to-face interviews and meetings I have been able to conduct or attend, as physical language has been essential in positioning myself in the respondent. Thus, the measurements against COVID-19 frequently forced me to develop connections quickly. As rapport takes longer to develop, I am sure that I would have gathered even more information during long-term relationships.

## **Positionality**

Reflecting on my research, there have been several elements that became beneficial or critical in conducting data. First of all, having a co-researcher has influenced my research. Lindsey and I are young adolescent women who have researched in a field that adolescent men mainly dominate. Multiple men have expressed their enthusiasm for seeing women in sustainable energy, which increased their will to share their knowledge and experiences with us. Furthermore, carrying out research together has been beneficial in creating and maintaining a network. We were able to introduce research participants to one another and to share and discuss our data. Therefore, collaboration with each other made the interviews more informal, as being in a small group gave the interviews rather a character of a group conversation.

Secondly, my Frisian roots have helped me create rapport and integrate into a Frisian community. Many of my research participants emphasized that being a native Frisian creates an immediate level of trust between two individuals. Understanding the Frisian language also made me capable of understanding all formal and informal conversations between citizens, state actors, and WEN. Frisian people tend to switch to the Frisian language in cases of enthusiasm, frustration, or when they are (forced) out of their comfort zone. In the end, this skill has been of high value during my participant observation and interviews.

Lastly, my positionality towards sustainability may have influenced my position in the field. During my fieldwork, I became very enthusiastic about the goals of WEN, as I am personally aware of climate change myself and the actions we need to take in order to combat this. However, this viewpoint may have influenced my position towards the opponents of the energy transition WEN. During my fieldwork, I have attempted to be deeply reflective of my personal opinion and thoughts towards energy transitions to listen profoundly to the opponents. Quickly I realized that the opponents were not against combatting climate change and that their position was based on other reasons. Therefore, in my perspective, this positionality has not influenced my data significantly in the end.

## **Structure of the thesis**

In chapter one, I position Wijnjewoude Energie Neutraal by the anthropological debate on energy ethics. It positions the local energy transition in a broader context of global transitions and demonstrates how energy ethics of different scales are intertwined. Thereby, it provides insight into the core values of the volunteers of WEN and how they aim to pursue these objectives. The chapter functions as the fundament for chapters two and three, in which the resistance against the bottom-up energy transition WEN is unraveled.

Chapter two focuses on the local conflict that has emerged in the village since the founding of WEN in 2015. It examines that while sustainable infrastructures promise economic and environmental prosperity, they simultaneously increase the feeling of exclusion and inequality. This chapter provides insight into the opponents' resistance and shows how the history of the village still influences present-day perspectives.

Subsequently, chapter three positions Wijnjewoude Energie Neutraal in the broader debate of energopolitics. It demonstrates how WEN and the municipality negotiate

on the topic of local acceptance towards the sustainable energy transition. The chapter demonstrates how this political negotiation creates another complex layer to the progress of the WEN-project.

The conclusion continues where the vignette of the introduction ends. It argues what is behind the banners of resistance in Wijnjewoude. It provides an understanding of the different parties that negotiate the bottom-up energy transition and it presents recommendations for other anthropologists on where to start in researching energopolitical processes. Moreover, it summarizes the local energy co-operation, its resistance, and its political mechanisms in all its complexity.

## Wijnjewoude Energie Neutraal: pursuing local energy ethics

*“We are the ones in charge of leaving a better future than the present-day situation. I do not want my grandchildren to carry the burdens we created”, Harry stated as we slowly walked off his property. It is a cold sunny day in Wijnjewoude. The meadows are lightened, and the frost is gradually evaporating from the grass. In my view, Harry is a true pioneer. You can feel it walking by his side. It is not just his words. It is his energy, his determination to give all he has got to save this planet. Maybe it is also his messy hair or his 80’s framed glasses. I am not sure, but everything about him makes you feel his awareness of the earth’s current state and his urge to change it.*

*We walk past the vast green meadows as we take his dog for a walk. The bare trees on our right side contrast the blue sky and a green tractor passes by. Harry is the first person I got in contact with during my fieldwork. I got in touch with him last summer, actually months before my fieldwork started. I got introduced to him as I listened to a podcast of NPO in which he talked about his dream of making Wijnjewoude energy neutral. It fascinated me how he came up with the idea of making Wijnjewoude energy neutral. Because even though I have lived in Friesland my whole life, I did not get in contact with many climate-aware individuals before.*

*We continue our walk and Harry explains how his awareness of the fragility of our earth grew as his friends experienced the effects of gas exploitation in Groningen. “That is where I drew the line. How on earth can we do this? We cannot stand there with a straight face, enjoying our lives while casually double-crossing the earth?! Because that is what it is! Double-crossing! And we also cannot wait for politics to intervene. It has got to be bottom-up. How can I blame someone else for not acting when I am not doing anything myself? That is when I came up with the idea of starting Wijnjewoude Energy Neutral.”*

WEN (Wijnjewoude Energie Neutraal) is a cooperation of local volunteers who pursue a common dream; in 2025, they aim to produce at least as much sustainable energy as needed among themselves. They dream of making their village independent of large profit-based companies. By producing their own electricity and gas, while sharing all revenues within the village. They dream of being proud of what they have accomplished together, and they dream of making Wijnjewoude well-known for its achievements.

This bottom-up energy transition can be seen as part of a global transition towards sustainability and can be positioned in the anthropological debate on energy ethics. The attempts to implement more sustainable energy infrastructures to save the world from climate change are manifested in citizens’ lives and raise fundamental ethical

questions regarding energy. Questions about the place of energy within society, how we make sense of the world around us, the degree to which we perceive the risk of climate change and questions regarding what humans consider to be right or wrong (Smith & High 2017). Energy ethics are essential for understanding the relation between humans and their environment and eventually realizing efficient and smooth energy transitions. However, these ethics can be analyzed on different scales—as locally, regionally, nationally, and globally energy transitions are being pursued. Thus, the small-scale transition of Wijnjewoude is part of a more significant national and even global debate on energy ethics.

Within this chapter, I will position the energy transition of Wijnjewoude in this broader contextual framework on energy ethics, and I will demonstrate how energy ethics of different scales are intertwined. Thereby, I examine the four central values that shape the energy ethics of Wijnjewoude Energie Neutraal. The chapter shapes a contextual framework that forms the fundament of chapters two and three – in which the conflict regarding the local energy transition is discussed.

### Energy ethics

According to Smith & High (2017) energy ethics are defined as “how people themselves judge the rightness and wrongness of energy. Starting from the ground up opens up analytic space to consider ethical sensibilities that inform how people understand and judge energy systems” (2017, 2). Energy ethics thus encompass how energy is ethically appraised. The authors argue that common sense might state that energy is equally experienced and interpreted among all people, despite their different socio-cultural, geographic, or economic position. This common sense contains the assumption that energy and sustainable energy transitions positively affect people’s lives, as it provides them with their basic needs, such as electricity, warmth, and transportation (Smith & High 2017). However, when focusing on how the concept of (sustainable) energy is intertwined in personal lives, we observe that the energy demands and the understanding of energy differ per person. Contrasting backgrounds, relations between humans and nature, and different levels of place attachment will influence the way people relate to energy and its infrastructures (van Tatenhove 2020).

Even though energy ethics are often researched on a personal level (Savacool & Dworkin 2014; Smith & High 2017), energy ethics can also be researched on broader scales. National, regional and local decisions are made regarding the way energy is structured and organized through society. These decisions are based on the energy ethics of this specific scale, which may differ per country, region, or municipality. Frigo

(2017) emphasizes how perceptions on energy derive from historical, cultural and geographical experiences and environments. “Energy ethics consist in the descriptive attempt to look underneath the surface of contemporary energy debates, to gain a complex, hard look at the ideas and values which are fueling people’s understanding of energy and the environment” (Frigo 2017, 10). Thus, analyzing energy ethics creates an understanding in why national- regional- local parties and people are open to the realization of (sustainable) energy transitions or not. By understanding these moral dimensions of energy, we can unravel the why’s and how’s of human behavior and choices regarding (sustainable) energy. We need to empirically understand different perspectives of energy ethics on different scales to understand how energypowers are structured through society (Savacool & Dworkin 2014). Especially as the energy ethics on different scales simultaneously influence each other. The personal energy ethics of residents in a specific country are partly shaped by the actions and values of their state. Despite whether the resident agrees on or argues against the energy ethics of the state, it shapes his or her perspective on energy regardless (Savacool & Dworkin 2014).

The volunteers of Wijnjewoude Energie Neutraal are also influenced by different energy ethics on broader scales. Their energy ethics can be seen in a broader global transition towards sustainability: the Paris Agreement, which has influence on small-scaled places as Wijnjewoude. The following paragraph will position Wijnjewoude Energie Neutraal in a global context in order to demonstrate how energy ethics are shaped at different scales.

### **From Paris to Wijnjewoude**

Harry and I return to his patio. We decide to have another coffee and walk into his house through the freshly painted white door. During our coffee session, he elaborates on the current state of the collaboration between WEN and the municipality Opsterland. As I sit across from him, I remember a municipality meeting in which a counselor connected WEN to the Paris Agreement. The counselor stated how the Wijnjewoude’s energy project is not solely a solution for the village itself but is simultaneously used by the municipality as an example for other villages, and as an opportunity to accomplish regional sustainability goals. The counselor emphasized his pride to witness such an initiative blossoming, whereafter he connected the Paris Agreement to Wijnjewoude.

In December 2015, a global policy The Paris Agreement was signed by the United Nations, which aims to combat climate change. The agreement includes objectivities that strive to hold temperature increase below two degrees Celsius and reduce the increase to 1,5 degrees Celsius (Dimitrov 2016). The realization of this agreement is based on a global common energy ethic that holds the value of taking responsibility for our environment and future generations. In order to realize this, article two of the Paris Agreement states that all parties involved are obliged to undertake and communicate ambitious efforts, and “each party shall prepare, communicate and maintain successive nationally determined contributions that it intends to achieve these goals (Art. 4.2)” (Dimitrov 2016, 7).

The Paris Agreement has been a noticable highlight in the history of climate change.

It has extensive influence on the development of contemporary political and economic plans. In order to reach the Paris Agreement, EU-states have subsequently established joint objectives, which reads that the EU member states will reduce their common emission by 40% in 2030. Consequently, the Dutch state created individual goals to realize this reduction. In 2030, the Netherlands have to have their emissions decreased by 49% in comparison to 1990, which will be achieved by the objectives stated in the national climate agreement: an agreement between the state, companies, and societal organizations (Ministerie van Economische Zaken en Klimaat 2020, 16).

The counselor stated that they, as a municipality - have the task to follow the Regional Energy Strategies (RES), established by the state in order to decentralize the common objective of reducing emissions by 49% in 2030, in comparison to 1990. In order to reach these regional strategies, objectives have been created concerning district implementation plans. “As these plans state that every municipality has to have an energy alternative by the end of 2021, I am extremely grateful that WEN has taken matters into their own hands and for the four million euro subsidy we are allowed to provide them with”, stated the counselor. “In this way, we can learn from them and maybe implement their tactics in other villages as well.” This demonstrates the interest of municipality Opsterland in the WEN-Project.

Even though the Dutch Climate Agreement sounds promising in fighting climate change, Boon (2020) states that bottom-up initiatives regarding sustainable energy react to the Dutch government’s initially neglected climate change responsibility. Citizens’ energy ethics are shaped by the dissatisfaction of energy ethics and corresponding actions on broader scales. Boon (2020) demonstrates that the policies at the state level exist rather of words than actions. Of the fourteen climate-related goals that have been pursued over the last twenty years by the Dutch state, less than half have been achieved (Boon 2020). He states that goals got neglected from approximately 2005, whereafter the approach came to a halt. This severe decrease in achievements may be caused by the Dutch climate agreement that is based on new long-term goals. Looking at the present-day goals of 2020 and 2021, respecting sustainable energy production, one can already conclude that these goals will not be accomplished (Boon 2020).

Consequently, the Dutch state will buy emission rights from other EU countries to reach them (Boon 2020). Therefore, Witt & Scheemts (2018) state that citizens have become firmertowardstheurgeofsustainablepolicies. OftheDutchcitizens,seventypercent position climate change as one of the four most important and problematic contemporary topics. This awareness is reflected in citizens’ initiatives relating to sustainability. Nowadays, The Netherlands counts more than five hundred local bottom-up sustainable energy initiatives, including Wijnjewoude Energie Neutraal (Rijksdienst voor Ondernemend Nederland 2020). Thus, the Dutch state has reflected its feeling of responsibility to combat climate change and protect future- and current generations by creating sustainability goals. In this way, they aim to act on their energy ethics. However, citizens are not satisfied with the state’s actions and argue for a stricter and more adequate approach to combat climate change. In this way, their energy ethics are partly shaped by the reflection and reaction to energy ethics of regional and national

scales. Simultaneously, the conversation with the municipality Opsterland showed how Wijnjewoude Energie Neutraal is related to regional and national energy ethics, as the municipality uses the determination and values of its citizens in order to collaborate in a regional energy transition. Eventually, the path from the Paris Agreement to Wijnjewoude shows how global decisions and energy ethics on different scales influence different layers in our societies, from sovereign powers to the everyday lives of small-town citizens. Thereby, it shows how energy ethics on different scales usually interact, sometimes complementary with one another, and do not stand independently.

### **Pilot Project of The State: where the state and bottom-up initiatives meet**

As stated by the counselor, Wijnjewoude Energie Neutraal will receive a four million euro subsidy (€4.300.000) to realize their plans. This place of support is a space where the energy ethics of the state and the bottom-up initiatives meet. The Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy, the Interprovincial Consultation, the Dutch Water Authorities and The Association of Netherlands Municipalities have created an inter-administrative program to alleviate energy transitions. Through this collaboration, they can uncover and develop ways to support municipalities and interested parties in their gas-free challenge, a part of the Regional Energy Strategy program. The base of this collaboration includes a knowledge- and learning program and the Proeftuin Aardgasvrije Wijken (PAW). The first contains a program available for all 352 Dutch municipalities, in which knowledge, network, obstacles, solutions, and inspiration are shared to learn and improve. The latter – the Proeftuin Aardgasvrije Wijken stands for neighborhoods that are selected to be a Pilot Project of Gas-free Neighborhoods (Proeftuin Aardgasvrije Wijken). This pilot case includes a subsidy of the state given to municipalities that present a well-considered, detailed and thoughtful plan on how they will become energy neutral. The Dutch state aims to transform a hundred neighborhoods into energy-neutral places. Nowadays, the state has provided 46 municipalities with this subsidy in order to make this gas-free transition possible.

The procedures to get selected as a pilot project is quite challenging. As a local cooperation, you have to present your plans to your municipality, who will eventually present it to the state. It takes three selection rounds, in which a progressive number of municipalities are eliminated. At the end of 2019, the state asked 355 municipalities to hand in a proposal on how they aimed to become energy neutral (PAW 2021). In total, 71 municipalities requested a subvention. Eventually, a few municipalities were chosen to get a four million euro subsidy on average. Beside Wijnjewoude, municipalities from every province have been selected and are at this moment pursuing their energy-neutral goal. For example, in Utrecht Overvecht, Nagele (Noordoostpolder), Sittard-Geleen, Duinwijck and Loppersum, citizens are – in collaboration with their municipality - researching and developing ways in which their village can become energy neutral in an economic- and environmentally friendly manner (PAW 2021). The members of WEN are noticeably proud of the PAW-grand. They see it as the embodiment of the municipality's trust in

their plans. An acknowledgment for six years of daily work, as the state's subsidy, makes it possible to carry out their plans.

WEN has been selected to be a pilot project and has signed the collaboration with the state in April 2021. Therefore, they have received a 4.3 million euro subsidy. According to the National Government (Rijksoverheid 2021), Wijnjewoude has been selected because of their complete and robust proposal, financially and technically, and organizationally. The proposal is based on an ambitious reduction in heat demand. Thereby, Wijnjewoude is an exciting example for rural regions, as they aim to use manure fermenting to reduce gas usage. This method could eventually be used in geographically similar regions (Rijksoverheid 2021). The collaboration between WEN and the municipality contains the following framework: WEN is responsible for creating the plans regarding the sustainable energy transition. They have to regulate the project from A to Z. This includes managing the money, creating local acceptance, or carrying out research regarding the best infrastructures. They have the freedom to shape the transition by their own expertise. Yet, before executing plans, the municipality will have to control whether their plans fit the purpose of the pilot project. Thus, WEN is responsible for developing and implementing, while the municipality has the responsibility to control and make final decisions.

Via de multiple pilot projects of the state, municipalities create a lead in becoming energy neutral via bottom-up initiatives, making it easier for following regions - and eventually larger-scaled areas – to make this sustainable transition. The PAW creates a method that makes it possible not to re-invent the wheel in every region but to create an efficient sample of a regional energy transition. In this way, local initiatives and energy ethics are connected to other regional and local projects and energy ethics. These citizens who aim to create greener and local forms of energy together shape the foundation of the Dutch national sustainable energy transition.

### **Energy Ethics of Wijnjewoude Energie Neutraal**

As can be concluded from the paragraphs above, energy ethics and corresponding actions of personal, local, regional, national and global scales are intertwined. As actors of the state, municipalities in the Netherlands seize bottom-up initiatives, as those may help them to accomplish their Regional Energy Strategy goals (Dimitrov 2016). Thereby, global political energy ethics and decisions such as the Paris Agreement have had daily effects on citizens of Wijnjewoude. To create a coherent understanding of how WEN's volunteers experience energy, I have thoroughly analyzed their energy ethics. That encompasses how this local group of volunteers experience their modern energy systems, possible sustainable energy systems of the future, and how they relate to their environment. These energy ethics form the fundamentals of their actions: realizing a self-sufficient and energy-neutral village in 2025. This information has created a coherent overview of the local initiative and the role of energy within lives of its volunteers. The citizens of Wijnjewoude seem to hold four topics as the most critical motivation to pursue a sustainable way of producing energy. These entail a local-communal ethical perspective, an environmental- and economic ethical perspective and a future-driven

ethical perspective.

The first important aspect of WEN's energy ethics concerns a feeling of community and unity, which is locally referred to as *Mienskip*. *Mienskip* is a term that my research participants have frequently used. The literal translation of 'community' lacks the actual meaning. *Mienskip* is a Frisian word that refers to using the knowledge and skills of every citizen in a village in order to be independent on to other villages. According to Van der Meulen (s.d.) it includes the interconnectivity of the citizens in a village in order to protect the community. The term comes from the era in which Friesland consists of small isolated villages that were self-sufficient, that consisted of depended and connected inhabitants. The inhabitants complemented each other in their abilities: farmers, bakers, painters, and smiths together shaped the village's everyday life. Thus, the interdependence of the citizens within the Frisian villages created unity, which made them independent of other regions (Van der Meulen s.d.). This feeling corresponds to the first aspect of WEN's energy ethics, as WEN aims to realize the sustainable energy transition as a community. Everyone can strengthen the movement by its expertise and abilities. It is a historically rooted feeling that is still present in Wijnjewoude and which shapes the core identity of Wijnjewoude Energie Neutraal.

This value of *Mienskip* became clear to me during an interview with Pabe. Pabe, Lindsey and I sat across from each other at a large wooden table in our temporary residence in Wijnjewoude. We had spoken to Pabe on the phone many times, yet it is always different to meet someone in person. Pabe is an essential member of WEN, also locally referred to as the visionair of the cooperation. He has lived in Wijnjewoude for about twenty years and has an extensive background and experience in realizing business transformations. "This village used to be independent as well. Many specialized shops maintained the village. Once, Wijnjewoude was independent of companies and parties of other regions." You can feel his enthusiasm for and his belief in *Mienskip*. He states how he has used this feeling as well during his career in realizing business transformations, in which he trusted and listened to the expertise of his team members. However, as he retired, Pabe was determined to continue his passion and wanted to do something for his village. "When I retired, Harry already started a cooperation, which motivated me to contribute to this project more than the sustainable energy idea itself." This is also the reason he was so interested in attending the cooperation WEN. "A cooperation holds the idea of working together. Of having a common goal and figuring out the right way as a team. Again: *Mienskip*. That is what drives me most." He emphasizes his resentment towards multinationals driven by revenues and losing sight of their initial purpose. "Power and money, that is something I want to dissent myself from." Therefore, Pabe is determined to share all revenues within the village. Every citizen will benefit from producing sustainable gas and electricity. Deriving from this perspective, WEN collaborates with 'Energie van ons' (Our Energy): an energy company that sells locally produced 'dark green' energy. WEN receives a yearly amount of 75 euros from every WEN member that agrees to support WEN. This money will be spent on projects in order to improve sustainability and livability in Wijnjewoude. This *Mienskip* ethic is reflected in the communication of WEN as well. It can, for example, be seen in a cartoon that is frequently used in

their external communication on online platforms. Figure 1.1 demonstrates the specific cartoon in which the municipality and WEN are proud to realize this transformation together.

This idea of *Mienskip* - of being independent and self-sufficient as a village - holds a particular belief in increased energy democracy. Every citizen should be able and allowed to contribute to and influence the transition. Chapter three will examine this theoretical concept of energy democracy inherently.

Together with the value of *Mienskip*, the environmental concerns and climate change are other aspects that shape WEN's energy ethics. Even though Pabe is most enthusiast about the idea of pursuing this dream together and even though sustainability has not been his initial drive to attend WEN, he does care about it. Pabe dreams about a better world for future generations, a greener and more sustainable one. He is noticeably enthusiastic about the more minor sustainable transformations that have already been realized in the village. He got his house off gas and has switched to a heat pump and solar panels. "We have done so much already!, Pabe said." He truly believes that Wijnjewoude can become energy neutral and be a national pioneer.

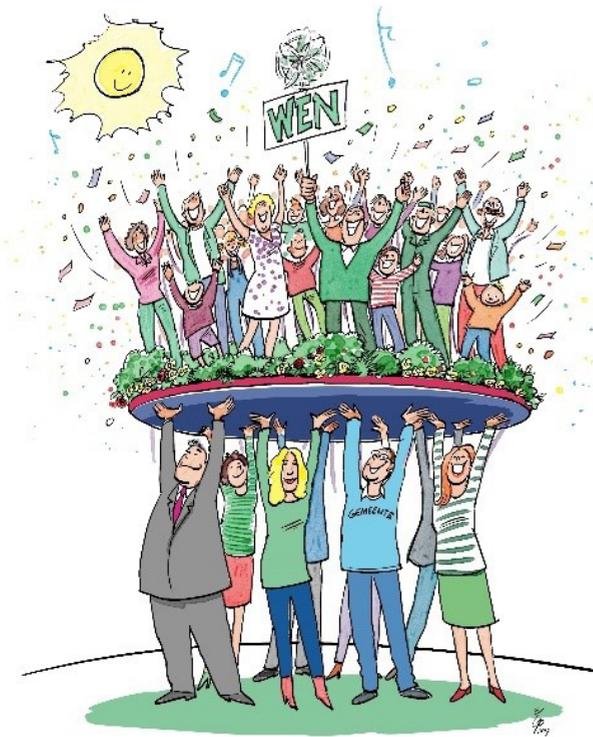


Figure 1.1: cartoon used in WEN's external communication

He shares this motivation with other WEN members. Taking care of our world and resolving the current climate problems caused by choices in the past are fundamental motivations for WEN's members. Yet, the members do not solely care about restoring nature itself and the connection between humans and nature. One of my research participants, named Herman, who has been an active member from the start but is not part of the board, feels like we as humans have lost our connection to nature. Herman is a retired man and former farmer who has lived in Wijnjewoude his whole life. He knows every citizen of the village and every local transformation that has occurred. "Most of us do not even know where our electricity comes from. It is just there. Times have changed immensely. I remember that there was not even gas available in this village." Herman has experienced times of oil lamps. He remembers the first electricity infrastructure that was built in Wijnjewoude. "Nowadays people do not know which way to turn when the electricity does not work properly. We are disconnected from the source. And when something so easily accessible is so abstract or invisible, you will not be aware of the effort it actually takes to get it." Herman argues that this invisibility of our current infrastructures and their climate effects increases people's ignorance toward climate change. "This awareness I have, due to my knowledge about where electricity comes from, makes me want to support WEN. I believe we have to go back to local production. It will be better for people as well as the environment." Thus, according to Herman, creating locally produced energy will not only combat climate change, yet it creates awareness and reunites humans to nature.

A third fundamental value that shapes WEN's energy ethics concerns taking responsibility for future generations. In many interviews, volunteers emphasized that this energy transition is nothing but taking responsibility for others. "We will not experience the drastic burden of climate change ourselves", Harry states. "Yet, our generation has created a tremendous amount of environmental pollution, and we are not the ones who will have to live with the consequences," Harry states how sustainability is not something he was raised with. His parents did not care about the environment in the way he does now. He believes his parents were not even aware of the way they were polluting the earth. Yet, while growing up, he became critical of subtle changes in the environment. "You can see by scientific numbers how invasive plants are dominating the meadows. Or you can see by the numbers how air pollution is increasing. And we caused that. We are burdening our children with an earth that will eventually be unlivable." Therefore, Harry tries to motivate the people in his surroundings and other villages and neighborhoods to reflect on their behavior and take responsibility for future generations.

Another resident of Wijnjewoude, Noah, is also aware of the threats of climate change for future generations and is determined to raise his children with environmental awareness. Noah is one of the 'younger' respondents I got in contact with, an adolescent man in his mid-thirties. He and his wife raise their two children in Wijnjewoude. They have been able to buy a house at the edge of the village and every day they adore the nature their region has to offer. Noah surprised me with the ways he tries to raise his children with environmental awareness. "We frequently go for a walk in the woods to collect waste. We create this little game where a bottle is a certain amount of points and a plastic bag another amount. The one who collects the most waste wins. It is a fun but effective



Figure 1.2: cartoon used in WEN's external communication  
 Translation: Do I get a subsidy as well now?

way to teach them to take care of the environment." Noah proudly tells how his youngest daughter even surprises him with her awareness. A while ago, she asked him why they actually eat animals. He is clearly proud of her awareness and states that he feels like the new generations really can create change. This strengthens his motivation to support WEN, take responsibility for his children's future, and fight climate change.

This third value that shapes WEN's energy ethics is also a highly discussed topic in WEN's external communication. For example, during the opening of the pilot project Proeftuin Aardgasvrije Wijken. WEN broadcasted a live show where interviews were held with several families of three generations in Wijnjewoude. Herein, the elderly emphasized the importance of leaving a greener world for their grandchildren. This ideology is also reflected in a cartoon of WEN, as demonstrated in figure 1.2. It represents the interest and awareness of younger generations in contributing to sustainability. The cartoon is used on WEN's website and in their flyers.

Thus, the energy ethics of WEN are shaped by communal- and environmental motivation and by their responsibility towards future generations. However, the members and supporters of WEN are also driven by economic motivation and the financial benefits of sustainable energy. Hence, acting economically responsible is the fourth aspect that shapes the energy ethics of WEN. Jeroen, a member of WEN who is highly enthusiastic about their plans, is mainly fascinated by this matter. Jeroen is a relatively young citizen of Wijnjewoude. He and his wife, both in their mid-thirties, have just moved into his parents' house. On a clear winter evening in February, we decided to go

for a walk together. The sky was beautifully blue and the golden sunlight gently stroked our eyes. I already knew Jeroen was politically intertwined with regional sustainability processes, yet I did not know his position towards WEN. Combatting climate change for future generations and the communal aspects turned out to be of fundamental value for him. Yet he stated: “I could say that the environment matters to me the most, but I would be lying. I find the economic aspect highly interesting. It is often about investments, but once the innovation is installed, it will be worth it in the long run.” Thus, acting economically responsible is also one of the reasons Jeroen supports the WEN-project.

Vera, a board member of WEN, is also mainly motivated by the economic aspect. “Little behavioral aspects can already make such a difference in the bill at the end of the month. We often do not realize that our current behavior is quite expensive. Therefore I am motivated to show people how small changes have a huge financial impact.” This extrinsic motivation is again translated into the external communication of the cooperation. Figure 1.3 demonstrates the cartoon – which is often used in their marketing - that reflects their drive. It visualized the benefits of small changes. This is reflected in the changes made regarding the radiator, the letterbox, and the curtain in front of the door – all to properly isolate the house. The text underneath the cartoon states, ‘It is the small things that have the most impact. The characters proudly read their annual financial report and state ‘that is easily earned!’ It reflects the fourth value of WEN that includes the personal financial benefits of sustainability.



Figure 1.3: cartoon used in WEN’s external communication

## Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined the energy ethics of Wijnjewoude Energie Neutraal, which consists of the four pillars *Mienskip*, environmental concerns, responsibility for future generations and financial responsible behavior. What I have demonstrated in this chapter is how the bottom-up energy transition Wijnjewoude Energie Neutraal is connected to energy ethics and transitions on different scales. The energy ethics of a specific group do not stand on their own but are rather intertwined with energy ethics of broader and more minor scales, as they constantly influence one another (Savacool & Dworkin 2014). Together, these energy ethics shape the way people interpret and experience (sustainable) energy. By the way they act on their energy ethics, Wijnjewoude Energie Neutraal contributes to the achievement of the regional and national Dutch climate goals - and is therefore constantly in relation to broader scales of energy ethics.

As discussed in the introduction of this thesis, WEN acts on their energy ethics by pursuing a local sustainable energy park construction. They aim to realize a solar field of 1,5 hectares and a mono-manure fermenter to make their village energy neutral by 2025. Yet, as the idea of this bottom-up initiative sounds promising and utopic, several conditions obstruct the development of the project. In Wijnjewoude, it becomes clear that energy transitions function beyond their material form. They are manifestations of hopes and dreams that make the political and social visible (Appel, Gupta, Anand 2018). By the construction – or the imagination – of infrastructures, historical patterns become visible, as well as matters of exclusion, connectivity, democracy and power. In Wijnjewoude, this can be seen through social and political processes that have risen since WEN introduced their dream of a mono-manure fermenter. The mono-manure fermenter would be located in the neighborhood of Klein Groningen and the idea of this material presence in their neighborhood has evoked increasing resistance by its residents. The different perspectives on this mono-manure fermenter often transcend its technological function. Because rather than solely implementing the imagined energy infrastructures and using the subsidy of the pilot project Proeftuin Aardgasvrije Wijken, the local energy transition of Wijnjewoude has evoked a local conflict. Different visions regarding the construction of the mono-manure fermenter, deriving from political parties, the cooperation WEN and citizens of Wijnjewoude create a field of tension that obstructs the progress of the bottom-up energy transition.

In the next chapter, I examine these social tensions and I relate them to historical events that have created contemporary frameworks. I will provide insight in how the imagined infrastructures by WEN create a conflict that transcends the actual material aspect of the infrastructure, and which instead derives from the reproduction of historical patterns.

## Rising Tension: Historical patterns in a present-day transition

*Even when one has no knowledge about the situation in Wijnjewoude, a walk through the village will already provide you with insights. It will be immediately explicit how the village is divided by different perspectives and the social tension this entails. One cannot help but notice the yellow stickers on many of the front doors. The stickers include the logo of WEN and represent one's support to the bottom-up initiative. It is the physical embodiment of the polarization in the village. However, as much as the yellow stickers stand out, one will observe other signs as well. When walking to the west side of Wijnjewoude, more and more houses have small banners in front of their windows that state "we say no to a manure fermenter". And on the edge of Wijnjewoude, where the properties start to have vast gardens and way more space, large banners are put in meadows to demonstrate against the mono-manure fermenter. An example is visualized in figure 2.1. 'No manure-fermenter in Wijnjewoude' or 'I say no to a manure fermenter', they say.*

*I regularly take a walk around this side of Wijnjewoude, where the conflict can clearly be seen. It visualizes the tensions that the citizens talk about and it makes me able to reflect on the conversations I had with them. One of the respondents told me how these banners were just a fraction of the manifestation of the conflict. "The different positions within the village go way beyond just contrasting opinions. It is manifested in relations between neighbors, and it even affects some financially", argues Remon – one of my respondents. "Three people have already moved out of the village due to the constant tensions and arguments. And Anne lost some of his customers due to a difference in opinion concerning the mono-manure fermenter. Also, Chris does not speak to her neighbor anymore." This statement of Remon emphasizes the severe resistance that can be observed in Wijnjewoude regarding the envisioned infrastructural plans by WEN.*



Figure 2.1: A resistance banner in Klein Groningen



Figure 2.2: A resistance banner in Klein Groningen

Within this chapter, I analyze the conflict that has risen since the WEN project started in 2015. It examines the grounds on which the local resistance against the WEN project is based and connects it to the village's local history. It shows how infrastructural projects in Wijnjewoude become rather a social than a technical matter, by exposing historical and cultural patterns and feelings. Since the bottom-up energy transition of WEN can solely be realized with sufficient local acceptance, it is of importance to understand this resistance and its fundamentals.

In what follows, I will first of all elaborate on the theoretical debate regarding anthropology of infrastructures. This paragraph will focus on the paradoxes and promises these infrastructures entail, whereafter they are linked to the case study of Wijnjewoude. Secondly, the local resistance in Wijnjewoude is examined, whereby I focus on how the local conflict is shaped and what this resistance is based on.

### **The promise of infrastructures**

Anthropologists have unraveled how infrastructures can be of great importance in people's lives and future perspectives— yet, also of great displeasure (Harvey & Knox 2012). According to Larkin (2014, 327), “Infrastructures are material forms that allow for the possibility of exchange over space. They are the physical networks through which goods, ideas, waste, power, people, and finance are trafficked.” Although the infrastructures are constructed with a promise of increased prosperity, this is not experienced the same among all citizens (Anand, Gupta & Appel 2018). Infrastructures often have a noticeable impact on people's daily lives, especially along the path of its construction, distribution, usage and waste (Smith & High 2017). The places they go, and do not go, do not only indicate their physical presence but also their social and political, due to contrasting ways people experience and interpret them (Graham and Thrift 2007). Anthropologists have researched how infrastructures are intertwined in people's daily lives and how they evoke these social and political processes.

Howe, Lockrem & Appel et al. (2016, 6) state that infrastructures expose the social conditions and times in which it is situated; thus, it demonstrates as much about our historical and cultural characteristics in a particular moment and place as it does about the thing itself. Focusing on sustainable energy: the Mondial investments of states in sustainable technologies demonstrate the urge and transition towards creating an energy-neutral economy. It represents the current political and social culture in which awareness about the threats of climate change has risen and is deliberately acted upon (Ministerie van Economische Zaken en Klimaat 2020). This focus on sustainable infrastructures demonstrates how these infrastructural innovations include a particular promise to the future. Mistakes of the past are being compensated by new infrastructures that should provide solutions for present-day and future problems. Sustainable energy solutions as solar panels and windmills should repair or minimize the destruction that former fossil fuel energy infrastructures have done. Thus, by building contemporary sustainable energy constructions, the past and the present are connected in an ideological sense.

However, where infrastructures make a certain promise to improvement and future prosperity, they must be constantly retrofitted to fulfill this promise. Therefore, the promise of durability is rather an illusion than a fact. According to Howe, Lockrem, Appel et al. (2016). “Retrofitting has a futurological orientation that has us thinking into the horizon while building from the materials and technologies of the present” (Howe, Lockrem, Appel et al. 2016, 9). Infrastructures constantly have to be retrofitted by authoritative and political parties to fulfill its promise of prosperity, making them rather temporal than solid. Furthermore, even though infrastructures contain this promise of a particular prosperity (e.g. environmental or economic development), they regularly evoke social processes of resistance and conflict. According to Anand, Gupta & Appel (2018), infrastructures can decide or emphasize who is included or excluded. The accessibility to a specific infrastructure – or not – emphasizes already existing social groups or creates new social groups by its construction. The prosperity that infrastructures should provide often solely count for the people who can use the infrastructure. In this way, inequality is emphasized or created by the construction of new infrastructures. The materiality of the construction exposes, maintains or accentuates social processes.

It can be concluded that infrastructures are rather active than passive materials (Di Nunzio 2018). They make social and political life into being, as their construction influences notions of equality, economic prosperity, and the accessibility of places. As they thus exist beyond their material form, the future of new infrastructures depends on who invents them and on the process of implementing them (Star 1999).

In Wijnjewoude, infrastructures are build in order to solve contemporary environmental problems. Where previous generations have exploited the earth with fossil fuels, the citizens of Wijnjewoude aim to use a mono-manure fermenter and a solar field. The mono-manure fermenter contains a circular mechanism in which daily produced cow manure of local farms is transformed into energy. By using manure of local farmers, there would be enough feedstock to produce gas for the whole village. According to Harry mono-manure fermenting is a circular way of producing gas. It is a technology that ferments cow feces and converts corresponding greenhouse gasses into biogas. The perks of this kind of technology can be found in the fact that the biogas can be transported through existing gas networks, which makes it a sustainable and affordable technology. By this mono-fermenter, the farmers become energy suppliers of the village, while they simultaneously decrease their greenhouse gas emissions by fermenting their livestock manure. Consequently, according to Harry, a mono-manure fermenter would not only benefit the climate and ecosystems, but the local famers as well. Therefore, this infrastructure holds a promise of prosperity to the future, to farmers, and to citizens of Wijnjewoude who may benefit from this innovation.

The solar field and mono-manure fermenter do not solely create promises of a wealthier and greener future, yet they also attempt to connect timelines. As Harry has stated in an interview: “Every present-day situation is caused by choices in the past. That is why we have the Paris Agreement. And every choice in the present will create the present in the future. That is why WEN has been founded.” Herein, the past and the present and the present and the future are intertwined in the bottom-up initiative. This corresponds to the

argument of Howe, Lockrem & Appel et al. (2016, 6), who state that infrastructures are constructed with a specific promise to the future. In Wijnjewoude, WEN attempts to correct the mistakes of the past, by creating present-day solutions, in order to create a better present in the future.

The promise of being a solution and creating a greener future contains an essential trust in innovation – A topic that I have extensively elaborated on with Max, one of the farmers in Wijnjewoude that profoundly believes in the promises of a mono-manure fermenter. When I asked Max about the Dutch State’s political plans concerning the possible decline of the livestock population, he does not seem to be worried. “Innovation always progresses. In a few years, we will be able to subtract way more gas from one-kilogram manure than we can now. I trust in innovation.” Hereby, Max emphasizes the paradox of the promise of infrastructures as discussed by Howe, Lockrem Appel et al. (2016, 9). On the one hand, the mono-manure fermenter promises a solid solution to contemporary problems. However, it also emphasizes the temporality of this solidity, as societal and political developments will force constant retrofitting.

Nevertheless, where WEN’s volunteers solely see the realization of these infrastructures as a promise and contribution to sustainability and wealthier village, the citizens of Klein Groningen (who will have to live near the possible infrastructures) are rather swamped by emotions of resistance. The envisioned infrastructures by WEN have created a local conflict over the past couple of years, consisting of different perspectives, experiences and interpretations of these envisioned infrastructures. As demonstrated in the introduction of this chapter, local resistance has manifested in social tensions and physical banners in the village. After conducting research in Wijnjewoude, it has become clear that this local conflict about historical and cultural patterns exposed and reproduced by the possible implementation of new infrastructures. Therefore, infrastructural development is rather a social matter than a material one. In what follows, I elaborate on the resistance in Wijnjewoude against WEN. I will examine on the fundament this is based on and how the conflict is manifested.

## **Resistance groups**

Soon after the establishment of Wijnjewoude Energie Neutraal in 2015, two resistance groups were founded. Both groups actively express(ed) people’s concerns about the envisioned infrastructural plans. One of the resistance groups is referred to as Klein Groningen. This name derives from the neighborhood in Wijnjewoude’ Klein Groningen’. This neighborhood is located near the side where WEN aims to build the sustainable energy park and is visualized in figure 2.3. This location is locally referred to as the RWZI (‘Riool Water Zuiverings Installatie’), which is located at the Tolleane in the west of the village. It contains a former water treatment plant which was abandoned twenty years ago. Nowadays, it is a vacant lot with the RWZI installations and infrastructure still in place. All the resistance group’s members have reservations concerning the mono-manure fermenter that may be placed near their neighborhood. Their concerns regard the smell, sound, landscape integration, light, safety, and traffic that the mono-manure fermenter may entail.

Westkant geen Mestkant is the smaller resistance group of both and has six members. All members live near or in Klein Groningen as well and thus near the former RWZI. As the RWZI is located about 200 meters from the backyard of two of their members, they feel like the infrastructure will be placed in their backyard. While the arguments and position of this action group are similar to action group Klein Groningen, Westkant geen Mestkant adheres to a different method in communicating their resistance. Where Klein Groningen is determined to stay in negotiation with WEN and believes that without dialogue, there is no influence, Westkant geen Mestkant refuses to talk with WEN. Since 2019, they have decided not to speak with the board members of WEN anymore. “It is a conscious decision to stay out of contact with WEN. Once you keep talking and stay in dialogue, you will be responsible for the outcome as well. We do not want to be responsible for a manure fermenter in our village. Because we just do not want such a thing”, argues one of the research participants. A respondent of Klein Groningen states that “We do not want the manure fermenter to be located in our backyard as well. Let that be clear. But once you dig in your heels and you stop talking, then you have no power at all. I do not think that is the right way.” Thus, both groups live near or in Klein Groningen and fight the same goal, yet they differ in their method pursuing this goal.

Where the strategies in order to resist the mono-manure fermenter differ between the opponent groups, both groups are similar in stating to support the mission and dream of WEN. They agree that a transition in sustainable energy is needed as we should combat climate change. In short, the locus of the resistance against WEN is not caused by a difference in energy ethics. Both groups support the idea of sustainable energy. However, the locus of this resistance is based on infrastructural change and the interpretation of this sustainable energy transition.

### **Historical and social patterns**

However, my fieldwork has shown that the conflict in Wijnjewoude consists of reproduced historical and social processes evoked by these sustainable energy infrastructures instead of a conflict about the materiality of the envisioned infrastructures. The opposition of Westkant geen Mestkant and Klein Groningen is based on deeper historical, cultural patterns and former experiences with authoritative parties and infrastructural projects. These projects include the destruction of the former local milk factory and the construction and endless negotiations regarding the local roads. These historical patterns and experiences have resulted in a feeling of social exclusion by citizens of Wijnjewoude. Insights in how this feeling of exclusion has developed provide us with insights in the ground of their resistance. To thoroughly understand the opponents’ position, I will first unravel local histories that still influence present-day realities, whereafter I demonstrate how former infrastructural negotiations have subsequently increased this feeling of social exclusion.

The first reason for these feelings of exclusion can be found in the geographical history of the village. Wijnjewoude belongs to the municipality Opsterland and is located in the southeast of Friesland. Till 1974, Wijnjewoude used to be two smaller villages: Duurswoude and Wijnjeterp. Both villages were connected by the dairy factory ‘*De Vooruitgang* Wijnjeterp-Duurswoude’, founded in 1902 and based in Klein Groningen

(a neighborhood in Wijnjewoude). It was based near the canal by which feedstock (raw milk) and products (dairy) could be transported. As the people of Duurswoude and Wijnjeterp were both dependent on the factory, they were often called within one name Wijnjeterp-Duurswoude. Eventually, due to interdependency, the villages were merged into one.

The current geography of Wijnjewoude can be seen in figure 2.3, visualized at page 22. However, the historical-geographical divisions still have their effects on citizens’ feelings of belonging. According to the citizens of Klein Groningen, their neighborhood has always felt separate from the center of Wijnjewoude, even though they geographically or administratively belong to the village. “People of Klein Groningen do not feel connected with the village itself. It is like a small congregation. You can still feel the history being present. There is no unity or feeling of togetherness, and there never has been.” In every interview I conducted, citizens of Klein Groningen emphasized that they did not feel as they belonged to the village. They all felt like a separate community. This can be led back to historical developments, as the neighborhood Klein Groningen initially was inhabited by employees of the milk factory. This has created a culture in which everyone is familiar with one another. The division is not solely a feeling: it is also emphasized by a large blue nameplate located at the edge of Klein Groningen in Wijnjewoude. The nameplate manifests the geographical and social division between both communities.

Thus, the first reason that explains the feeling of exclusion of Klein Groningen can be found in the actual geographical division of the village. Yet, the second reason that explains their feeling can be found in the many infrastructural negotiations that have taken place over the last twenty years. Several infrastructures that should facilitate the whole village, yet which were all placed in Klein Groningen, have emphasized their feeling of exclusion. “We carry the burdens,” state the citizens of Klein Groningen. The history of these infrastructural negotiations is of severe influence on people’s present-day perspectives on the local, sustainable energy project WEN.

The first infrastructural negotiation that emphasized their feeling of exclusion was the former milk factory. Where the dairy factory *De Vooruitgang* once provided the village with economic and social prosperity, it soon became an eyesore for the citizens of Klein Groningen. Figure 2.4, visualized at page 23, demonstrates where the former factory was located in Klein Groningen. The deterioration of the building decreased the living comfort of the inhabitants, which corresponds to the paradoxes of infrastructures discussed by Howe, Locker, Appel et al. (2016). The construction of new infrastructures includes a promise regarding development and prosperity. However, where infrastructures embody hope, dreams and optimism, their breakdown and downfall often embody the opposite. As the former milk factory was closed down and its technical purpose and its political policies were ripped off, it became a material remain solely. This is a paradox as infrastructures are most commonly built to increase economic development and wealth (Appel, Anand, Gupta 2018). Thus, where *De Vooruitgang* first increased the livelihood of surrounding citizens, it now became a vacant lot that emphasized political and social processes. Eventually, the citizens located

near this infrastructure got to decide what other facility would be constructed after the downfall of the old dairy factory in collaboration with the municipality. Citizens of Klein Groningen state that they were asked to attend a working group in order to democratically decide what the sequel infrastructure should look like. However, one of their respondents states that “choices were already made. We could not even choose the color of the playground equipment. Whereafter, they thanked me for my effort. ‘Without me it would not have worked out’.” This pretense of attending a democratic process has created distrust in similar processes for the citizens of Klein Groningen. This feeling has simultaneously been influenced by the second infrastructural negotiation, namely: the reconstruction of the main provincial road (N-weg). This has been an infrastructural process that has taken more than twenty years to prepare and realize and that has simultaneously emphasized the feelings of exclusion of the opponents. Figure 2.4 visualizes the former and current location of the main road.

One of the citizens who participated in the working group concerning the road, for about six years, is Jeroen . He explained how the road had influenced geographical and social processes in Wijnjewoude. The working group he attended discovered the possibilities of reconstructing the main road from Drachten to Oosterwolde. Previously, this main road was located between the center of Wijnjewoude and Klein Groningen. This created a geographical separation within the village, which influenced the feeling of unity between both communities. After negotiations that took over twenty years, the main road has been replaced on the westside of Klein Groningen. Therefore, the geographical division between Klein Groningen and Wijnjewoude has been removed, which should have strengthened a feeling of unity within the village. However, the old geographical division still holds its visible traces of exclusion nowadays – especially as the citizens of Klein Groningen are still not satisfied with the contemporary road that is now located within their neighborhood. According to them, local safety has decreased after replacing the former road infrastructures by the new highway. The new country road that has been reconstructed provides the opportunity for automobilists to accelerate in speed. Therefore, after the reconstruction of the road, working groups concerning safety continued. For the past ten years, the neighborhood has been in constant negotiation with the Provincial authorities respecting Klein Groningen’s wish to narrow the road to increase safety. However, according to them, they have been led on for years already.

This feeling was emphasized once the municipality decided to narrow the Merkebuorren – the main road that goes through the center of Wijnjewoude. This feeling of favoring forms the third reason of the feelings of exclusion of Klein Groningen. “Can someone explain why they are taken seriously and we are not?”, questions one of my research participants from Klein Groningen. “This is not the only time the village is being favored.” A few years ago, the citizens of the village’s center were able to buy subsidized solar panels. People of Klein Groningen were interested in this as well, yet we were not eligible. Subsequently, WEN has plans respecting a solar field in our backyard, located at the former RWZI. That is where we drew the line.” Thus, due to an initial geographical separation of Wijnjewoude, laborious infrastructural negotiations over the past twenty

years and the experience of favoring, historical feelings of social exclusion have remained and increased. These three processes have shaped the background and framework from which the citizens of Klein Groningen nowadays experience and interpret the sustainable energy project Wijnjewoude Energie Neutraal. The absent feeling of belonging of Klein Groningen to Wijnjewoude is emphasized by the current infrastructural negotiations about the mono-manure fermenter and solar field. The citizens of Klein Groningen feel like all infrastructures are being ditched in their environment and as if they have to carry the infrastructural burdens of the village.

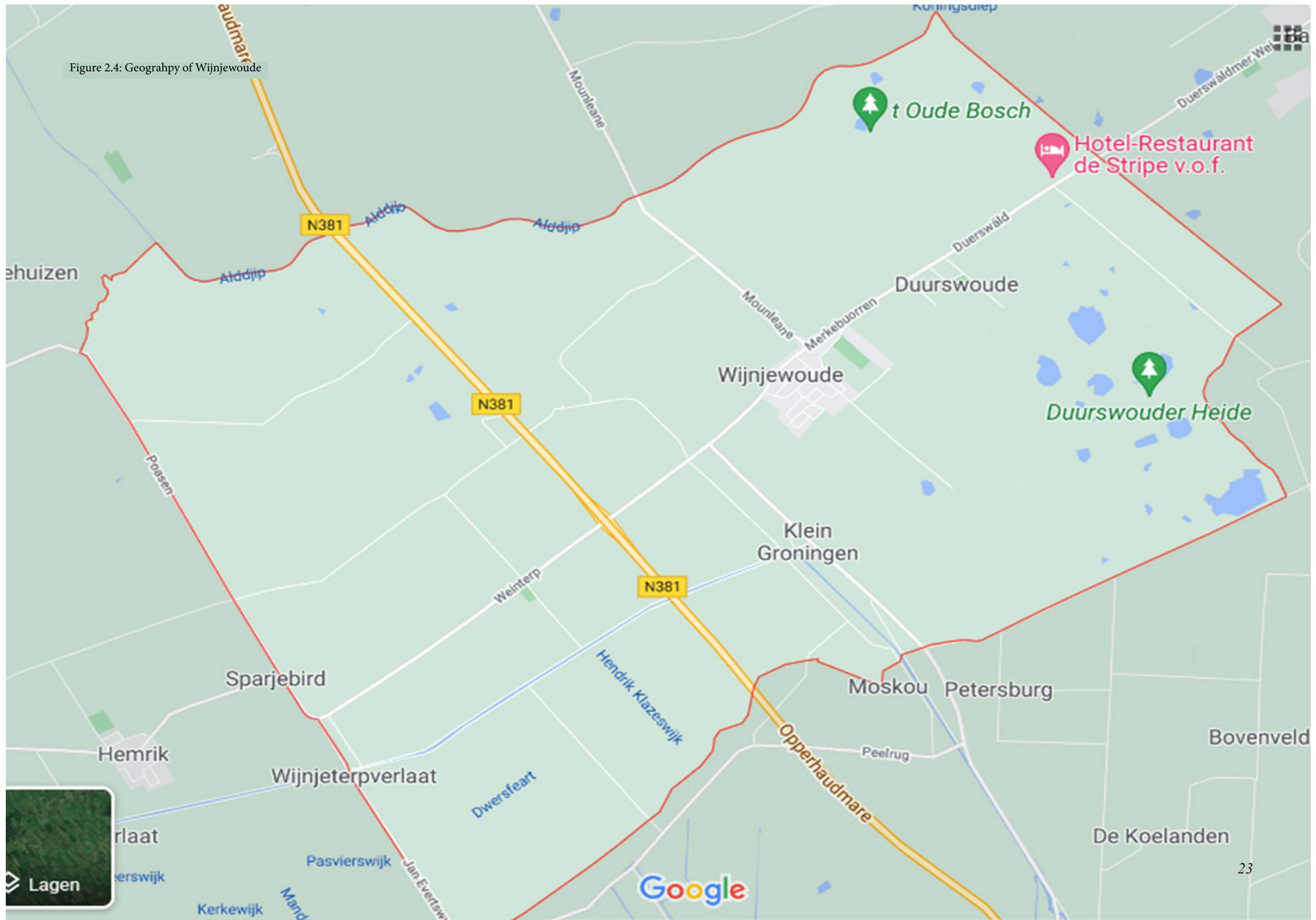
The situation in Wijnjewoude shows how infrastructural development evokes serious negative emotions and resistance by the people. The (imagined) visibility of the infrastructures assert its political and social effects (Larkin 2013) and exposes historically, personally and culturally rooted patterns and beliefs that transcend the actual physical presence of the infrastructure.



Figure 2.3: Infrastructural map Wijnjewoude

-  The previous main road of Wijnjewoude
-  The reconstructed N381, the new main road of Wijnjewoude
-  The former RWZI and the possible location of the mono-manure fermenter and solar field
-  The location of the old milk factory. This place now functions as a kinder garden.

Figure 2.4: Geograhpy of Wijnjewoude



## Contested truth-claims

Historically grown feelings and experiences have created a fundamental distrust by the members of Westkant geen Mestkant and Klein Groningen, which has resulted in contesting truth-claims regarding the mono-manure fermenter. This has created a conflict between the opponents and WEN members concerning the best infrastructures that are gauged to realize the most effective and safe energy transition. The opponents do not agree or trust WEN in their knowledge and therefore look for their own data in different sources. Hence, different truths about the effects and peril of the envisioned mono-manure fermenter are circulated in Wijnjewoude. These contested truth-claims are referred to as Anthropocenic Ecoauthority by Cyme Howe (2014). “Anthropocenic Ecoauthority is predicated on a series of experiential, scientific, and managerial truth-claims regarding ecological knowledge and future forecasting in an era of global anthropogenic change. Whether enunciated by resident communities, state officials, corporate representatives, or environmental experts, ecoauthority gains its particular traction by asserting ethical claims on behalf of, and in regard to, the anthropogenically altered future of the biosphere, human and nonhuman” (Howe 2014, 4). Even though the situation of Wijnjewoude does not specifically, or solely, include truths regarding ecosystems, the theory of eco authority can be used as a theoretical frame to interpret the situation, as the situation does include contrasting truth claims – in this case, regarding a specific infrastructure.

What follows is an examination of the truth-claims of the opponents (Westkant geen Mestkant and Klein Groningen) about the envisioned mono-manure fermenter and the sources this information has been derived from. Their view differs from the perspective of WEN and these divergences indicate distinct ways of imagining the realization of the bottom-up energy transition.

As stated, the opponents have created their own truth-claims to argue against the eco-authoritative story that the proponents of WEN position. The main difference in their truth-claims includes their perspective that the mono-manure fermenter will be a risk to their safety and the livelihoods of surrounding residents, instead of contributing to environmental- and economic benefits – as stated by WEN. However, the challenging aspect about the truth-claims of the mono-manure fermenter envisioned by WEN is the fact that there is no such mono-manure fermenter realized yet. Similar mono-manure fermenters have been constructed in other villages of Friesland, yet the size WEN aims to pursue is not realized before. According to WEN and neutral parties that have researched the possibilities, the plans concerning the fermenter are realizable in a safe and nuisance-free manner. However, the size of the specific mono-manure fermenter envisioned by WEN increases the opponents’ skepticism, especially as it is visioned through the historical lens of Klein Groningen. Thereby their skepticism is emphasized by information they are exposed to via online channels, such as documentaries. For example, many opponents are influenced by the documentary that has been broadcasted by NPO called ‘De Vuilnisman’. This documentary visualizes the devious and polluting way in which co-manure fermenters are being criminalized. However, this documentary presents information about a co-manure fermenter, in

which another feedstock is fermented together with the manure. Instead, a mono-manure fermenter only uses manure as feedstock. When I asked the research participants of the opposition whether they were aware of this difference, they admitted that this was the case. “But who knows whether the mono-fermenter will eventually turn into a co-fermenter to keep it economically viable”, stated multiple of the respondents. They argued not to have any guarantee whether this would become the case or not, once WEN’s subvention of the pilot project ‘Proeftuin Aardgasvrije Wijken’ transpired after twelve years.

In addition to this documentary, questions and uncertainties of the opponents are caused by other sources that influence their eco-authority. For example, by news articles, blogs, interviews or social media posts that express the negative experiences of citizens regarding co-fermenters in other villages. These sources are frequently shared on the Facebook page of Westkant geen Mestkant, and were simultaneously mentioned during interviews I did. For example, articles regarding co-fermenters in Holwerd (Friesland), Cothum (Brabant), and Marum (Friesland), were often referred to as authoritative sources (Verstegen 2021; Homma 2020; Leeuwarder Courant 2020; De Vries 2015). Even though these articles do not regard the same infrastructure as WEN envisions, they confirm the doubts and uncertainties the opponents already felt due to historical patterns of distrust.

In order to spread their doubts about the respected infrastructure with as many citizens as possible, the opponents share their eco-authoritative information via their Facebook channel ‘Westkant geen Mestkant’, via flyers and local- as well as regional newspapers. They spread information to share their eco-authoritative voice to persuade other inhabitants to believe their truth-claims. The messages that are being shared by these media platforms and via local banners present the ten main concerns of the opponents. For example, the opponents try to share their concerns regarding the uncertainties regarding the mono-manure fermenter, and their eco-authority, via the local newspaper. In May 2020, Klein Groningen expressed their worries in the local newspaper of Wijnjewoude – referred to as De Bân. The article explains the ground on which their opposition is based. “For the past couple of weeks, we have been having nightmares in Klein Groningen. A mono-manure fermenter may be build next to our neighborhood. That includes a minimum of twelve trucks a day, forth and back. Partly through the neighborhood. Six days a week. Almost every day. While we as Klein Groningen, have done all we could to decrease the amount of traffic and to let drivers reduce in speed.” Beside the topic of traffic, there are many other uncertainties the citizens cope with. “Will there be a constant hum from the machines? Will there be a constant manure smell? If the wind blows in the wrong direction, will we still be able to sit outside? Can I still hang the laundry outside? Will the manure fermenter influence our physical health? Will it impact our property value? What happens when the subvention ends? Will it then turn into a co-fermenter? Will there then be even more smell and nuisance?” (De Ban, 2020).

Max, one of the farmers that contributes to the realization of the mono-manure fermenter in Wijnjewoude, states that none of the fears or claims by the opponents are true. “They never came to me to validate anything or to ask for an explanation. None of the

information was true. If it were, I would not be a proponent either. No one wants such a thing as they describe.” This quote shows how both parties are opposed to each other. They do not solely have a difference in opinion, yet also reproach each other of their position.

In conclusion, the historical grown patterns in Wijnjewoude have created a considerable degree of distrust by the inhabitants of Klein Groningen. This has resulted in contested truth-claims that have been circulated in the village. The main difference between both truth-claims is based on the question whether the mono-manure fermenter will be a safe infrastructure and whether it will create a disturbing nuisance or not. Both parties stick to their truth-claims and confirm their perspective by corresponding sources that share their position. It can be concluded that these truth-claims do not solely derive from a difference in rationality but are mainly based on feelings of (dis)trust. The opponents and proponents are greatly opposed to one another on a rational as well as emotional level.

### **Chapter conclusion**

This chapter has examined reasons behind the resistance banners against the sustainable energy transition in Wijnjewoude. It has provided insights in the ground on which the opposition is based and has elaborated on the historical and current developments that form the reality of Klein Groningen and Westkant geen Mestkant. It has demonstrated how the resistance behind the sustainable energy transition Wijnjewoude is not based on the idea of realizing an energy-neutral village or on the idea of sustainability in itself. Instead, the resistance is based on processes of laborious historical negotiations and marginalization, exclusion, and conflict. These historical processes have created a framework through which present-day infrastructural developments and authorities have been envisioned. Even though WEN aims to pursue an inclusive, bottom-up movement, all their actions are visioned through a historically grown feeling of inequality and distrust. Therefore, opponents experience WEN and their bottom-up energy transition as obtrusive, as internal feelings of exclusion are remained. This emphasizes the paradox of infrastructures as discussed by Appel, Anand, and Gupta (2018). Even though the infrastructures contain a particular promise of prosperity and development to all citizens of Wijnjewoude, they are interpreted and experienced in contesting ways by its citizens. The infrastructures emphasize the already existing feelings of the people, which makes the social process of implementing infrastructures transcend its materiality. Feelings of exclusion, inequality, and power differences are reproduced and make the social and political life of the infrastructure into being (Harvey & Knox 2014).

In the end, the progress of WEN and its achievements will be determined by creating local acceptance, or not. If the current polarization is remained, political forces will have to determine whether WEN is allowed to carry out their plans, even with a degree of local resistance. Therefore, chapter three will elaborate on how the municipality Opsterland, as an actor of the state, is intertwined with, influences and negotiates upon the local acceptance regarding the bottom-up energy transition Wijnjewoude Energie Neutraal.

## Energopolitics in Wijnjewoude

*It is Monday, April 19th. My fieldwork should have ended a few days ago, but I cannot help to attend the counselor meeting of the municipality Opsterland. The political involvement of the municipality Opsterland in the WEN-project has been fascinating me. Never before have they managed such a successful bottom-up movement.*

*The sun is starting to set and I position myself behind my laptop. Sadly, all municipal meetings are still online. It makes it harder to concentrate, especially as the meetings sometimes take up to several hours. However, little did I know that this meeting would get me entirely concentrated until the last minute.*

*As the agenda topic of WEN was introduced, the discussion quickly shifted towards local acceptance and energy democracy. Rene Koopmans, D66's counselor, has been fighting for increased voting rights for people who may come to live near a new sustainable infrastructure for a long time. Yet the motion he presented has not been implemented. As soon as the issue of local acceptance is addressed, he speaks up. "The alderman had more than half a year to react on my motion to give unequal weights to the votes. However, I still did not get any reaction on how we should define and specify local acceptance in Wijnjewoude. It is.. I feel... It is unconceivable! If you, as an alderman, skip the democratic notion of decision-making and keep saying that Wijnjewoude Energie Neutraal is the one who shapes this concept, that is mad! I believe that is even against the law! I cannot believe it!" For the first time, I am happy to attend the counselor meeting online. I feel uncomfortable by the intense emotions that are even perceptible via a screen. Yet, it does allow me to clearly listen and rewatch parts of the meeting. It provides me with the opportunity to examine how this political landscape of negotiation and contestation is structured.*

This chapter examines the energopolitical landscape of Wijnjewoude. Energopolitics refer to how biopower (management of life and population) and energopower (utilizing electricity and fuel) are structured and intertwined. Boyer (2014) argues that via the concept of energopolitics, one can understand the complex operations of a state (actor) in relation to energy. When focusing on Wijnjewoude, modern energopolitical fossil-fuel systems are shifting to rather sustainable energopolitical systems (solar energy and a mono-manure fermenter) due to the biopolitical WEN-project on sustainability. Therefore, political parties have considerable influence on the WEN-project as it is carried out in collaboration with the municipality Opsterland – as an actor of the state - via the pilot project 'Proeftuin Aardgasvrije Wijken'. This collaboration holds a framework that includes prerequisites that WEN should comply with to carry out its plans. One of those prerequisites includes local acceptance - locally referred to as 'draagvlak'. *Draagvlak* is a Dutch concept that refers to the degree of local positivity or neutrality towards a particular project. Within this

chapter, I will demonstrate how the energopolitical landscape of Wijnjewoude is shaped by contestation and negotiation regarding the definition and interpretation of *draagvlak* in the bottom-up energy transition WEN. First of all, I am going to conceptualize this concept *draagvlak* by relating it to the anthropological concept of energy democracy. Hereafter, I demonstrate how the energopolitical landscape of Wijnjewoude is shaped, primarily via contestation and negotiation about *draagvlak*.

### ***Draagvlak, Mienskip and the belief in energy democracy***

*Draagvlak* is a typical Dutch concept, which I choose to translate as local acceptance. It is a Dutch term that is closely related to Dutch leadership traditions on realizing local consensus. However, it is much more than that. The concept holds the idea of realizing as little resistance as possible towards a project. It is as much about realizing support as it is about the absence of resistance (Boedeltje & de Graaf 2004). Ruelle and Bartels (1998, 405) have defined the concept as "an evaluation of a political situation by the target group of a specific policy, whereby the target group provides active or passive support towards the policy – or resistance." When the target group has a neutral attitude towards the specific policy, one can speak of minimum local acceptance. *Draagvlak* includes a scale of neutrality to utmost positivity (Boedeltje 2004). It is stated within the PAW-collaboration between the cooperation WEN and municipality Opsterland that *draagvlak* is required in order to carry out WEN's infrastructural plans.

The sustainable energy cooperation WEN aims to achieve *draagvlak* by focusing on the local (Frisian) notion of *Mienskip*. As discussed in chapter one, this relates to one of the core values of Wijnjewoude Energie Neutraal - namely, creating the feeling of unity and togetherness. *Mienskip* holds the belief that every citizen of the village has the freedom and ability to influence the process (Van der Meulen s.d.). Herein, hierarchal decision-making processes shift to horizontal decision-making processes, plus the skills and knowledge of all citizens are used to realize the transition. *Mienskip* can, in the context of the energy transition, be seen as the Frisian translation of the anthropological concept 'energy democracy'. According to van Veelen (2018), "civil society organizations use the term 'energy democracy' to link decarbonization with changes of who controls the means of energy production and distribution." Energy democracy holds the belief of equal influence and control between all citizens. McHarg (2016, 313) states that the transition to new energy technologies creates an opportunity for communities to regain control over their energy choices. Individuals can participate actively and genuinely influence the decision-making concerning their local energy supply. By participating in decision-making processes and increased ownership of local energy means, communities feel like creating a shift in contemporary economic- and authoritative structures while simultaneously increasing sustainability and livability (Sculiecki 2017). Therefore, the main characteristic of the energopolitical landscape of Wijnjewoude is its belief in increased energy democracy (in this context *Mienskip*). *Mienskip* should increase the number of civilians with positive attitudes towards WEN. It contains the promise of increased shared control and influence on a certain project – which should create *draagvlak*. Therefore, energopolitics

in Wijnjewoude are, among other things, characterized by bottom-up influence.

In this way, the collaboration between the municipality Opsterland and the bottom-up sustainable energy cooperation Wijnjewoude Energie Neutraal shapes a fascinating political landscape. The concept of *draagvlak* creates a yardstick by which the municipality determines whether WEN is allowed to construct their envisioned infrastructures or not.

However, where the energy transition of WEN aims to create *draagvlak* by pursuing increased energy democracy, the opponents still vision WEN as an authoritative force with the power to determine the livelihood in the village. To understand this, it should be noted that the opponents of the bottom-up energy transition have a significant amount of frustration due to constant historical negotiations concerning other infrastructures, which has raised them with a high degree of distrust. Even though WEN aims to realize the energy transition by Mienskip, the opponents feel overwhelmed and empowered by their already detailed plans and their power to pursue them with the subvention of the PAW-project. These opponents' feelings provide interesting insights when reflecting on the pursued energy democracy and energopolitics of Wijnjewoude. Where the local initiative holds the idea of inclusive decision-making, it is experienced like contemporary energy power structures – in which decisions are made top-down - by a large extent by the people on the westside of Wijnjewoude. This experience relates to the research of Young (2000). He has focused on bottom-up energy transitions and states that “while research participants deem inclusivity to be important, the ideals of inclusive decision-making and robust accountability procedures can be at odds with the practicalities of meeting them. It also shows that the nominal inclusion of (previously) underrepresented groups in decision-making does not automatically guarantee a transfer of power, as internal feelings of exclusion may remain” (Young 2000). It underlines the situation in Wijnjewoude, where energy democracy at this point is also rather an utopic dream than reality.

Yet, eventually, decisions on whether to implement the infrastructural plans of WEN – or not - will have to be made. Therefore, the prerequisite of *draagvlak* has become a highly contested and negotiated political topic that shapes the energopolitical landscape of municipality Opsterland – especially as there is no set qualitative definition of the term, nor is there a quantitative yardstick. As the final decision regarding the definition of *draagvlak* and compliance lays with the municipality Opsterland, energopolitics have a high influence on the success of the sustainable energy project. In the next paragraph, I am going to elaborate on the interest of the municipality in the WEN-project and the different parties by which the political landscape is structured. Hereafter, I focus on how the political forces of Wijnjewoude negotiate about and contest the topic *draagvlak*.

### **The political landscape of Wijnjewoude; from interest to influence**

After analyzing the energopolitics of municipality Opsterland, I state that municipality Opsterland on the one hand has a serious interest in the implementation of WEN's infrastructural plans, yet on the other hand experiences a hard time creating consensus regarding the definition of sufficient *draagvlak*.

The interest of the municipality Opsterland derives from the sustainability goals that the municipality will have to achieve as a governmental organization. After the Dutch Climate Agreement, Regional Energy Strategies (RES 1.0) have been established, including sustainable electricity goals that specific regions will have to achieve. It includes the goal to generate three terawatt-hours of sustainable electricity in 2030. In addition to the goals regarding electricity, the Frisian province has also established a plan on Regional Strategy Warmth (RSW). Herein, the opportunities and challenges of regional sustainable heat generation are discussed. It states that every municipality of Friesland has to have an individual strategy regarding heat production in 2021. The strategy regarding electricity may include solutions that cross regional and municipal geographical borders. However, sustainable heat production will have to be realized per municipality due to the need to spread the availability of heat throughout the province. This regional sustainability goal regarding heat highly influences the interest of municipality Opsterland in the bottom-up initiative Wijnjewoude Energie Neutraal. The WEN-project may greatly help municipality Opsterland to achieve its responsibilities concerning heat production, that Opsterland is commissioned by the Dutch state.

The collaboration between WEN and the municipality Opsterland, named ‘pilot project Proeftuin Aardgasvrije Wijken’, is the space where the interests of both parties meet. As discussed in chapter one, WEN has the task to develop and carry out the (non) infrastructural plans and the municipality has the power to make final decisions regarding the implementation of the infrastructures. The PAW-project is supervised by Rob Jonkman, Anko Postma and Timo Veen. Rob Jonkman and Anko Postma are the aldermen of municipality Opsterland and Timo Veen is the municipality's project manager. They are the initial contact persons for WEN regarding the PAW-project. To understand how the political landscape is further structured, Lindsey and I visited Rob Jonkman in the courthouse of Beetsterzwaag, another township within the municipality Opsterland.

Jonkman welcomed us in the magnificent white hall of the courthouse - a large historical stately building. We took a seat in a room at the back of the building, which had a beautiful view over the vast green garden of the courthouse. The garden is well maintained and structured by low bright green hedges. I was curious about what Jonkman would tell us and was primarily interested in the more basic information on how the municipality is structured. “Our municipality is divided in a municipal council of nine political parties, with a total of 21 members. They can be seen as the regional assembly of the municipality Opsterland,” Jonkman stated. He explained how the municipal council gathers two times a month in order to discuss regional processes. Herein, relevant subjects are discussed, such as the progress of Wijnjewoude Energie, *draagvlak* or the zoning plan of Wijnjewoude.

The latter relates to a topic in which we can observe clear influence of the municipality on the WEN-project. In 2019, the municipality already adjusted the local zoning plan of Wijnjewoude to pursue the Regional Energy Strategies. Herein, they have adjusted the destination of a former, long been out of operation, water treatment plant, locally referred to as the RWZI, to produce sustainable energy (instead of processing wastewater). According to Rob Jonkman the counselors of municipality Opsterland have

– by the adjustment of this zoning plan – aimed to provide support to the local energy transition. In this way, their interest in the energy transition has positively influenced the progress of WEN. “Yet, there is a ‘but’ in there”, according to Jonkman. “Whether WEN aims to use this location for solar panels or a manure fermenter, there has to be *draagvlak* in any case.” This notion of *draagvlak* has therefore been a central topic in Wijnjewoude, between the citizens as well as politically. It determines the main topic by which energopolitics in Wijnjewoude are shaped.

### **Political contestation regarding *Draagvlak***

In order to understand the energopolitics of Wijnjewoude, I have analyzed multiple council meetings. In these meetings, the nine different political parties shared their perspective on the bottom-up energy transition WEN. It was outstanding that all nine political parties agreed on and supported the idea of Wijnjewoude Energie Neutraal, to become energy neutral in 2025. Yet, they severely argued upon the question regarding *draagvlak*. Every conversation I have witnessed, came down to how sufficient local acceptance towards infrastructural plans will be determined. As described in the vignette of this chapter, the lack of a specific quantifiable definition of *Draagvlak*, has transformed the concept in a topic of contestation and negotiation.

Yet, before discussing the two contested perspectives that shape this political landscape, it is interesting to reflect on the adjustment of the zoning plan in 2019 regarding the question regarding *draagvlak*. Whether there is a good support base for the mono-manure fermenter is a peculiar debate, as the municipality’s counselors and alderman already approved WEN’s plan in general by adjusting the zoning plan of the RWZI, to support its use for sustainable energy production. In this way, the democratic process has, at least to some extent, already taken place by publishing the municipality’s draft zoning plan for views and comments. At that critical development stage, there were not many reactions from within the Wijnjewoude community, however. Consequently, any professional commercial energy producer could now use the possibilities the zoning plan now offers and ask for a permit for a mono fermenter that would be hard to refuse, since the zoning plan already provides for that. The applicant would only have to demonstrate that the mono-fermenter complies with the zoning plan regulations and applicable environmental regulations. Local support would not be a requirement for such a permit, as this is not any legal prerequisite. Nonetheless, the municipality feels, just as WEN itself does, that sufficient local support is a requirement for WEN’s initiative. Herein, two clear contested political perspectives respecting *draagvlak* can be identified.

On the one hand, several political parties state that the municipality should not get involved entirely with the realization or specification of *draagvlak* in Wijnjewoude regarding sustainable energy infrastructures. Especially political parties OpsterlandsBelang, VVD, and PvdA argue that WEN is a pilot project that demands time and patience. It provides space for WEN to uncover how they could create the support base and when they believe this is sufficient. This ideology requires trust and patience for the municipality – as managing local acceptance is usually a responsibility of the municipality. Therefore, they argue that as long as WEN acts within the framework of the PAW, they as the municipality

should not interfere and should trust the local democratic process. Jan van Dalen, the counselor of Opsterlands Belang, also argues that the municipality should reduce its involvement in this phase of realizing *draagvlak*. “The PAW-framework is clear, and WEN should be given its space in order to execute their plans. Whether there will be a mono-manure fermenter or not is something that they have to find out with the citizens.” Another political party that agrees on this position is Jan Harmsma - counselor of PvdA. “WEN’s challenge fits the contemporary era. Globally, and thus in our country and in our municipality, we have the responsibility to combat climate change and shape the future environmentally friendly. Of course, there will always be people who disagree with part of the plans – whether these reasons may be legit or not. However, now we have to trust WEN, to demonstrate their plans and to create acceptance. Nevertheless, we have to accept that this acceptance cannot be a hundred percent. We eventually will have to shape the future and take responsibility for the small part we can. We should be critical, yet trust WEN.”

On the other hand, several political parties – especially D66 and GroenLinks - argue that they should interfere increasingly with the local acceptance as a state actor. They argue that the sustainable energy transition by WEN is not a democratic process at all, as WEN and the municipality both have an interest in this transition. This interest can be seen through the adjustment of the zoning plan of the selected location for the sustainable energy infrastructures. Hence, they argue that when it comes down to the local process of creating acceptance, it concerns parties of power against powerless citizens. They state that patterns of inclusiveness have remained, and energy democracy is not realized.

Rene Koopmans – counselor of political party D66 – argues that there is neglected energy democracy in Wijnjewoude. During the meetings I attended, he expressed a noticeably amount of frustration. “The alderman states in an interview that it is *Mienskip* who may decide. But why? Where is it legally established that an energy cooperation can be responsible for considering the interests of all citizens? I will not agree with how the municipality Opsterland neglects its responsibility towards citizens, as long as citizens’ participation and its consequences are not legally established. It is our responsibility to listen to the perspectives of all citizens – opponent or proponent.” In order to combat this, he has submitted a motion to the municipality – and to the provincial actors - to increase levels of energy democracy by giving more weight to the votes of the citizens in the vicinity of the energy infrastructures. Yet, these motions have not been accepted and implemented by the municipality thus far.

In the counselors meeting of April 19th, the contestation and negotiation regarding the definition of *draagvlak* increased noticeably and emotions ran quite high. Even though I attended the meeting online, I could see and feel the frustration of the attendees. Some shook their head heavily, some stared angry at their webcam, and others even raised their voice, just as described in this chapter’s vignette. “The concept of *draagvlak* has been highly discussed this evening. It is a constantly recurring discussion. Because when can we speak of *draagvlak*?, questions Harm de Jong – counselor of the Friese Nationale Partij. Alderman Anko Postma states that he wishes not to define

draagvlak. He aims to leave this to WEN. “We have stated within the PAW-collaboration that local acceptance is required in order to build the mono-manure fermenter. That should be sufficient for now.” As Postma shares his vision, I could see the face of Koopmans get annoyed. “You want to leave this completely up to WEN? While the whole realization of this project is based on *draagvlak*? That clearly demonstrates the parties of interest. Your interest! You assign your political and legal obligation to a non-legal organization. And that is something I will never agree with.” This negotiation and contestation regarding the definition of and responsibility for local acceptance has wholly taken over the energopolitical landscape of Wijnjewoude. Every counselor meeting comes down the question on how to define and interpret *draagvlak*. It has transcended the project’s actual purpose that should create hope and enthusiasm regarding a sustainable future.

The definition and question regarding support base are interesting but strenuous and demanding questions that contemporary politicians face. When surrounding citizens are given an increased voice, energy transitions will be significantly slowed down as few citizens favor living near a new infrastructure. This is long known as the ‘NIMBY’ effect: Not In My Back Yard’ (Süsser, Döring & Ratter 2017). It will actively obstruct national achievements with respect to climate goals. However, by giving more weight to the voices of people who live near such an infrastructure, energy democracy will increase, and processes may be somewhat more impartial. It is a matter of balancing interests, whereby a decision has to be made whether we will focus on the environmental qualities of contemporary regional and local situations or act on a future-based ideology that aims to increase the environmental quality of future generations. However, no established regulation within the municipality Opsterland regarding the definition and management of local acceptance is available and that creates political contestation and an unclear situation for WEN to act on. Without a framework or definition regarding *draagvlak*, implementing the sustainable infrastructure will be procrastinated.

## Chapter conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how the energopolitical landscape of Wijnjewoude is shaped by *draagvlak*, *Mienskip*, energy democracy and antagonized communication. The municipality Opsterland is highly intertwined with the bottom-up energy transition Wijnjewoude Energie Neutraal. The municipality faces the WEN-project as a convenient development that may help them to reach local sustainable energy goals, derived from the Regional Energy Strategy plan. Nevertheless, even though all nine political parties agree on transitioning to sustainable energy, they have contesting visions regarding the definition and interpretation of the term *draagvlak* – a prerequisite for the infrastructures established in collaboration with WEN. Where *draagvlak* initially should be a helpful and powerful concept that captures the support and resistance towards a project (Boedeltje & de Graaf 2004), it has become a complex political topic in Wijnjewoude. A missing definition and specification of the concept obstructs the progress of the WEN-project.

For now, whether WEN will be able to take away the concerns of the opponents or not is still unsure, and while the outcome of *draagvlak* for the mono-manure fermenter is yet unknown, it demonstrates an interesting process: the process of realizing local and

political unity in an environment of a new horizontal leadership style, demanding interests and uncertainties.

One day, to reach the regional and national sustainable energy goals, energy transitions such as in Wijnjewoude will have to be implemented. These transitions are always subject to certain resistance, as disagreement is inherent to change – although the degree of resistance will differ per culture and history. It raises the ethical question to what extent we give weight to resistance as the longer we procrastinate these transitions, the more climate change consequences we will experience in the future. The realization of bottom-up energy transitions will therefore require clear political guidelines regarding when *draagvlak* is sufficient or not, whereby both future threats and the contemporary satisfaction regarding local livability are taken into consideration.

Conclusion -

## The story behind the banners

*My feet touch the pedals and slightly move until my cycling shoes find the click system. This will be my last bike ride through Wijnjewoude, for now. I pull my leg, grab the handlebar and ride down the Merkebuorren, the central street that connects all parts of Wijnjewoude. I see the houses of Sjoerd, Pabe, Harry, Jitske, and all other citizens that have made my stay in Wijnjewoude a blast. Spring is slowly finding its way through the cold days. I feel grateful. And, I feel dreams hanging in the air — dreams of ambitious citizens that care for the environment and the future. Even though we have no guarantee whether they will be realized sooner or later, they have become the essence of Wijnjewoude. At the Tolleane I turn left, the well-known street of the RWZI. The white banners are still positioned in the backyards of the surrounding citizens. Yet, I vision them differently than the first time I saw them. I know the stories behind them. I know why people feel the way they feel and why they hesitate to pursue this project respecting a sustainable future. I know the processes that happened previously of the display of these banners and how these have manifested in this resistance. This research has shown me what to focus on when we want to understand the resistance to the sustainable energy transition in Wijnjewoude.*

The past few months have shown me that Wijnjewoude Energie Neutraal is an ambitious group of local volunteers that actively pursue their dream. This dream includes a self-sufficient village that produces 100% of its own gas and electricity by 2025. This dream is based on energy ethics that include the urge to take responsibility for climate change and future generations and the dream of accomplishing this transition by using the Frisian concept of *Mienskip*. This local cultural feeling has grown in the Frisian communities since 1900 and holds the idea of increased energy democracy.

Chapter one demonstrated how WEN's energy ethics are intertwined with energy ethics on larger scales. The urge to contribute to global and national sustainability ethics is manifested within the lives of the volunteers of WEN. They aim to realize their dream by the construction of a solar field and a mono-manure fermenter. However, especially the latter infrastructure has created severe resistance within the village. Hence, action groups Klein Groningen and Westkant geen Mestkant have been founded.

Chapter two examined how the local energy transition of Wijnjewoude is contested and severely determined by context-specificity. Cooperation WEN aims to use *Mienskip* to realize *draagvlak*, yet – while the village center of Wijnjewoude is positive towards the project – resistance can be found on the westside. The resistance behind the banners in Wijnjewoude is context-specific as the reason can be found in the historical, geographical division of the village and previous infrastructural negotiations with authoritative parties. The neighborhood Klein Groningen holds a historically grown feeling

of social and geographical exclusion, as the main road used to divide the village into two parts. Therefore, the citizens of this neighborhood do not inherently feel like they belong to the Wijnjewoude. This feeling has consecutively been emphasized by the infrastructural negotiations regarding the demise of the former milk factory De Vooruitgang and the later reconstruction of the road N381 over the past twenty years. Therefore, Klein Groningen has had the feeling that they carry all the infrastructural burdens of Wijnjewoude. Since the founding of WEN in 2015, the citizens of this neighborhood have to negotiate on new infrastructures, namely the envisioned solar field and mono-manure fermenter by WEN. Historical grown frustrations and feelings of inequality are being emphasized by these developments and are manifested in their communication towards WEN. The opponents and proponents of the transitions have created noticeable polarization in Wijnjewoude, as they are both determined to stick to their perspective. Positions towards the mono-manure fermenter now derive rather on a repetition of historical grown habits and feelings than on the best way to produce sustainable energy. Thus, where the envisioned infrastructures on the one hand create promises toward economic and environmental prosperity in Wijnjewoude, it, on the other hand, increases the feeling of exclusion and resistance. Furthermore, on the one hand, it holds the feeling of inclusive decision making and *Mienskip*, while it on the other hand emphasizes notions of power divisions. The local energy transition includes interesting paradoxes that create contestation about the bottom-up sustainable transformation. Wijnjewoude Energie Neutraal dreams about an anthropocentric-turn and sustainable breakthrough by using *Mienskip*, yet is obstructed by a community that resists reliving their history of infrastructural negotiations and exclusion.

Eventually, in order to pursue the construction of the mono-manure fermenter or not, political unity is needed that provides WEN with guidelines regarding the definition of *draagvlak*. Therefore, chapter three examines how the energopolitical landscape of Wijnjewoude is shaped. It demonstrates how energopolitics in Wijnjewoude are shaped by contrasting definitions and interpretations of sufficient *draagvlak*. This creates a political landscape that consists of constant contestation and negotiation regarding this concept. In this way, the political processes create an extra complex layer to the situation in Wijnjewoude, as political division on *draagvlak* withholds the transition to progress. Without a legally established definition, endless negotiations regarding a sufficient support base will last.

In conclusion, the case study has demonstrated a unique situation for Wijnjewoude that also relates to local, regional, and national sustainable energy transitions. From chapters two and three, I conclude that social and political processes have transcended the technical and material matter of the sustainable energy transitions in Wijnjewoude. The case study has shown the conflict surrounding sustainable energy infrastructures, whilst a group of citizens has become aware of the Anthropocenic turn and another group has become aware of the consequences for the present. When answering the main question of this case-study on a rather theoretical level, I state that sustainable energy transitions are contested and negotiated phenomena in general. Although the locus of this may be the materiality of the infrastructures, the amount and shape of this contestation and

negotiation is specific to its local historical, cultural, and energopolitical context. However, as chapter one has demonstrated, the energy policies of different scales are constantly intertwined and should therefore not be studied in a locally-focused perspective only, but in relation to broader scales.

If we zoom out, the situation in Wijnjewoude also demonstrates an ethical dilemma that can be translated into a rather global issue. As Mike Hulme (2013) has argued, it comes down to a particular way of “anticipating the future” and “prosthetic-to-human moral and ethical deliberation about long-term decision-making” (Hulme 2013:50; see also Edwards 2010, Hastrup and Skrydstrup 2013). All deeds, eco-authoritative realities, and the positions one takes regarding sustainable energy, come down to the ethical question whether we (and politicians) should prioritize contemporary regional and local livelihoods and interests of citizens, or whether we should sacrifice some of our present-day satisfaction in order to save future human and non-human generations. Therefore, the question on sustainable energy transitions is also based on the ethical question from which ideology life should be managed, or not. However, Wijnjewoude has demonstrated how questioning this ethical dilemma may be too simplistic. To understand the experiences and ethical positions of citizens towards the sustainable energy transition, one needs to understand, among other things, historically grown feelings of exclusion, local geographical developments, historical processes of infrastructural negotiation, energy ethics of different scales, and the local Frisian concepts of *Mienskip* and *draagvlak*. These forces are just as critical to one’s position as more extensive national and global processes, such as the urge to pursue sustainability.

*I pull the break of my bike and reduce speed. My cycling shoes leave the pedals, and I take a seat in the green meadow. The grass is still a bit moist from the cold night. These past months have given me a glimpse of what goes along on sites and communities involved in rapid transitions towards sustainable energy. It has shown me how we can understand the resistance in Wijnjewoude with respect to the sustainable energy transition WEN. It has shown me the insecurities such a transition brings to surrounding citizens, the ones pursuing this dream, and the sovereign powers that enter these processes in an era of new energy supply. The uncertainty reminds me of the ethnography of Boyer. Because as the result and realization of this project are yet to be known, “it even captures something of the paradoxical quality of life and the experience of time in the anthropocene. We do not know whether what passes for inevitability of the moment will endure or whether a revolutionary transformation of the contemporary is yet not possible (Boyer 2015, 65).” For now, we know that comprehensive research is necessary to unravel these local processes in other places, to create an extensive overview of all human and non-human facets involved in these new infrastructural transformations. More local case-studies on the implementation of bottom-up sustainable energy transitions can create a comprehensive overview of the challenges they entail. With this extensive research, our knowledge may, one day, contribute to the implementation of sustainable energy transitions with less or no contestation and, hopefully, draagvlak.*

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## Article in De Bân, May 2020

### **Waarom zijn Klein Groningers zo boos (of vreemd ;-)?**

Op Klein Groningen merken we dat dorpsgenoten soms anders tegen ons aankijken of het een beetje vreemd vinden en dat we vragen krijgen waarom we zo reageren, waarom lijken we zo boos?

Nou, er speelt best wel wat op Klein Groningen dat direct invloed heeft op waar we wonen en hoe we wonen, werken, slapen, tuinieren, mekaar tegen komen op straat in de buurt, spelen .....

#### **Oude melkfabriek / SWA**

Het begon allemaal 10 jaar geleden. Eigenlijk nog eerder maar 10 jaar geleden werd het concreet. We gingen aan de slag in ontwerpateliers om onze buurt opnieuw te ontwerpen. Het leek erop dat de lelijke oude melkfabriek eraf zou gaan. De fabriek is gesloopt en we hebben er een mooie speeltuin voor terug gekregen met de SWA erbij. Vanwege de aanlegsteiger in de Turfroude wilde de provincie dat er een sanitaire voorziening zou komen. De gemeente moest iets bouwen zodat de (deels beschermde) vleermuizen uit de oude fabriek konden terugkeren naar dezelfde plek. Bovendien wilde de gemeente graag dat de voorziening ook beschikbaar zou zijn voor wandelaars en fietsers. Vanuit de buurt wilden we graag een locatie om mekaar te treffen. Dit alles kwam samen in de SWA, de Slecht Weer

Accommodatie. De plek waar bootjesvaarders, fietsers en wandelaars even kunnen schuilen, naar het toilet kunnen en een kopje koffie of thee drinken. Natuurlijk wil iedereen graag dat dit rendabel zou worden. Alleen hebben we ook afgesproken dat de SWA niet mag concurreren met het dorp en het achterland, met De Swingel, Bakkerij Van der Molen, het café, De Stripe enz. Daar waren en zijn we het helemaal mee eens. Op 15 mei dit jaar zouden we dan eindelijk de officiële opening hebben van speeltuin en SWA, maar er moet nog wel wat water door de Turfroude voordat het eindelijk zover is. De laatste loodjes wegen zwaar. Samen met de gemeente proberen we eruit te komen. Plaatselijk Belang zit hier o.a. ook bij aan tafel en het is niet altijd even gemakkelijk voor de Klein Groningers.

#### **Geen zonnepanelen voor Klein Groningers en nu een zonneveld**

Op en rond het terrein van de oude RWZI komen zonnepanelen zodat we via WEN duurzame energie kunnen opwekken. Een aantal jaren daarvoor konden dorpsgenoten uit het dorp zelf zonnepanelen kopen met een subsidie. Op Klein Groningen waren hier ook geïnteresseerden voor. Helaas kwam Klein Groningen er niet voor in aanmerking. Vervolgens blijken er opeens concrete plannen voor een heel zonneveld aan alle kanten van de oude RWZI en daarmee direct achter de huizen. Dit ging te snel en te ver. We voelden ons overvallen en waren er niet in gekend. Gelukkig zijn we hier goed uitgekomen met WEN, we waren het weer eens, want ook wij willen meewerken aan een Duurzaam Wijnjewoude. Het zonneveld werd kleiner en het bosje naast de RWZI blijft intact. Maar het was een onderwerp dat even volop de aandacht had op de buurt.

#### **Verkeersveiligheid**

Dit is zo'n onderwerp waar we al heel veel mee bezig zijn geweest de laatste jaren. En dit geldt zowel voor de straat Klein Groningen als de afwaardering van de oude N381 naar de Opper Haudmare. Voor de straat Klein Groningen tot aan de brug zijn we eruit gekomen met de gemeente. Daar liggen nu klinkers, drempels en een druppel om de snelheid van het verkeer omlaag te brengen. Vooral ook omdat de kinderen op straat spelen en de kinderen aan de ene kant van de buurt wonen en de speeltuin aan de andere kant van de weg ligt. Het is immers geen doorgaande weg, maar ligt in de buurt. Gelukkig hebben we ook een stoep gekregen.

De verkeersveiligheid van de oude N381 naar de gemeentelijke weg Opper Haudmare is nog een grote zorg. Het verkeer rijdt hier hard. Overdag en vooral 's avonds en 's nachts gaat het eigenlijk meestal te hard. Toen we hier destijds over in gesprek waren met de provincie hebben we hier elke keer aandacht voor gevraagd. Elke inloopbijeenkomst, insprekavond en gesprek binnen de projectgroep. De provincie bood ons maar één maatregel aan: een drempel van 18 cm erbovenop. Vanuit de buurt zeiden we dat de weg juist verlaagd moest worden en niet verhoogd. Na 4 lagen asfalt op elkaar was de weg erg hoog komen te liggen. Dit zag je heel duidelijk aan de huizen direct aan de weg. Pas toen de provincie langs kwam en we gezamenlijk aan de weg stonden zag je hun hoofden schuin gaan en begrepen ze dat een meter verschil tussen de weg en de buurt te groot was om nog eens te verhogen

met een drempel van 18 cm. De weg is uiteindelijk zoveel mogelijk verlaagd en opgeschoven. Wat we vanuit de buurt graag wilden, waren wegversmallingen of een slinger bij binnenrijden van het buurtschap om de snelheid eruit te halen. De gemeente gaf aan dat ze dit niet deden in Opsterland. Alle andere alternatieven die we aandroegen hadden ook altijd wel weer een reden waarom het niet kon. Bovendien gaf de provincie aan dat er schanskorven zouden komen die een snelheidsverlagend effect zouden hebben en dat het verkeer uit de richting Haulerwijk/Waskemeer via Donkerbroek naar de nieuwe N381 zou gaan. Op Klein Groningen hadden we hier een hard hoofd in en dat bleek helaas de waarheid. Het verkeer vanaf de Leidijk richting A7 en Drachten rijdt gewoon via Klein Groningen en omdat het dagelijks forenzenverkeer is, weten ze precies hoe hard ze kunnen en dat is veel harder dan 60 km/u.

Met de provincie (in bijzijn van de gemeente) hadden we afgesproken dat we het eerst zouden aanzien en als het een probleem was dat we er later opnieuw naar zouden kunnen kijken. We moesten eerst geduld hebben hoe het zou uitpakken als iedereen aan de nieuwe situatie gewend was, inclusief achterland tot aan de werkzaamheden in Ureterp aan toe. Dat het een probleem is, dat zien, horen en weten we inmiddels allemaal. Plaatselijk Belang en de gemeente gaven vervolgens aan om mee te doen aan de werkgroep vanuit het dorp want er waren nog twee locaties waar het verkeer een probleem was. Met toch wel een beetje het gevoel te hebben dat we opnieuw aan het lijntje gehouden werden, dat we weer geduld moesten hebben, gingen we aan de slag in de werkgroep. Twee jaar en drie buurtgenoten later besloot de werkgroep om op twee van de drie locaties maatregelen te nemen, maar niet op Klein Groningen. Dit was ronduit teleurstellend om het mild te noemen. Eind vorig jaar hebben we vanuit de buurt contact gezocht met Plaatselijk Belang en de gemeente. Plaatselijk Belang gaf aan de buurt te steunen maar dan moest de buurt het voortouw nemen. Alleen wil de gemeente het liefst samenwerken met Plaatselijk Belang. De gemeente geeft vooralsnog niet thuis, er ligt een mail van ons met drie mogelijke oplossingen. Er ligt ook een verzoek van ons bij Plaatselijk Belang met wie we dit gaan oppakken...

*En nu lezen we dat de Merkebuorren twee wegversmallingen krijgt – waar wij al vanaf het begin om vragen. Kan iemand ons uitleggen waarom het daar wel kan en niet op de Opper Haudmare?*

#### **Mestvergister**

Tot slot de mestvergister. De laatste weken slapen velen slecht op Klein Groningen. Er dreigt een mestvergister naast de buurt gebouwd te worden. Dit houdt in dat er minimaal twaalf keer vrachtwagens naar toe gaan rijden en weer terug. Deels door de buurt. Zes dagen per week, dus bijna elke dag, altijd. Daar waar we zoveel moeite hebben gedaan om het verkeer minder te laten worden en minder hard te laten rijden.

## Article in De Bân, January 2021

### **Wie zijn “Westkant is geen Mestkant” en wat willen ze of liever gezegd, wat willen ze NIET!**

Enige tijd geleden is er een bijeenkomst georganiseerd door enkele bezorgde omwonenden van de voormalige Waterzuiveringsinstallatie aan de Tolleane. Hier zijn plannen om een mestvergister te bouwen. Er was een grote opkomst en uiteindelijk hebben tegen de 50(!) huishoudens aangegeven TEGEN de komst van een mestvergister te zijn. Een mestvergister hoort namelijk niet in een bewoonde omgeving en zeker niet in de achtertuin van een hele buurt. Het dichtstbijzijnde huis staat op zo'n 170m afstand, dan kan echt niet!

Uit deze grote groep hebben 9 mensen zich aangemeld als touwtrekkers. Dat is de “actiegroep” **Westkant is geen Mestkant** geworden. Zij zullen uit naam van al deze huishoudens er alles aan doen om de komst van een mestvergister tegen te houden. Er is bewust gekozen voor de naam “Westkant” omdat dit niet enkel Klein Groningen betreft, maar ook gedeelten van de Opper Haudmare, Tjalling Harkeswei, Compagnonsfeart, Tolleane en Weinterp. Kortom het westen van Wijnjewoude. Op tientallen locaties in Nederland zijn vergisters met veel subsidiegeld gebouwd en hebben ze gezorgd voor overlast en ellende met een slecht rendement! Uit ervaringen van omwonenden en betrokkenen heeft de Westkant een lijst met 10 van de belangrijkste redenen verzameld waarom er **GEEN** mestvergister moet komen:

1. **Allereerst natuurlijk de stankoverlast.** Er wordt beweerd dat die er niet is. Dat is helaas niet waar. Iedereen snapt natuurlijk wel dat als er met mest wordt gewerkt, het stinkt. Ook een gesloten systeem stinkt en als de wind verkeerd staat (en dat staat hij vaak: zuid/zuidwest) dan kan het hele dorp er last van hebben. Er zijn vele voorbeelden in de provincie (en daarbuiten) zoals Marrum, Hantumhuizen en zelfs Haulerwijk waar de mensen zomers niet buiten kunnen zitten vanwege de stank. Dat wil toch niemand!
2. **Geluidsoverlast.** Bij een mestvergister horen pompen. Die moeten de mest constant in beweging houden en mengen. Pompen maken een doordringend geluid dat ver kan dragen, vooral 's nachts. Deze pompen draaien constant!
3. **Verkeersoverlast.** Voor de aanvoer van mest rijden er zo'n 5 à 6 vrachtwagens heen en weer, want de mest moet ook weer afgevoerd worden. De infrastructuur rondom Klein Groningen is hier totaal ongeschikt voor. Kleine weggetjes en een woonerf dat kan echt niet! Bovendien brengen mestwagens veel vuil met zich mee, waardoor je smerige straten krijgt. De vrachtwagens rijden ook door het dorp!
4. **Lucht- en Licht vervuiling.** Een mestvergister produceert fijnstof wat in de lucht komt. Deze fijnstof is slecht voor de gezondheid evenals de stank welke slecht voor je gezondheid is. Daarbij komt nog de lichtvervuiling. Een industriële installatie staat NOOIT in het donker, dus zodra het avond wordt, gaan er grote lampen aan om de boel in de gaten te houden. Lichtvervuiling is erg slecht voor de omgeving van mensen en ook (nacht)dieren.
5. **Leefomgeving en woongenot.** Door de komst van een mestvergister op zo'n kleine afstand van bewoond gebied wordt de leefomgeving en het woongenot van een hele buurt/wijk aangetast door alle eerder genoemde omstandigheden.

6. **Gevaar voor de gezondheid.** In een mestvergister wordt gas geproduceerd, o.a. methaangas. Dit gas is zéér gevaarlijk, zo niet dodelijk! In Coevorden is onlangs in een straal van 900 m alles geëvacueerd, omdat er een gaslek was. Gelukkig is hier verder niets gebeurd, maar als de boel ontploft dan is de ramp niet te overzien!
  7. **Waardevermindering onroerend goed.** De 1° 3 speerpunten van een makelaar zijn: locatie, locatie, locatie! Door de komst van een mestvergister op zo'n korte afstand van woningen, worden al deze woningen minder waard. Niemand wil wonen bij zo'n ding in de buurt, laat staan zowat in je achtertuin.
  8. **Vervuiling landelijk uitzicht.** Een industriële installatie hoort niet in een bewoonde en landelijk omgeving. Daarvoor zijn er industrieterreinen uitgevonden, die staan niet naast bewoond gebied en hebben een goede infrastructuur voor de benodigde vrachtwagens.
  9. **Stress.** Door al deze zaken, hebben mensen nu al stress en zorgen en dan staat hij er nog niet eens. Slapeloze nachten en piekeren: wat als daar straks zo'n grote installatie komt..... Dat wil niemand, iedereen wil rustig wonen in een rustige, landelijke omgeving welke niet verstoord wordt door stank, lawaai, verkeer, etc...
  10. **Duurzame energie.** Natuurlijk wil iedereen duurzame energie en dat KAN ook zonder mestvergister. Pas in 2050 wil de overheid van het gas af. Tegen die tijd zijn al andere bronnen van groengas actief, daarvoor hoeft er niet 1 in Wijnjewoude te staan. Dat men dan zogenaamd groengas zou krijgen uit “eigen dorp” is onzin. Alle energie, dus ook opgewekte zonne-energie komt in één algemeen netwerk. Dat is het netwerk wat men nu ook al heeft. De stroom en het gas wat daar uit komt, komt overal vandaan. Alles komt dus op een grote hoop, ook in de toekomst. Bewoners blijven gewoon voor hun verbruik betalen en een enkele exploitant levert energie aan het openbare net, gesteund met forse overheidssubsidie van de overheid.
- Mocht u na het lezen van deze 10 zeer goede redenen ook **TEGEN** een mestvergister zijn, dan kunt u zich aanmelden via [mestvergister.ww@gmail.com](mailto:mestvergister.ww@gmail.com)  
Volg ons ook op Facebook en Twitter voor het laatste nieuws: Facebook: “Westkant is geen Mestkant” en Twitter [@geen\\_is](https://twitter.com/@geen_is)  
Wij kunnen dit namelijk niet alleen. De mensen van de actiegroep hebben wel degelijk uw steun nodig. Hoe meer huishoudens zich TEGEN de mestvergister uitspreken, hoe beter. En dat geldt net zo goed voor huishoudens uit het dorp, want ook zij kunnen overlast krijgen van deze mestvergister. Als u de artikelen leest in de krant en op internet over Marrum, Hantumhuizen etc dan begrijpt u waarom.

**Wij wensen iedereen een heel fijn, gezond, gelukkig, stank- en overlastvrij 2020 toe!**

