

# Belonging to Paesens-Moddergat: friction in a village next to the Wadden-Sea

A study on different feelings of belonging, changing interests and human-environment relations



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<sup>1</sup> Retrieved from [http://www.flipcharts.nl/?page\\_id=832](http://www.flipcharts.nl/?page_id=832), accessed on 10-08-2018



# Belonging to Paesens-Moddergat: friction in a village next to the Wadden-Sea

A study on different feelings of belonging, changing interests and human-environment relations

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## **Abstract**

In the Netherlands there is a trend of people leaving rural areas, especially small towns. The Dutch government calls these regions that are dealing with a declining population and availability of work shrinkage regions. Due to this, houses in these regions are fairly cheap making them interesting for especially highly educated people from urban areas that are in search for a more peaceful life outside the tumult of the city. This thesis is about Paesens-Moddergat, a small village that is located in a shrinkage region. Paesens-Moddergat is originally a fishing village located right next to the Wadden Sea. Due to the changing local interests, as the region is relying more and more on tourism, and the influx of so called 'newcomers' to the town, it is dealing with friction between original inhabitants and newcomers. This thesis proposes that this friction is one of different human-environment relations and feelings of belonging the inhabitants have. Furthermore, thesis demonstrates that the village of Paesens-Moddergat has always been divided in several ways. In order to demonstrate this, this thesis is divided in three chapters. The first chapter is a contextual chapter showing how the history of the village is linked to the contemporary situation and social dynamics of the place. In the second chapter different feelings of belonging are covered. Here is demonstrated how these various feelings of belonging the inhabitants have can lead to friction. The third chapter explores the various attitudes towards outside organisations that the inhabitants have and how this is linked to the relation the inhabitants have with their environment.

Keywords: Shrinkage region, Human-Environment relations, Belonging, Friction, Fishing Village, Political landscape, Paesens-Moddergat, Friesland.



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# Maps

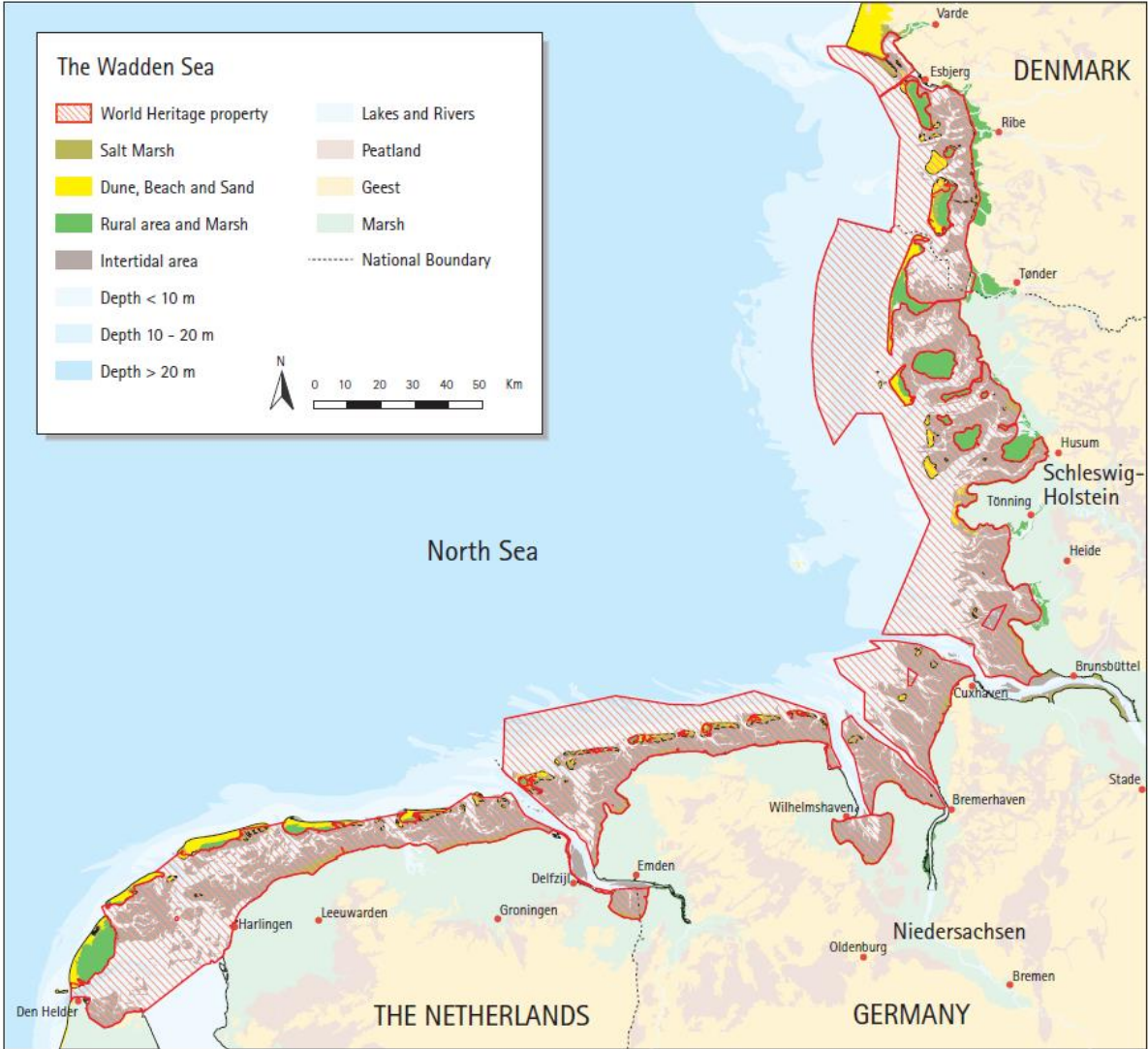
Map 1 – The Netherlands, Europe



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<sup>2</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.google.nl/maps>, accessed on 13-08-2018

**Map 2 - UNESCO World Heritage the Wadden Sea**



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<sup>3</sup> Retrieved from [https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1314/multiple=1&unique\\_number=1967](https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1314/multiple=1&unique_number=1967), accessed on 13-08-2018



## Introduction

*It is no longer as it used to be here in the village, everyone leaves, and it is all 'import'. I do not know them anymore I don't. My husband and I also said to each other, the whole village changes there is nothing anymore ... When people go to live in an elderly home, who will come to live in their houses? Well, I do not know them ... yes, they come here because the houses are not that expensive, I think<sup>4</sup>.*

This quote is from an interview I held with Beitske, a woman in her 50's that is married to a fisherman. She lived most of her life within the village of Paesens–Moddergat a small fishing village on the north coast of the Netherlands. She discusses how in her experience the village is changing especially due to the coming of as she refers to 'import', people from more urban parts of the Netherlands that come to live in the village while at the same time people that grew up in the village leave. This thesis is about the village of Paesens-Moddergat and the friction (Tsing 2005) that the inhabitants of the village deal and have dealt with and argues that such friction has always been part of the identity of the village life of Paesens-Moddergat. For example, according to Urquhart, Acott, Reed and Courtney (2010) fishing communities become vulnerable when their cultural identity is challenged, and social cohesion undermined. According to (Woolley 1998) important aspects of social cohesion are strength of social relations, shared values, feelings of a common identity and a sense of belonging to the same community.

Paesens-Moddergat is not solely dependent on the fishing sector anymore but also on other sectors such as tourism. Due to its location and the beauty of the town it was elected second most beautiful place of the Netherlands in 2004 (Wadlopen bij Paesens-Moddergat 2018). Furthermore, the Wadden Sea was recognized as UNESCO World Heritage area in 2009 (Wadden Sea secretariat 2018). At the same time the location is part of a so called shrinkage region according to the Dutch government meaning that it is a region that is dealing with a declining population and availability of work<sup>5</sup>. Due to this and the fact that the village is being recognized more and more for its natural beauty, the village attracts people from other more urban areas of the Netherlands. These people come here in the hope to find a life that is more peaceful due to the wideness and nature, a life where there is a feeling of freedom (Hananburg 2011). In this thesis, I refer to the people that choose for several reasons to come live in Paesens-Moddergat, a place different from the one where they were born, as newcomers. The inhabitants that were born and raised within Paesens–Moddergat often share a long history with the village that goes back for multiple generations. It is common that the family of these inhabitants still partly or fully lives within the village. Therefore, in this thesis they are regarded as 'original inhabitants'.

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<sup>4</sup> Interview with Beitske 24-04-2018

<sup>5</sup><https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/bevolkingskrimp/oorzaken-en-gevolgen-bevolkingskrimp>, accessed on 11-07-2018

The environment that is surrounding the village is used and related to differently among individuals making the environment relative to whose environment it is (Ingold 2002). For the local inhabitants of Paesens–Moddergat this means that although they share the same environment, it can be experienced differently. To make sense of how an environment can be experienced differently among the inhabitants of Paesens-Moddergat I use the theory of Palsson (2015) whereby human environment relations are categorised as environmental orientalism' and 'paternalism'. Environmental orientalist and paternalists share that they see humans as master of nature. Where they differ is that environmental orientalist are focused on domesticating, expanding, conquering and exploiting the environment (Palsson 2015, 143). Paternalists on the other hand are focused on protection of the environment and try to treat it with respect but with this radical stance they are fetishizing nature, thereby setting it apart from the world of humans (Palsson 2015, 144).

In order to consider the political dimension of the environment, and, the Wadden Sea area, Kraus's concept of 'Political landscape' provides some useful insights. He coined this concept to look at the UNESCO World Heritage Wadden Sea as he argues that "the political is not projected onto the region but is quite concretely rooted in it, in nature as well as in culture" (Kraus 2005, 42). Using the concept of political landscape allows me to demonstrate the complexity of attitudes towards a landscape and how these differ depending on the relation one has with the environment.

Paesens – Moddergat, originally is considered a fishing village but due to changing interests and the coming of newcomers the social dynamic of the village has been changing. While much is known about economic and ecological aspects of fisheries, for example in an attempt to do something about over-fishing resulting in stricter policies such as fish quotas, little is known about the cultural and social entanglements (Ingold 2011) of fisheries and fishing communities (Urquhart, Acott, Reed and Courtney 2010, 240). Therefore Urquhart, Acott, Reed and Courtney (2010) argue that social science has an important role to address by looking at more 'subjective elements of culture, heritage, sense of place and the contribution that these make to the social fabric of a community' (Urquhart, Acott, Reed and Courtney 2010, 242-243).

The focus on sense of place is related to a sense of belonging as 'Belonging to a particular locality evokes the notion of locality to a place, a loyalty that may be expressed through oral or written histories, narratives of origin as belonging' (Lovell 2003, 01). In the debate on belonging two main analytical dimensions of belonging are recognized; Sense of belonging and politics of belonging (Antonsich 2010). Firstly, a sense of belonging is related to a personal, intimate, feeling of being 'at home' in a place (Antonsich 2010, 645). Antonsich (2010) reviewed the literature on feelings of belonging which lead

him to be able to determine several factors which contribute to generating these feelings of belonging. These are referred to as the auto-biographical, relational, cultural, economic and elective factors.

The second dimension of belonging is about the politics of belonging as being able to feel home in a place is not just a personal matter, but a social one as well. Therefore, politics of belonging can be seen as a discursive resource which constructs, claims, justifies, or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion (Antonsich 2010). Differences in sense of belonging between original inhabitants and newcomers can become problematic in social situations. In politics of belonging there is therefore the question of who 'belongs' and who does not, and even more important, "what are the minimum common grounds- in terms of culture and normative behaviour- that are required to signify belonging" (Yuval-Davis 2006, 207). The normative behaviour and culture in this case relate to the differences in sense of belonging of the inhabitants often leading to what Tsing (2005) refers to as friction.

The concept of friction as described is by Tsing (2005, 4) is described as follows; "the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference." To illustrate what friction entails she uses the metaphor of two sticks; "Rubbing two sticks together produces heat and light; one stick alone is just a stick, friction reminds us that heterogeneous and unequal encounters can lead to new arrangements of culture and power." She developed the term friction as a metaphor for conflicting and diverse social interactions that makes up the contemporary world with a focus on globalization as she uses the term to study global interconnections and connections between global and local encounters. I use the term friction to capture the dynamic through which different kinds of knowledge and culture come into contact with one another (Yarrow 2006, 291) on a local scale.

Throughout this thesis I demonstrate how the human-environment relationship that the inhabitants of Paesens-Moddergat have, are interrelated with the way their feelings of belonging are shaped and constructed and how discrepancy in human-environment relations and feelings of belonging leads to friction. In order to do so the focus of this thesis is on how friction in Paesens-Moddergat can be seen throughout history and becomes apparent in different relationships the inhabitants of Paesens-Moddergat have with their environment. In order to demonstrate this in this thesis the focus lies on how this is shaped by natural events occurring in nature, the sector inhabitants work in, religion, reason for living there, interests, experiences and memories one has of the place and how this intersects with feelings of belonging. The following research question allows me to demonstrate this;

How are human-environmental relations near the Wadden Sea constructed and narrated by inhabitants of Paesens-Moddergat at the junction of changing local interests and feelings of belonging and place?

## **Operationalisation**

In order to answer the research, question this thesis is divided thematically. The first theme is context of the village of Paesens – Moddergat which provides an overview of the geographical and demographic position of the village, a brief history and an introduction into social dynamic processes involving the village. This chapter allows me to demonstrate what relation the people living in Paesens-Moddergat had with the environment, and more specifically the Wadden Sea and how the past relation still influences the relation the inhabitants have now. By doing so it allows me to demonstrate that friction was throughout history already part of the village identity. This theme allows me to demonstrate what I mean with ‘changing local interests’ as the change has to do with the village’s past as a fishing village and with contemporary social dynamic processes of the place related to the region as shrinkage region. Based on this I can introduce what happens when more and more new people with different interests move to the village.

I use the concept of friction as coined by Tsing (2005) in order to grasp and explain the dynamic of encounters between newcomers and original inhabitants of Paesens-Moddergat. A primary theme of this research is that of human-environment relations, as it is a difference in human-environment relations that often leads to friction throughout history and now. To demonstrate this difference this thesis builds on the work of Ingold (2002) to define the idea of the environment and Milton’s (2002) view on how human-environment relations are mediated. In this thesis I use Palssons (2015) theory on different human environment relations as a tool for analysing and explaining this difference. By using these several factors as an analytical tool, in this thesis I demonstrate that the elements from which a sense of belonging for the inhabitants is made up varies per person.

The second theme is ‘belonging to Paesens-Moddergat’. This theme uses an analytical divide, between sense of belonging and politics of belonging (Antonsich 2010). The concept of sense of belonging (Fenster 2005) is used to look specifically at how feelings of belonging are constructed by the inhabitants of Paesens-Moddergat. In order to analyse how this sense of belonging is constructed I use the factors of belonging as proposed by Antonsich (2010). Feelings of belonging are personal and for this research it is relevant to know what happens when these feelings are expressed in social situations, known as politics of belonging, as it is there where friction becomes apparent. I therefore use the theory of Yuval-Davis (2006) and Antonsich (2010) to determine and analyse these politics of belonging. This analysis allows me to demonstrate the friction that different feelings of belonging can create and how this interrelates with the relation the inhabitants have with their environment.

The third chapter is about ‘top down decision making processes’ in relation to Paesens-Moddergat and its environment and how inhabitants relate themselves to these processes. By looking at how inhabitants relate to environmental organisations, political decision making and a gas extraction company in

regard to Paesens-Moddergat this chapter demonstrates how a different human-environment relation can cause friction in other contexts. The theme of this chapter therefore builds on the earlier themes that were introduced and demonstrates how the friction between original inhabitants and newcomers is a friction related to a different human-environment relationship. The theory that is used in this theme is that of human-environment relationships (Palsson 2015) and is in this chapter linked with the concept of political landscape (Kraus 2005). The environment of Paesens-Moddergat in this chapter is seen as a political landscape to point at the complexity of attitudes towards it (Krauss 2005).

## **Methods**

This thesis is the result of a fieldwork research held in Paesens-Moddergat that lasted for three months between February and May 2018. During this time, I lived in a summer cottage within the village of Paesens-Moddergat. I used a triangulation of methods as it “allowed for cross validation of conclusions by comparing them using data collected in different ways” (DeWalt & DeWalt 2010, 113). The methods that I used are Participant observation, interviews and use of public data as part of a document review.

Participating, observing, asking questions and taking notes (O’Reilly 2005, 110) are the tools I used as part of participant observation. These tools allowed me to engage normally in informal conversation while still being able to ask questions that come up with the outlined research in the back of my mind (DeWalt & Dewalt 2010, 124).). Through participant observation “a researcher takes part in the daily activities, interactions, rituals, and events as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture” (DeWalt and DeWalt 2010, 1).

As the village of Paesens- Moddergat is cold in February and most people stay inside this meant that I visited every event or meeting that was organized in order to get in contact with the people. For example, I joined the local volleyball club that was training every Monday and joined the local koersbal<sup>6</sup> competition which was held every two weeks on Tuesday. These events were important for me to meet the original inhabitants and building up rapport as I got a lot of respect from them for joining the club because young people and a lot of newcomers do not join the club.

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<sup>6</sup> Koersbal which is called Bowls in English is a game played mainly by people from around 50 years and older.



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<sup>7</sup> Picture of me participating in a game of Koersbal.

Regularly, I went walking through the village and in the surroundings of the village which helped me to meet more people. Access to events was provided by some 'gatekeepers', people who directly or indirectly provided access to my research participants (Campbell et al. 2010). For example, the family of who I was renting the summer cottage from invited me to a meal that was organised by the church. This event then enabled me to get closer contact with the people that were there. Another key participant was a woman whom I met on my first day on the dyke when she was walking her dogs. She is not originally from the village and only moved in recently but her contacts with neighbours, her position of outsider and her knowledge of the village provided me with insights and new contacts.

I used the initial contacts I made through these meetings and walks for snowball sampling in order to generate further contacts. An example is that of the fishermen, as in the beginning it was hard for me to get into contact with a fisherman but when I had interviewed one of the fishermen he was able to connect me with other fishermen. In the process of snowball sampling I always thought carefully about how heterogeneous my initial sample was and if it was necessary to make use of snowball sampling further in a specific direction (O'Reilly 2005, 44).

Additionally, the snowball method helped me in obtaining interview participants. Throughout my fieldwork I conducted semi-structured interviews that allowed me to follow the lead of the research participant by asking questions occasionally in order to stay focused on the topic or clarify points (Spradley 1979). All of the people that were interviewed are or were inhabitants of Paesens-Moddergat and are between 20 and 85 years old. The people that I interviewed were a mix of women and men, newcomers and original inhabitants, fishermen, farmers and of different ages in order to get the best possible impression of the village.

According to O'Reilly (2005, 65) it is important to explain what you are doing as a researcher and what you do with the material you collect. All the people who were interviewed were asked consent for recording the interviews and were informed as far as possible about my research. Important in my research was to promise and explain to my research participants that I would anonymize the data in such a way that it could not be traced back to the person, especially the sensitive information. All names of participants are therefore fictitious. I realized that this was important for the research participants during my fieldwork because the village is so small, and the community know each other so well that it is already hard for someone to keep a secret. Therefore, sharing opinions by the participants could only be done if he or she was sure that nobody else could trace their contribution back to them.

I focused on the Dutch inhabitants of the village thereby leaving out people that own a recreational house in the village and visit the place for holiday, among this group of people is a group of Germans

who bought the houses as holiday homes. The reason for not including this group is due to time restriction. Additionally, I had several informal and formal conversations and meetings with people that were happy to talk and share information with me which I jotted down first in notes and in the evening or next morning I would further develop in detail on my laptop into field notes. Furthermore, I kept an intellectual diary in which I had room to write down analytical ideas, this helped me in retaining the viewpoint of the stranger and enabled me as O'Reilly (2005, 100) argues to stand back, avoid overinvolvement or 'going native'.

The fact that I do not originate from the region of Paesens-Moddergat and do not speak the Frisian language, which is the main language spoken in the village, helped me in doing research while at the same time made it more difficult in other ways. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) refer to this double experience as the etic/emic dilemma. As I am doing fieldwork in my home country, the Netherlands, the fact that I did not speak the same language as the original inhabitants helped me in keeping an outsider/etic perspective which has its advantages. In some meetings where people were speaking Frisian it dissociated me from the situations that were happening and made it able for me to look at things more objectively but at the same time maybe lead me missing some salient issues or details (Mandiyanike 2009, 6).

On the other hand, I was often seen as an insider/emic mainly by newcomers that, just as me, do not originate from Paesens-Moddergat. The divide between original inhabitants and newcomers was therefore one I was automatically made part of as I was placed in the group of newcomers by both groups. This made it harder for me to build rapport with original inhabitants in the beginning and made it easier in building good relationships with newcomers. What helped me in building rapport with the original inhabitants, and was enforced by the inhabitants themselves is that I told them that I grew up in a small village in the east part of the Netherlands. The original inhabitants often in interviews and conversations therefore referred to me as Oosterling<sup>8</sup> opposed to one of 'the import' or 'the Hollanders'.

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<sup>8</sup> Meaning Easterling in English, hereby referring to the part of the Netherlands where I grew up. The east of the Netherlands is a part that is not so densely populated and is considered a rural area, just as the environment of Paesens-Moddergat. The reason for calling me Oosterling is to show that I am 'okay' as I also originate from a similar environment. Most newcomers, the one that the original inhabitants name import or Hollanders come from the western urban part of the Netherlands.



## **Structure**

This thesis is divided up into three chapters. The first chapter consists of 4 sections. Firstly, a historical account of the village and its surroundings is outlined through a narrative representing important historical events demonstrating in what different ways the village used to be divided and how that lead to the situation as it is now. From there the social dynamic of the village is discussed leading to the contemporary situation, one that is marked by a new divide within the village that leads to friction. Chapter two demonstrates how this friction is apparent in 'belonging'. First sense of belonging is discussed and how this belonging is constructed by the inhabitants which is followed by a section on politics of belonging as this section demonstrates what happens when these feelings of belonging become social. In chapter three top down decision making processes that affect the environment of the inhabitants stand central. Here is shown how the various inhabitants relate to these processes and how that is connected to the individuals' relation with the environment. After the third chapter the conclusion follows in where the research question is answered.

## 1. The village of Paesens-Moddergat in context



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<sup>9</sup> Picture made by me standing on the pier at low tide. On the picture you can see the dyke and the two towers of the churches, on the left Paesens, on the right Moddergat. Made on 25-04-2018.

## 1.1 Introduction

This chapter creates an image of Paesens-Moddergat and the relevant history the village has as this chapter demonstrates that the village was divided throughout years in diverse ways and is now divided again. By using theory on human-environment relations this chapter brings forth that the divides apparent in the village were, and remain, a divide in different human-environment relations that shape the inhabitant's behaviour. Before looking at relevant historical events this chapter first outlines a geographical and demographic account of Paesens-Moddergat as it helps getting a clearer picture of the position of the village and its inhabitants.

## 1.2 A Geographical and demographic account of Paesens – Moddergat

Paesens-Moddergat is a so-called twin-village positioned in the north of the Netherlands next to the Wadden sea and is consisting of about 460 inhabitants (CBS 2017). The only thing that is separating the village and the sea is a dyke that stretches all along the north coast and is between 8.00 – 9,75 meters above 'Normaal Amsterdams peil' which translates to English as 'Amsterdam Ordnance Datum'. Depending on the tide there, mudflats between the dyke and the sea can span for kilometres as the Wadden sea consists of 50 % 'intertidal flats' which are covered by the sea at high tide and are mud flats at low tide (De Jonge, Essink and Boddeke 1993, 47). These mudflats are translated as 'het Wad' in Dutch which is why the sea is called the Wadden sea as it is the world's largest unbroken system of sand and mud flats that are dry during low tide<sup>10</sup>.

Because of its geomorphological and ecological values, the Wadden Sea has the status of UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2009 (Wadden Sea secretariat 2018). Furthermore, the Wadden sea is named a trilateral area since the area is made up of sea and coast that is part of three countries; Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands. Therefore, the area is managed trilaterally with the goal *“to achieve, as far as possible, a natural and sustainable ecosystem in which natural processes proceed in an undisturbed way”* (Turnhout, Hisschemöller, Eijsackers 2008 ,227). At the same time the Dutch part of the Wadden Sea is subject of different Dutch laws involving water quality, fisheries, mining and shipping. The different interests, environmental and economic and different layers of governance make the Wadden Sea an area that is politically complex (Turnhout, Hisschemöller, Eijsackers 2008 227,228)

Additionally, on the other side of the village, the surroundings mainly consist of fields and farms. The first supermarket is in the neighbouring village about 5 km away and the closest city is Dokkum, about 15 km away. The landscape is one that can be best described as a landscape made up of wide open space, clay ground and a large variety of birds.

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<sup>10</sup> <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1314>, last accessed on 07-07-2018.

Paesens – Moddergat is located in the province of Friesland or 'Fryslân' as its named in the Frisian language, the second official language of the Netherlands spoken only in this province (Douwes 2010, 7-8). The Frisian language is the primary language of most inhabitants of the village, at least for the people born and raised there. In the field this sometimes-caused unease as I don't speak Frisian. For example, when I attended a meeting of 'de laatste eer'<sup>11</sup>, before the meeting started the question was raised if there is anyone not speaking Frisian<sup>12</sup>. Raising my hand as the only one there made me feel like an outsider. At the same time the Frisian speaking people were not happy as someone then reacted by saying "ow we need to talk Dutch again". In the countryside municipalities in Friesland about 80 % speaks Frisian, the other 20 % that do not speak it mostly are not originally from a Frisian speaking region but for example other parts of the Netherlands (Douwes 2010, 19).

The village originally is a fishing village (Jongeling 1987, 29) and still today the fishery sector is an important way of securing livelihood for the inhabitants which can be seen throughout the village. As one of my activities everyday was to walk through the village I realized on one of my first walks that there are a lot of objects inside houses and gardens that remind you of being in a village where fishing and the sea plays a significant role. Such objects include for example old wooden boats, anchors and masts<sup>13</sup>. The fishermen of Paesens-Moddergat can be described as what Goodwin (2001) calls 'small-scale fishers'. A small-scale fisher is typified by living in a community along the coastline with their fishing activities taking place close to their communities. Another thing that is typical for a small-scale fisher is that the job of fishing is related to the fisher's culture and personal identity. This for example means that fishing for a small-scale fisher is not only to secure one's livelihood but more a way of life (Goodwin 2001, 3).

The fishermen of Paesens-Moddergat originally had their boats stationed next to the town in the sea but due to changes in depth of the sea next to the village the harbour moved years ago to the harbour of Lauwersoog which is about 10 km away from Paesens- Moddergat. The fishing activities do mostly still take place close to the community as most fishermen fish in the Wadden Sea while some fishermen have permits to fish on the North Sea which is still relatively close to their home town. Most fishermen of Paesens- Moddergat have a permit for catching shrimp, this is related to the fact that recently the mechanical removal of cockles was banned (Van Dijk, Broersma, Mehnen 2016, 90).

The number of inhabitants from Paesens-Moddergat of whom are still involved with the fishing sector is not clear. According to the website of the village there are 9 fishing boats owned by inhabitants of Paesens-Moddergat (Paesens-moddergat.nl 2018). Furthermore, there are people involved in other

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<sup>11</sup> Meaning 'the last honour' which is a local organisation that arranges everything around a funeral locally.

<sup>12</sup> Fieldnotes, 28-03-2018.

<sup>13</sup> Fieldnotes, 09-02-2018.

kind of water and boat related professions, for example some inhabitants are connected to the business of dredging and inland shipping. When asking the inhabitants about how many people are still engaged with fishing, boat and water related professions several estimated that there are 40 to 70 inhabitants still involved in those professions.

Next to the fishing and agricultural sector the tourism sector is a sector that is important within the village as there are different accommodations for tourists. There is for example a campsite situated at the edge of the village that offers a couple of bungalows. Next to that there are various bed and breakfasts and holiday homes that were formerly residential houses but now are bought by German people as well as people from urban parts of the Netherlands and are used as second homes. Of the 126 houses in Paesens 12 have a recreational permit, in Moddergat out of 151 houses 28 have a recreational permit meaning that these houses can be rented out for recreational purposes (DDFK Gemeenten 2018).

Interesting to note is that 44 % of the inhabitants in Paesens-Moddergat are female and 56 % are male (CBS 2017). In a meeting with two board members of Dorpsbelang<sup>14</sup> it was explained to me that more men than women stay living in the village due to several reasons but most important it is related to the sector they work in, as the men that work in fishery or agricultural sector don't feel the need to move. Women more occasionally continue studying and move to the place of for their study while studying or move to another town or city later where is more job availability. At the moment there is a street which is named 'the single street' by the inhabitants because about 4 men between 20 and 35 years old are living next to each other in their recently bought house designed for a family. Three of these men are fishermen.

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<sup>14</sup> Fieldnotes from meeting with dorpsbelang which means 'village committee', 16-03-2018





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<sup>15</sup> Picture taken by Elisabeth Beeris. This picture is taken from the dike. On the picture you see the old fishermen's houses standing in Moddergat. Some of these houses belong to 'Fiskershuse' which is the local fishery museum while other old fishermen's houses are still inhabited.

### 1.3 Paesens-Moddergat, a brief history

#### Formation of Paesens and Moddergat

Today Paesens-Moddergat is considered a twin village that is forming one community with no spatial border. The only sign of separation of the two villages is the name which is enforced materially with a town sign that on one side has Paesens and the other side Moddergat written on it. Paesens is the oldest of the two villages and was originally a fishing village. The village was named after the river 'Paesens' which merged into the sea right next to the village.

Around the 16<sup>th</sup> century Paesens started to lie further away from the Wadden sea due to the process of accretion (Jongeling 1987). This was a result of a combinations of two things that happened over an extensive time. First, The Wadden sea is an always changing area that due to the impact of currents and waves carries sediments and change the coastlines. Secondly, the construction of the dyke changed the flow of the water. As the fishermen of Paesens could not come close enough to the village anymore by boat they decided to build a new settlement nearby that allowed the fishermen to live close by their boats. Most of this settlement was built in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and was named Moddergat meaning 'mud hole'. The name Paesens means something similar as it is derived from the word 'Pagingi' meaning mud, earth or swamp (Jongeling 1987, 7).

About a hundred years after the fishermen started moving to Moddergat a clear divide could be seen in the sector that the villagers work in. People living in Paesens were working mostly in the agricultural sector while the inhabitants of Moddergat where mostly engaged with the fishery sector (Jongeling 1987). So, although the inhabitants of both villages where living a few hundred meters apart from each other they had a different relation with their environment. One focused on the sea, the other focused on land.

Milton's (2002, 66) argues that culture is the thing that mediates between humans and their environment. Following this line of thought, the argument can be made that the cultural productions that mediated between the inhabitants and their environment were produced through the work the inhabitants did as a means of securing their livelihood. The inhabitants from Paesens did this by working the land, the people from Moddergat by fishing on sea. Therefore, the work the inhabitants did and the environment they worked in, situated them in the world and created a different relation between the inhabitants and the environment, both in an environmental orientalist way by trying to master and exploit their environment (Palsson 2015, 143).

The inhabitants of the two villages were now divided in work they did, physically by the river and politically as the river was used as a border for the local municipality before Moddergat was built. Therefore, Moddergat belonged to the municipality of Westdongeradeel and Paesens to the municipality of

Eastdongeradeel up until 1984 when the two municipalities together formed the municipality of Dongeradeel (Jongeling 1987, 8-13).

### **Fishing disaster, schism of the church and their connection**

In 1883 there was a huge storm disaster that is now still known as the disaster of Moddergat that ensured another divide. In this storm 83 fishermen died while they were out on the sea fishing. The local reformed church ('hervormde kerk' in Dutch), the only church in the village at that moment, did not involve itself in any financial support to help recover after the tragedy which then resulted in a new liberated reformed church ('gereformeerde kerk') being built around 1890. The building of this church was funded mainly by the relatives of the ones that died at the disaster and other fishermen as they disagreed with the fact that the church did not support them.

This can be explained by the relation the inhabitants of Moddergat and especially the fishermen had with the sea that was an important source for securing their livelihood. When the disaster happened the survivors and relatives expected the church to step in for support as the church back then played the role of mediator between the inhabitants and their environment. As Milton (2002, 63) points out that culture is made up of perceptions and interpretations through which people make sense. The church and belief system provided the inhabitants with a basis for making sense of their perceptions and interpretations of their environment. When the church did not help the inhabitants, this caused a disruption in their belief system leading to the forming of the new church.

The idea of forming a new liberated reformed church that time by the local village of Moddergat is not to be seen as an isolated event related to the fishing disaster but was part of the schism (in Dutch known as the Doleantie or kerkscheuring) that took place in 1886 where many more liberated reformed churches were formed.

These two unrelated events of the schism and the fishery disaster that come together indicate what Ingold (2011, 149) coins as entanglements of 'lines' coming together forming a meshwork as life unfolds not in places but along paths. In this case the entanglements can be seen between the storm, the inhabitants and religious schism as endpoints of lines that together forming something new. Therefore, human existence is not place-bound but rather place binding (Ingold 2011, 148) emphasizing that place is always in the making and a matter of becoming rather than being (Ingold 2011, 12). For the village of Paesens-Moddergat this demonstrates how the village in the past dealt with changes that, although different from nowadays, caused a divide.



## **The bridge between Paesens and Moddergat**

After the disaster the villages of Paesens and Moddergat were not only separated in sectors where they would work but also in religion and use of churches. Eventually the schism led to a divide in elementary schools. Where before, the inhabitants of both villages would go to a public elementary school, now schools were built that would correspond with each religious outing and even a bakery and milkman for every religion. It was only in the 1960's that the schools joined together again under the name 'Christian national school'.

The physical divide between the two villages, the river 'Paesens' always had a bridge which connected Paesens with Moddergat. Although the river was closed down in the year 1900 (Meinsma 2007,10), the point where the bridge once stood is still known today as 'the bridge' which is symbolized by two iron pipes emerging from the ground in half circles representing the handrail of the former bridge. According to Jan<sup>16</sup>, a volunteer in the local museum of Paesens-Moddergat of whom his grandfather grew up in Paesens-Moddergat "the place where the bridge used to be still remained the border between the two villages".

The divide between the two villages is still apparent in the minds of a group of inhabitants whose family have lived in the villages for generations. Bauke, a man in his 70's who is originally from Paesens and grew up in a family concerned with agricultural work remembers this divide in villages<sup>17</sup>. In one of our conversations in his kitchen while drinking coffee together he tells the story of the divide and explains that "back in the days I never came in Moddergat since all of my friends were going to the primary school in Paesens" as the people from Paesens at that time mostly went to the local reformed church and corresponding school. He highlights that "occasionally we would fight with the people of Moddergat at the 'bridge' because there wasn't so much else to do those days in the village". The idea of the bridge thus symbolized a divide between the two villages, this time not a physical divide but a divide in religion.

The difference in religion caused some difficulties within the village. One of these difficulties was merging of the two schools which at that point was necessary as around the 1960's the population of the village was not big enough anymore to sustain two schools. Bauke explains to me how these processes went. "The two villages and schools agreed to merge under certain conditions. One of them was that the school principal should be someone from the liberated reformed church, the second from the local reformed church and the third person rotating, as at that time there were twice as many inhabitants in Moddergat as in Paesens. At one point the school principal left and the second fitting person to

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<sup>16</sup> Fieldnotes, informal conversation with Jan, 10-02-2018.

<sup>17</sup> Fieldnotes, informal conversation with Bauke, 22-03-2018.

become school principal was the vice-principle, only he was from the 'wrong' religion' according to the rules so a vote was held." Bauke can still clearly remember how it happened. "the liberated reformed inhabitants gathered all elderly people and brought them with their wheelchairs and rollators to the voting desk." This of course ensured the win for the liberated reformed since they were in a huge majority at that time showing the powerplay that was caused mainly due to difference in beliefs.

The relation between the villages, working sectors and religions became less evident but the divide in religions remained for some time. Gaaitse<sup>18</sup>, a man in his 70's who himself is not raised religiously highlights that they can still remember that on Sunday morning there were two lines of people walking to each church to go to mass. Of course, these people would cross each other each on one side of the street. Everyone that time knew each other within the village and normally on passing someone people would always greet each other but not on Sunday when going to mass. As Gaaitse mentions that "Everybody would walk with their heads bent down or looking forward".

So, although the bridge disappeared, a symbolic bridge remained for a long while within the village. And as the connection with work and religion became less, the function of the place where the bridge used to exist changed. Bauke explains that the function of the bridge changed from a place that used to serve as a border dividing the village to a place for meeting<sup>19</sup>. This was made partly possible since the divide between the villages and their connection with working sectors and religion became less strong. Gaaitse remembers that his dad would meet and stand on the bridge "always from ten till twelve in the morning and then again in the afternoon around three, there would be about eight till ten people there"<sup>20</sup>. And while the old divides became less, they were replaced by new divides in contemporary times.

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<sup>18</sup> Interview, Gaaitse, 14-03-2018.

<sup>19</sup> Interview, Bauke, 27-03-2018.

<sup>20</sup> Interview, Gaaitse, 14-03-2018.

## 1.4 Contemporary Paesens-Moddergat

### What role the church plays in contemporary Paesens – Moddergat

Now, about 125 years after the fishing disaster there are still reminders of the village's history which still lives within some of the inhabitants. The two religions officially merged a year ago into the 'Protestantse Kerk in Nederland (PKN)' meaning 'protestant church in the Netherlands'. Before that mass was already held together for a while, rotating location from one week in the local reformed church to the following week in the liberated reformed church and so on. It took almost 50 years to really bring the two churches together as Bauke argues; "already in the 1970 I researched how there could be a federation between the two churches but the people were not ready for it yet". He means by this that people were not ready yet to merge two religions into one as a federation of two churches means a coming together of two religions and associated mentality and behaviour of people which at that point was hard to unite.

There are two other associations, related to the church, that still play a role in the lives of much inhabitants of the village. First, the 'Christian women's group' ('christelijke vrouwengroep' in Dutch). This group, consisting of 35 members meets once a month where they most of the time invite someone to speak about different topics and do workshops on various themes. Last season for example, a police agent came to talk about her job and before that another person came to talk about Islam. For the members of this group these meetings are important not only for learning about the discussed topics but mainly because it gives them reason to come together and catch up. This meeting place thus functions as a place for occasional interactions allowing them to work on their sense of group belonging that in this case is shaped by the relational factor of belonging. According to Baumeister and Leary (1995, 497-501), in order to construct these feelings of group belonging the relations between the people should be long-lasting, positive, stable and should take place through frequent interactions.

Marieke, a woman in her 50's that has been living within the village for just over a year explained some more about this group to me. In one of our many conversations she describes how she was invited to participate within the group but decided not to join because of several reasons. First, it is linked to the church and the woman's group still sing songs when they start the meeting and she is not religious so therefore she doesn't feel at home in this group. She argues that "they (the woman's club) are inviting people to talk about topics that you and me already know about through google or by watching documentaries."<sup>21</sup> While other people that are in the group might agree with her, they still go there as they find these feelings of group belonging important. For the woman that just moved to the village, being

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<sup>21</sup> Fieldnotes, Marieke, 12-02-2018.

included or excluded in this group and the thereby associated feelings of group belonging are not of such importance as for her sense of belonging, the environment is of more importance.

Officially the churches are merged into one religion now but still most people know who is originating from which belief. For example, several inhabitants note in conversations that they are married with someone from 'the other religion'. Gaaitse adds that "now it is called PKN so officially the divide between local reformed and liberated reformed people do not exist anymore however, in the hearts of the people they maintain one or the other". Religion seems to be still holding a prominent position among some, mainly the elderly inhabitants of Paesens – Moddergat but also that has changed the last years.

The reason why this divide is mainly alive in the minds of people from 30 years and older is because there are fewer and fewer people going to church, especially the younger generation are not going anymore. For many however, the church served and is still serving another important social function within the village of Paesens – Moddergat. Beitske<sup>22</sup> argues that "newcomers do not come anymore to church, so then you do not know anymore who those people are that come living in the village". She points at the fact that the church functioned as a meeting place for maintaining and building relationships within the community, a place for maintaining a sense of group belonging.

In the interview with Gepke, a fisherman who grew up in a religious family of whom can be traced back in the village for five generations, we discuss the topic of religion within the village and discuss if religion is still important within the village although it has been declining so strongly. He explains to me that it still does; "You see that piece of land, its 'local reformed' ground, 25 years ago I wanted to buy that land, but it didn't get through."<sup>23</sup> Now, recently my neighbour, who has a local reformed background, called the church as the land is belonging to the church and he did get succeed so I now finally have that extra piece of land". Gepke has this piece of land now only for a couple of years showing how the history of divide in religion still plays a role nowadays.

If politics of belonging is about practices and discourse that separate 'us' from 'them' (Antonsich 2010), then for some of the original inhabitant's religion still is playing this role of what Crowley (1999) defines as boundary maintenance. These boundaries are that of the political community of belonging, in the case of Paesens – Moddergat, the past boundary between the religions remains visible.

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<sup>22</sup> Interview, Beitske, 25-04-2018.

<sup>23</sup> Interview, Gepke, 04-04-2018.

### **Shrinkage region**

Apart from the fact that women that are leaving the village, there seems to be a trend of people leaving the village in general. The reason that the churches and schools merged has to do with this just as several other things the village of Paesens-Moddergat is dealing with. First, there used to be a lot more people in the village than now. Where before there were about 1500 inhabitants now only around 460 inhabitants live in the village. This is because families are a lot smaller than they used to be, where before a family mainly consists of parents, four to eight children and even sometimes grandparents, now a household consists of in total three to five people with the elderly living more often in elderly homes.

Furthermore, in the meeting with the village committee<sup>24</sup> I was told that in the 70's for example the prices of houses were pretty cheap so a lot of German people bought houses here with the idea of using them as a holiday house and were only inhabited in weekends and holidays. The village tried to protect itself against this behaviour by implementing rules, for example that a house is only allowed to be sold to someone outside of the region after it is for sale for more than half a year. Another rule the village implemented more recently is that it would not issue any new permits for the use of a house for recreational purposes as a reaction to the more and more houses being rented out as a bed and breakfast or as holiday homes.

Additionally, due to these developments the region is considered as what is called in Dutch a 'krimp regio' meaning 'shrinkage region'. This means that it is a region dealing with a steadily declining population due to several factors. According to the Dutch government (Rijksoverheid 2018) a shrinkage region expects a shrinkage of the population of about 16 % until 2040 whereas the rest of the Netherlands on average is expecting a growth in population of about 11 % until 2040.

One important reason for leaving, according to inhabitants that still live in the village but are thinking about moving away is that the village itself is not housing a supermarket and bakery anymore, only a local farmer selling some vegetables. Another argument is that the secondary school is a good 12 km cycle away and for higher education the closest by institute is a half hour car trip away. What you see happening in the village is that the inhabitants that want to go to a university move into a student house and then decide to stay in the city they study in or keep commuting between school and home but then move later anyway as there is not a wide variety of jobs in the region.

Due to this shrinkage there are all sorts of developments in the region that are experienced as decline. There are for example houses in the city centre that are not inhabited now and are deteriorating because of it. The problem often with these houses is that they are too small to be lived in with a modern-

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<sup>24</sup> Fieldnotes, Village committee, 16-03-2018.

day family as the needs a family have now is different to family needs from when the houses were built (Prins and Timmer 2012). Because of the decline in population, the houses in the area of Paesens – Moddergat are fairly cheap which makes them interesting for people from more urban parts of the Netherlands that want to settle in a more peaceful environment.

### **A new divide**

According to Hanenburg (2011) people that migrate from more urban areas of the Netherlands to the region of Friesland are mostly highly educated people that are in search for a peaceful life where they can experience a feeling of freedom. This seems to be the case for Paesens – Moddergat, as at least the newcomers from outside of Friesland that move to the village seem to be highly educated and share the motivation as explained by Hanenburg. With their coming the ‘newcomers’ bring different values, norms and visions on living which can change the identity of the village (Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau 2006, 15).

The villages of Paesens and Moddergat used to be divided in several ways; by a river, sectors of work, in religion, education and until recently in municipality. Now however, there is a new divide apparent in the village between the inhabitants that have been living there all their life and people that moved to the village coming from the more urbanized area of the Netherlands for the peaceful environment. This is a divide that may not be as clear as for example the divide in working sectors or the divide in religion, but a more subtle divide. Such a divide between so called newcomers and the original inhabitants becoming visible in values, norms and vision on living (Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau 2006, 15).

The concept of human-environment relations is the overarching theme of this thesis. Throughout history until now there have been multiple divides in the village which all correspond to different relations the inhabitants have and had with their environment. As discussed, the divide of religion is related to the relation the inhabitants of Paesens-Moddergat had with the sea and the sectors the people worked in as it was the fishermen that decided to build a new church after the fishing disaster. As for the original inhabitants their relationship with the environment is constructed throughout history through fishing and conquering the environment, whereas newcomers have a relation with their environment based on enjoyment of the nature that is characterized by peace, wideness. Therefore, the next chapter is focused on problematizing this concept.

## 1.5 Human-environment relations

Before looking more closely into the topic of human-environment relations, in this section first the concept of 'the environment' is problematized. Ingold (2002, 20) argues that there are three points that are important when defining the idea of the environment. First, it is important to notice that the environment is a relative term as it is relative to whose environment it is as there can be no organism without an environment and vice versa (Gibson 1979 and Lewontin 1982 in Ingold 2002,20). Secondly, the environment is forged through activities of living beings and therefore constantly under construction and never complete. The third point is that the notion of the environment should not be confused with the concept of nature. The difference lies in the perspective of seeing ourselves as beings that live within the world or without it. If we would talk about nature as something out there, as a detached scientist, it would be easy to think that it is unaffected by our presence (Ingold 2002, 20).

Humans and their environment are mediated by culture according to ecological anthropology where the central aim is to study human-environment relations (Milton 2002, 38-40). The nature of those relations and of the role that culture plays is a debated topic. In this thesis I conceptualise the human-environment relationship following Milton's (2002, 40) argument; The relation between a human and its environment can be considered mutually constitutive as this way of looking at this relationship emphasizes the complex interplay between one and another.

If culture has the function of mediating that complex interplay, what do we understand by the concept of culture? Milton (2002, 66) argues that culture consists of three key features. First, culture is something that exists in people's mind and is expressed through what people say and do. Secondly culture is made up of perceptions and interpretations which together encompass things like emotions, values, norms assumptions and so on, through which people make sense of their experience. Thirdly, culture is the way through which people connect with their environment. If human-environment relations are mediated by culture, then that means that culture has the role of situating us in the world (Milton 2002, 63), or as Ingold (2002, 20) argues; the environment is relative to whose environment it is.

For the local inhabitants of Paesens – Moddergat this means that although they share the same environment, it can be experienced differently. This is demonstrated in the past by the building of a new village by fishermen that then later started a new religion due to their relationship with the sea and the happening of the storm. If culture mediates between in this case the fishermen and the sea and religion is representation of culture, then it can be explained why the fishermen choose to build a new church in search for one that could help making sense of their experience.

Nowadays a different human-environment relation is apparent between original inhabitants and newcomers of which the former sees the environment as a source of income for securing their livelihood

and are therefore focused on exploiting the environment. For the latter their environment is important for experiencing peace and quietness of the nature and to secure this they are more concerned with preserving it. These differences in relation with their environment intersects with their sense of belonging as for the newcomers their environment is an important part of constructing their feeling of belonging while for the original inhabitants these feelings are constructed differently. This is discussed in the next chapter.



## 2. Belonging to Paesens- Moddergat



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<sup>25</sup> Picture made by me from the dyke looking into a part of the village. Made on 08-02-2018.

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter is about belonging to Paesens-Moddergat and how belonging can be shaped and constructed differently among the inhabitants. As shown in the previous chapter, the relation one has with the environment differs between original inhabitants and newcomers, in this chapter I demonstrate how this different human-environment relation is also a difference in belonging. By using the factors of belonging, that Antonsich (2010) proposed as an analytical tool I am able to show these sometimes subtle and sometimes big differences in how the feelings of belonging of the inhabitants of the village are constructed and shaped. In the second section on politics of belonging I demonstrate how the different feelings of belonging that the inhabitants have, can lead to different ideas on how to live together within the village leading to friction (of belonging and different human-environment relations).

## 2.2 Sense of belonging

According to Fenster (2005, 243) sense of belonging can be described as an intimate, personal, private sentiment of place attachment. This aligns with the idea of how the word belonging consists of being and of longing or yearning (Yuval-Davis 2003). Furthermore, sense of belonging can be associated with present and past experiences as well as memories and future ties connected to a place (Fenster 2005, 243). These experiences grow with time as they consist of everyday life activities that come to make 'place' out of 'space' as a 'place' can be considered a space made meaningful (Leach 2002, 281).

In chapter one I defined the environment as relative to whose environment it is (Ingold 2002,20). For now, I find it necessary to problematize the concept of place as it helps in understanding how the inhabitants attach meaning to this place. According to Shamai (1991) the word place is dimensionless as it can be applied to any scale, for example to a home, or to a country. A place can be considered a physical and human environment combined and is therefore "a piece of the whole environment which has been claimed by feelings". If belonging and place attachment are built on experiences, accumulated knowledge and memory (Fenster 2005, 243) than sense of belonging is something that changes with time 'as these everyday experiences grow and their effects accumulate' (Fenster 2005, 243). Therefore, the feelings towards a place change, changing the meaning of the place. For the inhabitants of Paesens-Moddergat that have different human environment relations due to different experiences with their environment this could mean that people living in the same village can share different feelings towards their environment depending on their everyday experiences.

## Factors of belonging

For newcomers the environment of Paesens – Moddergat is an important motivation for moving to the village. They go there for the position of the village and for the peace, quietness, nature and the emptiness that surrounds the village. Victor a man in his 40's who has been living in Paesens – Moddergat for about 10 years explains that he lives there because of the emptiness<sup>26</sup>. He explains that his motivation for coming to live in Paesens – Moddergat comes from an experience he had as a kid. He and his family would go to Texel, one of the Dutch Islands, for holiday and Texel is an island that shares some landscape characteristics with the village and environment of Paesens – Moddergat as it is described as a place full of nature, emptiness and sea. He describes that he used to live in the city during his study and loved it; “The city offered me a place to party and be engaged in all kind of things that I like but at some point, I was done with that and was longing for something else”. He points out that as a kid he always loved nature and therefore decided to move to a place with similar characteristics as Texel. He further explains that the city has a lot to offer but the reason for moving to Paesens – Moddergat “is not to be entertained, something that is easily possible in a city due to all ‘distractions’ a city has to offer. I came here to experience it”. He clarifies that by experiencing he means to experience the emptiness, the silence and the nature.

So, what most newcomers have in common is a strong connection with their environment as an important reason for going to live there. According to Antonsich (2010, 647-649) people that choose to live in a place, different from the one they were born, build up a sense of belonging in a new place if that place is congruent with the individual's life story. Antonisch (2010) refers to this kind of belonging as ‘elective belonging’ pointing at the choice to live somewhere else. The way in how these feelings of belonging are shaped is connected to the newcomers' length of residence as people that move to a certain place do not originate from there. The most important thing about creating a sense of belonging by a newcomer is that one finds a life that is meaningful, a life worth living (Antonisch 2010, 649). For most newcomers that come live in Paesens-Moddergat this meaningful life that is generating their feelings of belonging holds strong ties with the relation they have with their environment as they choose to live there mostly for the environment and its landscape characteristics.

For the original inhabitants, elective belonging is mostly not relevant as they lived within the area for their whole life, their belonging is thus made up out of other factors which shape these feelings. (Antonsich, 2010, 647–649). The first factor is the auto-biographical factor, this one is related to one's history, relations and memories that attach a person to a place. Various original inhabitants have shared memories with me about the place. Geeske, a woman in her 40's that grew up in the region of

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<sup>26</sup> Interview, Victor, 14-03-2018.

the village and married one of the original inhabitants explains that “I can remember as a kid lying in bed hearing the sound of the sea that was hitting the dyke on a stormy evening, I always imagined during those moments that my mattress would be able to float if the dyke would break, just like the mattresses of my sister and my parents”<sup>27</sup>. Furthermore, she can remember that she would go walk on the mudflat with her dad “my dad always had something with nature, so we would go there, and he would teach me things about the special plants that grow there”. Other inhabitants have memories of all kinds of activities they would do in the surroundings of the village, mainly behind the dyke<sup>28</sup>. Bauke is one of these people that can remember this very well as he describes; “Back in the days we would play korfbal and we used to swim and fish and did mudflat walking”.

The second factor is the relational factor which refers to social and personal ties, for example with friends and family members. In order for these ties to shape a sense of belonging it is important that these relations must be long-lasting, stable and take place through frequent interaction (Baumeister and Leary 1995, 497–501 in Antonsich 2010, 647). For the original inhabitants these relational factors are important as friends and family live at least partly within the village. Gaaitse highlights this importance and argues “look, I wouldn’t mind moving to Australia so to speak, but only as long as the children and grandchildren move with me, otherwise I wouldn’t be able to cope” emphasizing what is most important for him, his family. Haaie, a former fisherman and nowadays an inland skipper that has been living here his whole life explains that due to the shrinkage and decline of original inhabitants “the social life is becoming less and less, which is very unfortunate” as he describes further; “what I like about the village life is that we are running the village together, just like a family only then a bit bigger”.

The third factor is named the cultural factor of which Antonsich (2010, 648) argues that language is the most important part as language stands for a particular way of constructing and conveying meaning. Important to notice is that language can contribute to generating a ‘warm sensation’ among the people that speak it, creating an element of intimacy, as it resonates with the auto-biographical factor thereby contributing to a feeling of being ‘at home’. The main language spoken in Paesens – Moddergat is Frisian, and most newcomers do not speak it. There are newcomers who put an effort in trying to speak the language, or at least understand it but not all newcomers do so.

The fourth factor is the economic factor and is about contributing to a safe and stable material condition for people (Antonsich 2010, 648). This factor of belonging is to be seen in relation to fishery and agricultural sectors which was and still is an important source of income. A fisherman feels connected

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<sup>27</sup> Interview, Geeske, 06-03-2018.

<sup>28</sup> Fieldnotes, various informal conversations.

to the place where he lives as it is next to the Wadden Sea, his place where he earns his money. For most newcomers, moving to the village is not motivated by economic factors as there is not much work in the region which newcomers are aware of in advance.

The divide between the newcomers and original inhabitants becomes clear when looking at where their feelings of belonging are built upon. The newcomer's feelings of belonging seem to mainly be shaped through their relationship with the environment as the environment offers them something that fits with their life story, something they were missing in their life before moving to Paesens – Moddergat. The original inhabitant's feelings of belonging are constructed in diverse ways, mainly on basis of auto-biographical and relational factors and to a lesser extent on basis of economic and cultural factors.

The different ways in which feelings of belonging are constructed also explains the difference in relationships the inhabitants have. An example that exemplifies this clearly, as recognized by most inhabitants is about the area 'behind the dyke'. The village of Paesens – Moddergat, is located right next to the dyke. On the other side of this dyke is a natural reserve made up mainly out of a salt marsh area before it turns into the Waddensee and mudflat area. In this natural reserve is a long Pier and some other footpaths making this area well suited for walking. I used to try go for a walk here every day while conducting field work, on one hand because of the beauty of the area, on the other hand to see what people I would meet and see behind the dyke.

One of the first persons I met behind the dyke was Marieke who visits the area behind the dyke daily to walk. She explains to me while drinking coffee together in her house after a walk that she has conversations with a lot of people there<sup>29</sup>. I reply to this by asking; people from the village you mean? "no only 'immigrants' 'If you know what I mean" hereby referring to newcomers and tourists. She thinks further out loud and says, "it's almost like the Dyke functions like a wall for the original inhabitants which they do not climb over anymore". For her, this place is a philosophical place, a place for reflection as she explains that "For me the area behind the dyke is a place for meeting people and for being alone, and if I meet people I always have deep conversations that go further than everyday small talk".

When discussing this with original inhabitants they agree with the fact that original inhabitants they mostly do not go behind the dyke anymore. In a conversation with Leenke<sup>30</sup> who is the daughter of Gepke she explains to me that only a hand full of original inhabitants still walks behind the dyke, and the rest of the original inhabitants according to her argue "why should I go there? Its way to busy anyway" thereby referring to the summer period and Sundays when there are tourists visiting the

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<sup>29</sup> Fieldnotes, Marieke, 12-02-2018.

<sup>30</sup> Fieldnotes, Leenke, 19-02-2018.

place. Another interesting remark to make in relation to this is from a woman that lives close to the village in an old farm. When asking why she thinks the original inhabitants do not come behind the dyke anymore she answers “the place there with the mudflats (behind the dyke) also has intrinsic values, therefore I do not need to visit the place every day or every week. Just knowing that it is there, so close and so beautiful is for me very important.”<sup>31</sup>

This situation, where newcomers do feel a strong connection with the place behind the dyke, and the original inhabitants not is an interesting one and can be explained by looking at an intersection between feelings of belonging and the relation one has with its environment, in this case more specifically with the place behind the dyke. According to Fenster (2005, 243) belonging to a place is made of experiences that grow with time while Tilley (2006) adds that identifying with a place requires work and repeated acts that create relations between peoples and places. Deriving from this, the argument can be made that the newcomers visit the wad so often because it is important act for shaping their feelings of belonging. In order to shape feelings that depends on the connection with a certain environment the newcomers need to build up experience with the place, as a repeated act that creates the relations between them and the environment.

This repeated act, for example by walking daily within the environment of Paesens-Moddergat is an act of placemaking in where a space, the environment of the village, is made meaningful and thus transformed into a place of belonging. For the original inhabitants, this factor for creating feelings of belonging is not that important since they can rely on other factors consisting of past personal experiences, memories, the presence of family members or social ties that enrich life in such a way that gives them belonging. All these above mentioned factors might lead an individual to live a life that is meaningful, a life worth living, which, according to Hooks (2009, 1 in Antonsich 2010, 649) is what to find a place where we belong is all about.

### **Coming home, being home**

The way in which the sense of belonging is shaped thus differs per inhabitant and as belonging means to find a place where an individual can feel ‘at home’ (Antonsich 2010, 646). This raises the question of what is home for the inhabitants of Paesens-Moddergat, when do they experience coming home and is this divide in feelings of belonging between original inhabitants and newcomers apparent here? These questions are discussed in this section.

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<sup>31</sup> Fieldnotes, Aakje, 24-02-2018.

“I am working in the city of Leeuwarden. And when I start driving upwards, to the north, and when I have completely passed the city of Dokkum, completely, then I get the feeling of coming home already.”<sup>32</sup> This quote is from Bas, a Frisian man that just moved to the village about a half a year ago. What he explains is the geographic point where he feels he is coming home after being away from the village. This geographical point is shared among newcomers as well as original inhabitants<sup>33</sup>. For them, coming home is when one is traveling back from holiday or from work as a group of inhabitants commute daily between work, mostly situated in cities like Groningen and Leeuwarden. The point when people start feeling home is when they pass the city of Dokkum. From this point on the roads are mostly empty and the landscape is slightly different from the landscape below Dokkum. One of the things that is different is that you can see the dyke arising on the horizon. Furthermore, landscape characteristics that are typical for this area is a low population density ‘giving a feeling of freedom, rest and being in nature.

Looking at several factors of belonging as coined by Antonsich (2010), what most inhabitants share about the feeling of coming home is related to the geographical place with its landscape characteristics, but that is not the only thing that contributes to the feeling of coming home. Haaie explains in relation to this that “when we come home from holiday and we are driving back we are always playing the game of guessing who we will see first of people we know”<sup>34</sup>. For them it is not only landscape characteristics that remind them of coming home, but more so seeing someone that they know and recognize, this links well with the relational factor of belonging (Antonsich 2010).

What is shared is that home stands for a symbolic space of familiarity, comfort, security and emotional attachment (Hooks 2009, 213). The geographical scale of which the inhabitants feel home however varies per individual as for some, home is their house while for others home is related more to the environment, demonstrating that feelings of belonging to a place can therefore be conceptualized at multiple levels (Morley 2000, 11). For Beitske<sup>35</sup> and Maaike<sup>36</sup>, who have been living in the village their whole lives, being home is being in their house and being able to sleep in their own bed. For Geeske<sup>37</sup> factors that are important for feeling home are as follows: “We made our home here, that’s also because of our house, the place, the garden, the view, the space and also the beautiful air, yes we made our home here”. With ‘making’ a home she is pointing at the fact that she and her husband together build a home within the village. Tilley (2006, 14) argues that identifying with a place requires work and

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<sup>32</sup> Interview, Baarnd, 22-04-2018.

<sup>33</sup> For example Boaitse and Wietske, an original inhabitant and a newcomer explain similar stories about the same location where they start to feel that they are coming or being home.

<sup>34</sup> Interview, Haaie, 15-04-2018.

<sup>35</sup> Interview, Beitske, 25-04-2018.

<sup>36</sup> Interview, Maaike, 15-03-2018.

<sup>37</sup> Interview, Geeske, 06-03-2018.

repeated acts that create relations between peoples and places. For Geeske, building a house can be seen as work and repeated interactions with the house, therefore creating an emotional attachment to this place which makes her feel home there.

But that does not mean that she cannot feel home due to other things as well as she further describes that the sea for her and her family gives them a feeling of being home and she uses an example to signify that; “We sometimes go camping in France, mostly then in the mountains next to a little stream but after a few days the boys (her kids) really felt a need to go and check the sea”. Her daughter explains this during our interview, “when I come home from holiday and I’m standing on the dyke it is then that I think, now I am home again”<sup>38</sup> referring to the role the sea plays in their life.

As demonstrated, feeling home and coming home is for the inhabitants shaped by environmental factors, for example by the sea and through social factors, for example by recognizing someone when coming home. These two factors therefore important for the original inhabitants as for newcomers, although original inhabitants find the social factors more important while newcomers speak more about environmental characteristics in relation to home and belonging to the place. Another theme where this divide became apparent is that when inhabitants were discussing about the word ‘freedom’, a word that much people spoke about while attaching different meanings to it. This divide in social and environmental factors and related friction became apparent in conversations about freedom with the inhabitants

### **Freedom**

In daily conversations and interviews with the inhabitants an important theme that kept coming up was ‘freedom’. When asking what the people mean with the word freedom I got different answers that made me realize that the meaning and associations that are connected to the word differ per individual. Where some would relate freedom to landscape characteristics, others would relate freedom to the way the inhabitants interact with each other thus more of a social freedom. This section is about ‘freedom’ and the different meanings the inhabitants give to the word.

Ingold (2002) argues about situatedness that the environment is relative to whose environment it is. For the fishermen of Paesens – Moddergat for example, their environment is not based on recreational use but related to economic profit in order to secure their livelihood creating a different relation with their environment in this case the Wadden sea area. For the fishermen this area is not linked to feelings of freedom, rather to a decline of freedom as Jente, a fisherman now in his 50’s, argues about the job as a fisherman “the romantic part is completely gone as the profession of a fisherman is one that is a

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<sup>38</sup> Interview, Leenke, 03-04-2018.



profession of adventure and freedom but all these rules that have come up last year are inhibiting this freedom taking the fun out of it”<sup>39</sup>.

Some fishermen therefore experience a decline in freedom but when asking the inhabitants why the feeling of freedom is so present within the village multiple inhabitants argue that this feeling of freedom originates from the history the village has as a fishing village and from the profession of fishing that is so connected with freedom. So, while fishermen feel more and more restricted in their freedom, the feeling of freedom within the village remains strongly connected to belonging to Paesens-Moddergat as Jente argues ‘well, the Frisian people in general do not like it when someone tells us how to live, but here (in Paesens- Moddergat) that feeling is even stronger, for us our freedom is important, just let us (the villagers) do our own thing”.

What most inhabitant share when talking about freedom is that they are talking about the landscape and geographical position as Maaike<sup>40</sup> explains that “the view, the wideness the freedom, that’s what I experience here, something I wouldn’t experience in a city or close to a forest, because that would stress me”. Saakje<sup>41</sup> shares the opinion of connecting freedom to the environment “What gives me a feeling of freedom is that I am always able to just walk over the dyke whenever I want”. For some, freedom is therefore related to the landscape characteristics and to the way they want to use their environment as for these two people their environment is one to be used in a recreational way, for walking.

This feeling of freedom is not solely related to the natural environment as these feelings of freedom arise from the way people are relating to each other within the village. Saakje<sup>42</sup> explains that “people leave each other alone here within the village and give each other space, of course everyone talks about everyone here, but we do respect each other’s choices”. The way of living that the inhabitants find important, connected to a social kind of freedom is embraced by most inhabitants but not all. Newcomers that come from other parts of the country do not always share the same ideas on how to live a life in a small village, or more precisely in the village of Paesens-Moddergat.

Tension can arise between original inhabitants and newcomers as newcomers bring new ideas on how to live together or how people ‘should’ live together based on different values. Yuval-Davis (2005, 528) argues in relation to this, that the sociology of emotions should come to terms with the sociology of power. Feeling home at a place is therefore not only a personal matter but also a social one. That’s why there is always a mediation going on between these personal feelings of belonging to a place and

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<sup>39</sup> Interview, Jente, 09-03-2018

<sup>40</sup> Interview, Maaike, 15-03-2018.

<sup>41</sup> Interview, Saakje, 21-03-2018.

<sup>42</sup> Interview, Saakje, 21-03-2018.

the practices of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion that happens in that place conditioning one's sense of place-belongingness (Antonsich, 2010,649). This mediation of belonging is thus between feelings of belonging on one side, and politics of belonging on the other. How this sense of belonging becomes part of the politics of belonging is discussed among other things in the next section.

### **2.3 Politics of belonging, friction on how to live a life in Paesens-Moddergat**

Politics of belonging is related to various dimensions of citizenship, as citizenship is about exclusion and inclusion of people and therefore about which identities are included and which are excluded from the hegemonic community (Fenster 2005,245). Lefebvre (1992) argues that different definitions of citizenship dictate in which representations of space the rights and duties of citizen are relevant and in which spaces they are not or in other words clarifies the boundaries between “us” and “them”. Citizenship in this thesis is not about a national citizenship and belonging to a nation but rather about being a member of and belonging to the community of Paesens-Moddergat. Talking about newcomers and original inhabitants as separate groups is therefore not only about different ways that their sense of belonging is shaped as it is related to politics of belonging when these feelings of belonging become social.

In the above section about freedom as an important value within the village I introduced that experiencing this is not a problem for a sense of belonging as these feeling are personal. However, these feelings can become problematic if these become social as it they then are valued and judged (Yuval-Davis 2006, 203) by other inhabitants. What is meant by a sense of belonging becoming social is that the individual values one has, are expressed through normative behaviour and raises expectations on behaviour and responsibilities oneself and others have towards the community (Fenster 2005, 249). The normative question of how a life should be lived in Paesens – Moddergat was never point of discussion as it was formerly decided by mainly original inhabitants that more or less agreed on a certain way of living together. Now, due to the coming of other people to the village the dynamic of the village has changed, the answer to the question of how to live together in Paesens-Moddergat is less clear. Newcomers and original inhabitants have a different answer to this question which sometimes leads to difficulties and frustration among both groups. This section is about these different opinions on how a life should normatively be lived in Paesens- Moddergat.

In the previous chapter it became clear that that there are various things that are important for living in the village. For newcomers, that is a life that gives them peace and is one in where they can experience the wideness and quietness of the place and its surroundings. For the original inhabitants, although they have some overlap with newcomers, other things are more important. For them giving

each other the space to live and respect the way other inhabitants live is important while the importance of living together is emphasized as Saakje explains to me that “we, the inhabitants, give each other the space to live our lives but when needed we take care of each other.”<sup>43</sup>

In my interview with Gaaitse he describes several examples of “how these Hollanders are not integrating and adjusting to the village life”<sup>44</sup>. One of the things these “Hollanders” generally do not do well according to him is maintenance of their houses and gardens, “they come live here and have a fucking mess everywhere, the good ones aside of course”. He explains further by telling me a story about a man that just moved to the village;

*“On one day a man knocked on the door asking if he could sign a letter he made. This letter set up as a petition against the tractor that was leaving the village around 6 in the morning making a lot of noise as the farm is in the middle of the village. I replied to that man that the farm exists already for over a hundred years now and you (that man) do not even live here for a hundred days. After, that man lived here for another 6 weeks and moved away from the village.” He emphasizes that he has no problem at all who comes to live here within the village, “I don’t care if they are brown or white, I don’t care but if I go to a city I will adjust my behaviour, and if someone comes to live here someone needs to adjust their behaviour too, and they shouldn’t tell us how things need to be done here”.*

Politics of belonging is about boundary maintenance and about deciding who is standing inside or outside the imaginary boundary between ‘us’ and ‘them’ between being inside or outside the imaginary community (Yuval – Davis 2006, 204). For Gaaitse to accept a newcomer as one of ‘us’, meaning part of the community of Paesens-Moddergat is decided based on behaviour and attitude of the newcomer as he exemplifies that a newcomer should adjust her behaviour to the behaviour that is accepted within the village. Maaïke adheres to this thinking<sup>45</sup> and describes the story of a neighbour that came living within the village about 10 years ago. She points out that she attempted to get in contact with these newcomers as she finds it important to know her neighbours, but her neighbours were not interested. “What the neighbours did do is complain. They complain about the youth because according to them they drink too much and about the trees next to our house. They want to cut down healthy trees because they do not like them? Well I said to them, we don’t cut healthy trees here.” With the sentence ‘we don’t cut healthy trees the original inhabitant is laying a normative claim on how a life should be lived within the village. According to her, to belong to Paesens-Moddergat participating and

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<sup>43</sup> Interview, Saakje, 21-03-2018.

<sup>44</sup> Interview, Gaaitse, 14-03-2018.

<sup>45</sup> Interview, Maaïke, 15-03-2018.

getting to know each other is as important as not openly judging others behaviour and thereby respecting the other.

Why the original inhabitants of Paesens – Moddergat find aspects of a certain normative way of living important can be explained through the factors that their sense of belonging is mainly depending on. For example, the auto-biographical factors that are made up by the presence of family members and relatives that live within the village, give meaning to the life of the original inhabitants and add to their sense of belonging to the place. With the coming of new inhabitants that bring different norms on how to live together and as their feelings of belongings are shaped through different factors, feelings of alienation can be experienced among the original inhabitants (Dorling et al. 2008) or at least a reordering of their local social dynamics on which these feelings of belongings are based. The differences in which these feelings of belonging are shaped therefore has a direct connection with politics of belonging and the relation one has with its environment.

As argued earlier, for most newcomers the most important source of belonging is the landscape and peace and quietness surrounding the village. This helps to explain the behaviour of the newcomer that is frustrated about the tractor that makes a lot of noise every morning as it does not align with the expectation he had of the place and his sense of belonging that is connected to this due to his relationship with the environment. For original inhabitants of which feelings of belonging are constructed differently this is not so much of a problem as it is for them of more importance that the relationship with the farmer is long lasting.

Another example that exemplifies this divide in feelings of belonging and different ideas on how to live a life within the community of Paesens-Moddergat is related to the local primary school. The primary school of Paesens-Moddergat consists of 50 students from Paesens-Moddergat and the neighbouring village Wierum<sup>46</sup>. The school is still just about surviving because of the children from Wierum that go to the school but a decline of children visiting the school could be a threat that could eventually lead to closing. In a conversation with Jurre<sup>47</sup>, a fisherman that recently moved out of the village himself explains that the school is the heart of the village community and that he is afraid that the village will not be able to survive if the school closes. He argues that already the supermarket and bakery closed in the village meaning that inhabitants need to go to other town for these needs and that if the school would close this means the only facilities the village has left are a bar and a tea room.

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<sup>46</sup> <http://www.paesens-moddergat.nl/cbs-t-kompas/>, accessed on 04-08-2018.

<sup>47</sup> Fieldnotes, Informal conversation Jurre, 12-04-2018.

For Haaie<sup>48</sup> the role the school plays are important for another reason; “Look, now at ten in the morning when the kids have a break you hear them screaming, that creates a lively feeling within the village.” He elaborates on what he means by a lively feeling; “I think that’s important, a village should be lived together, it’s a community, sometimes you cry together, sometimes you fight with each other and sometimes you laugh” emphasizing the relational factors of belonging to a place that are made up out of social ties that for him enrich his life (Antonsich 2010). He adds about the newcomers that they do not share that village feeling, “they live on their own ‘island’, do their own thing and do not interfere with life of others” meaning that they are not participating as they do not find this important. According to him the newcomers, which he calls “import”, do mostly not bring their kids to the local school because they think the quality of the school in Paesens – Moddergat is not good enough. Therefore, their parents bring the kids to school in Dokkum every day.

This example showcases how the different relations the inhabitants of Paesens-Moddergat have with the village and its environment shape feelings and politics of belonging to the place. As for the newcomers the auto-biographical and relational factors are not of importance for generating their sense of belonging as these feelings are mainly constructed by the environment and the relation they have with it. For the newcomers, belonging to Paesens–Moddergat is mainly belonging to the peaceful surroundings that are characterized by its quietness, wideness and nature. While for the original inhabitants the environment is important, the main factor of belonging to Paesens–Moddergat for them is built up out of personal experiences and memories related to for example childhood and to dense relations with friends and family (Ager and Strang 2004, iv; Chow 2007, 514 in Antonsich 2010). The question that remains unanswered then is how the inhabitant’s feelings of belongings are shaped by decisions and claims made by institutions outside the village and how this influences their human environment relations. This question is addressed in the next chapter.

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<sup>48</sup> Interview, Haaie, 15-04-2018.

### 3. Organisations involved with the environment of Paesens – Moddergat



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<sup>49</sup> Picture made by me of one of my daily walks behind the dike on the pier with my research participants. Taken on 29-03-2018.

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores how the inhabitants relate to organizations and political decision from outside the village that lay claims on the surroundings of the village and how these intersect with their feeling of belonging to and relation with the environment. Due to its geographical position, next to the Wadden Sea, it is an area that is highly contested and claimed by multiple organizations. One on side the area is praised for its unique natural values and is recognized as UNESCO world Heritage. Various environmental organisations therefore are involved into the region, for example Greenpeace. On the other side, the local inhabitants living in the area depend for already hundreds of years on what the sea has to offer in order to secure their livelihoods via fishing. Their attitude towards environmental organisations therefore are mostly negative. Furthermore, under the seabed there is a lot of gas stored which, if extracted, is enough to provide all Dutch household for gas for a period of 10 years<sup>50</sup>. And although gas extraction is already being done in Paesens-Moddergat, it is being frowned upon by some inhabitants.

This chapter is divided up into three sections corresponding to important organisations and processes playing a role in the environment of Paesens-Moddergat; UNESCO World Heritage the Wadden Sea, Environmental movements and the Nam which is the organisation involved in gas extraction. As this chapter is about the different attitudes original inhabitants and newcomers have to these organisations and political processes involving their environment, especially to the Wadden Sea Region. I will use the concept of 'Political landscape' as introduced by Kraus (2005) to explore the complexity of attitudes towards a landscape as these attitudes are made up out of different perceptions and values the inhabitants of Paesens-Moddergat have regarding their environment. There is never just a landscape but rather many landscapes (Bender and Aiken 1998, 25) as it is relative to whose landscape or environment it is (Ingold 2002,20) or who gives meaning to it.

Landscapes therefore are not passive and only 'out there' "because people create their sense of belonging through engaging and re-engaging, appropriating and contesting the sedimented pasts that make up the landscape" (Bender and Aiken 1998,25). Bender (2006, 303) adds to Kraus in relation to the concept of political landscape how one place at the same moment can be experienced differently and argues that "how people interact with place and landscape are almost unending, and the possibilities for disagreement about, and contest over, landscape are equally so." The interactions the inhabitants of Paesens – Moddergat have with the landscape surrounding Paesens – Moddergat therefore make up different human environment relations. In this chapter I use Palsson's (2005) division of human environment relations to analyse the different attitudes towards organisations involved with the

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<sup>50</sup> <https://www.nam.nl/gas-en-oliewinning/wadden/gaswinning-onder-de-waddenzee.html> , accessed on 06-08-2018.



region and is used to demonstrate how these different human-environment relations can lead to friction. This chapter starts with a section on UNESCO World Heritage the Wadden Sea as it is only recently that the Wadden sea got recognized as such.

### **3.2 UNESCO World Heritage the Wadden Sea**

About 10 years ago the Wadden Sea area was given the status of UNESCO World Heritage in recognition of establishing and preserving an outstanding environment, representing one of the largest wetland ecosystems in the world (Wadden Sea secretariat 2018). Obtaining that status was not easy as it was met with resistance from diverse groups. One of these groups was represented by the local communities living on the Wadden Sea coast who used the “not in my backyard’ approach (NIMBY) (Van der Aa, Groote and Huigen 2004). A main concern that the inhabitants of The North of the Netherlands expressed against nomination as World Heritage was that they feared a loss of autonomy over the region (Van der Aa, Groote and Huigen 2004, 301). Farmers as well as fishermen living in Paesens-Moddergat explained what that loss of autonomy meant for them in relation to their work. Haaie<sup>51</sup>, explains how the recognition changed political decision-making processes involving the area. “They promised us that the Wadden Sea being recognised as UNESCO world heritage area would not have any consequences for the economy or for the area or region but if there is something going on the fact that the area is UNESCO territory is always used against you”. Haaie hereby refers to the fact that the fishermen were promised that the recognition as UNESCO World Heritage would not have any consequences. In reality this is not the case and the recognition is used as an argument in favour of protecting the area and against fishing related practices thus having consequences for the economy and for the autonomy the local fishermen have.

Bauke<sup>52</sup> explains that his son in law, who is a farmer has felt the effect of the area being recognized as UNESCO world heritage mainly in the coming of extra rules as it stretches out for about 10 kilometres into the main land. He gives an example to exemplify this by describing how his son in law wanted to build a barn in one of his fields, but his application was rejected as it was considered visual pollution. Bauke points out that before (the recognition) this would not be so much of a problem as there would be less decisions being made from outside of the village regarding the environment. This demonstrates that the fear for loss of autonomy over the region that was voiced already in 2004 among the local inhabitants is one that has come true.

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<sup>51</sup> Interview with Haaie 15-04-2018.

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Bauke 27-03-2018.

The Wadden sea area that covers around 2% of the Dutch population is becoming more and more a national and international issue since the national government and the European Union have argued for authority on grounds of national and international regulations for the area (Van der Aa, Groote and Huigen 2004, 296). This influence from outsiders at the expense of insiders that increased when the Wadden Sea was recognized as UNESCO World Heritage created feelings of frustration and alienation among the inhabitants of the area (Van der Aa, Groote and Huigen 2004, 296). According to Dorling (et al. 2008,23) feelings of alienation among other things can indicate an absence of a sense of belonging. How then is the recognition of the Wadden sea area as UNESCO World Heritage leading to feelings of alienation by the inhabitants of Paesens–Moddergat?

This can be explained through the feeling of freedom as an important value among the inhabitants of Paesens – Moddergat who connect this to a feeling of belonging. Inhabitants of Paesens – Moddergat feel restricted in their freedom due to influence from outsiders, in this case related to the UNESCO World heritage recognition of the Wadden Sea area, which causes the inhabitants to feel alienated. Gaaitse<sup>53</sup> argues in relation to this that there is not so much freedom anymore behind the dyke since the recognition of UNESCO while Maaike<sup>54</sup> further emphasizes how “there are more rules now and more restrictions.” These rules and restrictions, as experienced by the inhabitant’s cause feelings of loss of autonomy among the people as it gives them the feeling that they have less say over their environment. Victor<sup>55</sup> argues that it is due to these new regulations and rules that come with recognising the area as UNESCO World Heritage that farmers, fishermen but also other inhabitants start seeing outsiders that are creating, implementing and enforcing these rules as some kind of enemy. This results in an anti-environmental lobby, especially among those whose profession is related to that environment. Maaike adds the following to this; “That’s why you shouldn’t start talking about Greenpeace for example here because people here are really anti-environmental organisations”. The next section explores this stance towards environmental movements that is shared among multiple original inhabitants but mostly not among newcomers.

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<sup>53</sup> Interview with Gaaitse 14-03-2018.

<sup>54</sup> Interview with Maaike 15-03 2018.

<sup>55</sup> Interview with Victor 14-03-2018.

### 3.3 Environmental movements

*I am entering the café, the first thing I notice is the smell of smoke from strong tobacco. As my eyes are adjusting to the dark surrounding I am slowly beginning to scan the place. On the left there is a long table followed up by a billiard with a projection screen behind it. The live soccer game of SC Heerenveen Versus PSV is being projected on to the screen. In front of me there is a u shape bar lined with about fifteen bar stools, seven of which are taken by men, the rest of the stools empty. When entering the café, the bar man greets me by nodding and muttering something that sounds like a greeting which also some of the men at the bar do. Although I am being greeted by some the way I am being greeted and being looked at gives me the feeling that it is not often that a stranger visits this place as they all seem to inspect me making me feel a bit out of place. I decide to first order a beer and sit down at the long table on my own. The man on the bar seem to all have a couple things in common, they smoke strong tobacco, and all have one full and one almost empty beer in front of them which is filled up as soon as one is empty. When I go back to the bar get another beer one of the man at the bar asks me; ‘why are you sitting on your own there? And why don’t you join us at the bar?’ I mumble ‘ehm I thought it was full at the bar’ and the guy at the bar answers ‘there is plenty of space’. I react by getting my stuff and sit down between the guy who invited me and another guy who later turn out to be fishermen, just like most other men here. When sitting down on the stool the first thing one of the guys says is; ‘Are you from Greenpeace?’ ‘No’ I answer laughing as I am a bit surprised by the question. “Then it’s okay” he replies<sup>56</sup>*

This situation serves as an example for the general attitude that fishermen and original inhabitants have towards outside forces that potentially could lay a claim on or have plans with the environment of Paesens – Moddergat. Two organisations of which the inhabitants of Paesens – Moddergat often refer to in conversations are Greenpeace<sup>57</sup> and the Waddenvereniging<sup>58</sup>. Both organisations are focused on nature conservation and protection. It is the for example the mission of Greenpeace “to expose global environmental problems and promote solutions that are essential to a green and peaceful future<sup>59</sup>”, while the waddenvereniging strives for conservation, recovery and good management of nature, landscape and environment and of the ecological and cultural-historical values of the Wadden Sea Region<sup>60</sup>. Due to the focus on nature conservation and protection, these two organisations can be

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<sup>56</sup> Vignette of visiting the local bar ‘de Zwarte Arend’ in Paesens-Moddergat on 17-02-2018.

<sup>57</sup> Greenpeace is an international environmental organization.

<sup>58</sup> The Waddenvereniging is an association that stands up for the interests and rights of the Wadden Sea.

<sup>59</sup> <https://www.greenpeace.org/usa/about/> , accessed on 05-07-2018.

<sup>60</sup> <https://waddenvereniging.nl/vereniging/doelstelling> , accessed on 05-07-2018.

considered as paternalists as their relation with the environment is based on protection of the environment with a tendency to fetishize nature by setting it apart from the human world (Palsson 2015, 243).

This leads to the situation where mainly the original inhabitants, fishermen and farmers of Paesens-Moddergat feel that nature becomes more important than sustaining the livelihood and the liveability of the village. For newcomers, this is mostly not a problem as what you see happening is that newcomers often are very engaged with environmental causes which makes sense as their sense of belonging and reason for living in Paesens-Moddergat is because of the natural environment and the relation with that environment. For the original inhabitants of the village of whom their profession is not directly involved with the natural environment, this situation where nature becomes more important, is experienced mainly through rules and regulations that inhibit their freedom of living the life that they were always able to live. Gaaitse<sup>61</sup> argues in relation to this that “it’s going to come so far that when standing on the dyke you’re not even allowed to fart anymore “pointing at the fact that there are more and more rules coming that according to him “inhibit the freedom behind the dyke more and more”. Saakje<sup>62</sup>, explains why these decisions on behalf of preservation of nature are so contradictory; “Because of this protection, and promoting of the area as special, one that needs to be preserved, it attracts a lot of people that go walk behind the dyke on the mudflats with a guide to see the beauty of the nature, and that would not harm the birds and the critters? But when I want to set up a small little net or lay out some hooks behind the dyke to catch a couple of fish than I am punishable for poaching.” This quote demonstrates the feeling that the original inhabitants have, that nature is more important than them and that everything they do is seen as ‘bad’ behaviour and restricted. While newcomers and tourists can recreate and do as they please in the region.

For the inhabitants that are involved with the direct environment as part of their job this is experienced stronger as it makes it harder to do their job as Jente<sup>63</sup>, a fisherman in his 50’s argues that due to these environmental organizations the area in which they can fish on shrimps gets smaller and smaller every year. He agrees with the environmental organizations on some points as he is happy that there are rules on fishing which every fisherman needs to obey “otherwise we would fish until there is, nothing to fish anymore and that is also not what we want, because I strongly believe that if we do not watch out also nature can turn to shit.” What the fishermen and environmental organizations share is that they see humans as master of nature, as they both are aware of their influence on the region. Where

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<sup>61</sup> Interview with Gaaitse 14-03-2018.

<sup>62</sup> Interview with Saakje 21-03-2018.

<sup>63</sup> Interview with Jente 09-03-2018.

they differ is in their relation with their environment. Palsson's theory on different human-environment relations allows me to demonstrate that environmental organizations can be seen as paternalists and focused on protection of the environment while fishermen are considered environmental orientalists as they are focused on conquering and exploiting the environment (Palsson 2015, 143). Some fishermen <sup>64</sup> say in relation to this that they are anti-environmental movement and do not like the 'green mafia' as they refer to it. This situation was different before as Haaie<sup>65</sup> points out that 'years ago most fishermen were a member of Greenpeace and of the Waddenvereniging but now we do not feel like they are supporting our norms and values anymore, as it is only nature that seems to count.

Arriving from this, the statement made by Jente<sup>66</sup> of "the Wad is considered a holy place nowadays" makes sense as he means that the natural values of the Wadden Sea are in his eyes more important than survival of the livelihoods that are depending on the Wadden Sea. He explains that the seals are a good example of this as years ago there were almost no seals left but since they started saving seals as part of this environmental lobby there are about 7000 nowadays in the Wadden Sea. Jente highlights further that a seal eats about 5 kilo fish a day "which makes them serial killers, and not these sweet little animals as some people think they are." With some people he is referring to people that do not have practical knowledge of the Wadden Sea and are not there every day, for example tourists or politicians and researchers that do not live in the region but do make decisions about the region.

This is a strong feeling that is shared among mainly the original inhabitants of Paesens – Moddergat, that all political decisions regarding the environment are made by people living far away from the Wadden Sea and not in the area as Saakje argues "sometimes I get tired of it, the people that are living the furthest away make up the rules of the area behind the dyke here". Jente argues about this that "when they (members of environmental organisations) are right they are right, but you should not just say something without knowing how it works, you should first come and look and ask our opinion, but they don't do that, therefore we have this attitude against them". What frustrates the fishermen about this is the fact that their opinion is not considered when making decisions regarding the Wadden Sea area just as their knowledge and practical experience is never used.

Haaie explains to me how this top down decision making is experienced by fishermen. "A paedophile cannot have wear an ankle monitor in a neighbourhood with many children around because it would violate the right of privacy, but a fisherman is being tracked in five ways as you have a following system, a black box and marine traffic on board, control by police and then you also need to bring your bycatch to shore." Due to this the fishermen almost feel like criminals when carrying out their profession as for

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<sup>64</sup> Informal conversation in bar 'de zwarte arend' 17-02-2018.

<sup>65</sup> Interview with Haaie 15-04-2018.

<sup>66</sup> Interview with Jente 27-03-2018.

them it feels like everything they do can be 'wrong'. From this point the attitude the original inhabitants, and more so the fishermen of Paesens-Moddergat have towards environmental organisations can be understood as these organisations limit the freedom of the fishermen while not working together with the fishermen in making policy and rules. This might explain the stance towards 'Hollanders', tourists and newcomers that are coming to the place as most of these people can be considered paternalists, people that want to protect the environment in order to ensure the future of the nature, which is the same vision the environmental organisations have.

The attitude that fishermen, farmers and original inhabitants have towards environmental organisations seems logical as the fishermen and farmers are working in the surroundings of the village that is so contested and claimed by outside organisations. Therefore, the surroundings of the village are not only beautiful nature but also a political landscape, contested over and claimed by many parties (Kraus 2005, 43) that threaten the livelihood and liveability of the village as fishing and farming is an important source of income and one of the few jobs still available within the close surroundings of the village. It is in this regard interesting to see how the inhabitants of Paesens – Moddergat relate themselves to another organisation that is located within the surroundings of Paesens – Moddergat; De Nederlandse Aardolie Maatschappij (NAM) meaning the Dutch earth oil company.

### 3.4 THE NAM

The NAM is a gas and oil extraction company that is part of oil companies Shell and Esso with its core business to extract oil and gas from the Dutch subsoil<sup>67</sup>. In 1999 the NAM placed a gas drilling installation just outside Moddergat with the goal to drill from there under the Wadden Sea. The inhabitants of the village back then were open to the coming of the NAM and for the drilling to happen but the waddenvereniging tried to stop the drilling from happening. It took until 2007 for the actual drilling to start taking place (NAM B.V. 2010) and until today gas is still being extracted at this location. The inhabitants of Paesens- Moddergat argued in opposition to environmental organisations and explained that “we walk here daily next to the sea or are on the sea with boats since we are living here and know better than anyone else how dynamic this area is<sup>68</sup>” pointing at the fact that they have knowledge of the area and can therefore agree with the drilling knowing it is safe.

While mostly the attitude towards the NAM in the Netherlands is negative because of several cases of subsidence by gas extraction happened, most of the original inhabitants of Paesens-Moddergat seem to still hold a positive attitude towards the NAM and the gas extraction that is happening from their backyard. In a meeting with Dorpsbelang<sup>69</sup> one of the board members explains to me that a commonly heard argument in favour of Gas extraction is that we are all still dependent on gas and it needs to come from somewhere.

This attitude can again be explained through the relation most original inhabitants have with their environment. As explained in the above section on UNESCO most original inhabitants work in the surroundings of Paesens–Moddergat or know someone close that is working there. As previously mentioned, through working experience that is built up from being dependent on what nature, for example the land or the sea provides, these inhabitants build up a so-called orientalist relationship with environment in which the focus is on exploiting and conquering the environment (Palsson 2015, 143). If your experience with your direct environment is constructed from this idea, that your environment can provide you in securing your livelihood, it makes it understandable that these people have a positive attitude towards the NAM as they share the environmental orientalist relationship with their environment.

Arriving from this, it becomes clear why it is then that the newcomers are the ones that have a negative attitude towards the NAM and start protesting against this as the newcomers’ relation with the environment is a paternalistic one, focused on protection of the natural environment not on exploiting it

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<sup>67</sup> <https://www.nam.nl/over-ons/missie-en-visie.html>, accessed on 07-07-2018.

<sup>68</sup> <https://www.trouw.nl/home/kustbewoners-het-wad-redt-zich-wel-als-de-bodem-een-stukje-daalt~ac962923/>, accessed on 07-07-2018.

<sup>69</sup> Dorpsbelang is dutch for Village committee.

(Palsson 2015, 143). This attitude that the newcomers have, and the fact that they are outwardly expressing that something needs to be done against the NAM and the gas attraction annoys some original inhabitants. Maaïke explains this by saying “yeah most inhabitants here do not have problems with the NAM, I don’t have any problems with it either but it’s the imports that have their big mouth open against it”. Additionally, Gaaitse explains that “there is a ‘Hollander’ that was always outwardly against the NAM and was always trying to stop the NAM from doing what they are doing.”

The other reason why the original inhabitants are positive about the role the NAM is the role that the NAM is playing in the village as the NAM is financially supporting the village in several ways. For example, the NAM financially supported building of the multifunctional accommodation with solar panels in 2015<sup>70</sup>. This building was built with the idea to become an important meeting point for the inhabitants of Paesens – Moddergat and is for example used as a sporting club canteen, a youth base and for organizing activities. In terms of factors that shape feelings of belonging this building represents a place for maintaining and working on relational belonging (Antonsich 2010) as organising activities in this place makes frequent interaction possible. This relational sense of belonging is mostly important for the original inhabitants that value the community feeling of belonging to Paesens-Moddergat which explains their positive attitude towards the NAM. Another action of the NAM, which can be grouped under the relational factor of belonging, is the sponsorship of the village festival held every 4 years. The village festival is an important event for the original inhabitants, sponsoring such an event is contributing towards a relational factor of belonging.

Newcomers hold a different stance towards the NAM and seem almost surprised by the attitude the inhabitants have towards the NAM as Victor explains to me that when he moved to the village that he got a shock when he read in the newspaper about “the NAM is more than welcome!”<sup>71</sup>. For him, financially contributing to the village by the NAM is a sort of what he names ‘kettingkjes en kraaltjes principe’ which literally translates to necklaces and beads principle hereby referring to the nice shiny things the colonists would give to the tribes in order for the tribe to give permission for use of resources for example.

According to him this is what the NAM is doing now, creating goodwill by paying for a few things and organising small events to give the inhabitants of Paesens-Moddergat the feeling that the NAM is a nice organisation and will probably do no harm while drilling. Victor highlights an event that was organised by the NAM that demonstrates this. “When the NAM was about to expand its extracting activities, they invited all of the village inhabitants. They were picked up with a bus and taken to the site

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<sup>70</sup> <https://www.nam.nl/nieuws/2015/duurzame-energie-voor-nieuw-verenigingsgebouw-paesens-moddergat.html>, accessed on 07-07-2018.

<sup>71</sup> Interview, Victor, 14-03-2018.



although the site is only a couple of hundred meters away. “ He explains that at the same time he understands the attitude of the inhabitants as they just are interested in the technical aspects of the site.

In the yearly open dorpsbelang meeting<sup>72</sup>, where inhabitants and politicians are invited, these different attitudes towards the NAM became visible. In the dorpsbelang meeting there was a conversation about the NAM. The original inhabitants react mildly by discussing if “maybe it is possible to do some zero measurements in our own town to ensure that the gas extraction here isn’t doing any harm. The original inhabitants only now start to think about this measurement while the gas extraction already started 10 years ago. The newcomers react completely different to this story and voice their opinion strongly, it appears that two newcomers that have a seat in the dorpsbelang board of whom one of them lives in Paesens – Moddergat for only a few months are part of an environmental organisation known as ‘Feste Grun’.<sup>73</sup> They argue against anything that has to do with gas extraction in the meeting and one of them points out that “the only thing we can do is an accelerated transition towards sustainable energy as a reaction on NAM things” as she goes on by saying “the best weapon against the scum of the NAM is sustainable energy”.

The original inhabitants do not seem to share this opinion, as someone asks to me during the meeting “what is the answer then? A windmill in my back garden? Do you know how much noise that thing makes and how horrible it looks”? The newcomers and original inhabitants thus share a slight concern against the gas extraction but as the Dorpsbelang meeting demonstrates that newcomers see the NAM as pure evil, something that needs to be stopped, the original inhabitants also see practical and economic advantages for sustaining the village. This dichotomy in thoughts between original inhabitants and newcomers about gas extraction is one that can be explained in a different relation with their environment, a difference between a paternalist relation and an orientalist relation, and the connected feelings of belonging that for both groups are constructed differently.

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<sup>72</sup> Fieldnotes 23-03-2018.

<sup>73</sup> This is an environmental organisation that focusses on the effects of gas extraction within the municipality of Dongeradeel.

## Conclusion and Discussion

### Conclusion

Paesens-Moddergat, once a small fishing village, has remained divided throughout history. In order to study this divide, the relation that the inhabitants have with their environment and what this means for their feelings of belonging have been studied using the following research question:

How are human-environmental relations near the Wadden Sea constructed, and narrated by inhabitants of Paesens-Moddergat at the junction of changing local interests and feelings of belonging and place?

The village of Paesens is the oldest of the two and as demonstrated, it was mainly due to the relation the inhabitants had with their environment that Moddergat was built as the village of Paesens was moving further away from the sea. For the fishermen living in Paesens this was not convenient as they were not able to moor their boats close to the village anymore and decided to build a new settlement which later became the village of Moddergat. From this point on there were two villages divided in human-environment relationship as people from Paesens were more involved with agricultural work while the people from Moddergat were fishermen. Additionally, they were physically divided by a river 'Paesens' border.

Later, in 1883 a storm occurred wherein a large group of fishermen died on sea while the church did not support them in recovering from this disaster. As mentioned, human-environment relations are mediated by culture and culture is made up of perceptions and interpretations through which people make sense of the world (Milton 2002,63). For the fishermen the church provided in making sense of their experience with their environment, the sea. When the church did not support them in recovering from the disaster, this caused a disruption in the belief system of the fishermen leading them to form a new church. It is due to the relationship the fishermen have with their environment that this happened, the farmers that had no connection with the sea or had loss from the storm felt no need to change church and stayed with the original church.

In contemporary Paesens-Moddergat I demonstrated that there is a new divide in the village, that between original inhabitants and newcomers. As demonstrated, these newcomers are often highly educated people (Hananburg 2011) who move from more urban parts of the Netherlands to the village in search for a more peaceful life, one where they can experience the quietness and wideness of the nature surrounding the village. As outlined, for newcomers, being part of the community and the social life of the village are not as important as the search for 'peace in nature' while these factors are of high

importance for the original inhabitants. These different norms and values between the original inhabitants and newcomers became clearer when looking at how their sense of belonging is shaped and constructed. As for newcomers the main factor for generating a sense of belonging is related to the elective factor which indicates their choice to move to a place that is congruent with the individual's life story (Antonsich 2010, 649). For them, the natural environment is an important factor when coming to Paesens- Moddergat while for original inhabitants on the other hand there are other things that are more important for shaping these feelings of belonging. For them personal experiences, memories and the relation with family members are important just as economic embeddedness (Antonsich 2010, 647) related to the work on land and sea. The factors of belonging that connect original inhabitants to Paesens-Moddergat are therefore auto-biographical, relational and economic.

The difference between factors that shape and construct feelings of belonging for original inhabitants and newcomers leads to friction within the village. A friction that arises (Tsing2005) when various kinds of knowledge and cultures encounter each other. This becomes clear when looking at the politics of belonging to Paesens-Moddergat. The feelings of belonging the inhabitants have, are expressed through normative behaviour and expectations of behaviour and responsibility's (Fenster 2005, 249) of other individuals within the community.

In the village there are various normative ideas on how a life should be lived within the village. The primary school that is based in the village exemplifies these various ideas. For example, original inhabitants find it important and normal that you send your children to the local school as it aligns with their idea of living in Paesens-Moddergat which is about living together as a community demonstrating the importance of the relational factor of belonging for the original inhabitants. Newcomers that find it less important to live together as a community, often send their children to a primary school that has the highest quality. For them, belonging to Paesens-Moddergat is not about living together as a community, taking care of each other, and keeping the village spirit alive.

For newcomers, to create a relation with this environment they often visit the place as a repeated act which is an act of placemaking in where a space, the environment of the village, is made meaningful (Leach 2002, 281) and thus transformed into a place of belonging. For newcomers the environment is thus of significant importance for constructing their feelings of belonging. Their relationship with the environment can therefore be considered a paternalist relation focused on a protecting their environment (Palsson 2015, 143), as for them sustaining their environment and its natural values is important as it is related to the reason for coming to live in the place. The original inhabitants in general and, fishermen and farmers, adhere to an environmental orientalist relation with the environment focused in exploiting the environment to sustain their livelihood (Palsson 2015, 143). This helps to understand

the critical attitude of fishermen and farmers against environmental organisations and why they consider themselves 'anti-environmentalists'. Arriving from this, the friction between original inhabitants and newcomers becomes clearer. Firstly, because newcomers share the human-environment relation with environmental organisations, they can both be considered environmentalists, wanting to protect what is so important for them. Secondly because the original inhabitants tend to rank the newcomers as the same people that represent environmental organisations; as people that come from other parts of the Netherlands without practical knowledge of the environment but with a strong opinion on it.

In this thesis the focus on human-environment relations allowed me to demonstrate that in the past the storm, religion, the fishing disaster and the schism came together as what Ingold (2011, 149) indicates as entanglements of 'lines', coming together forming a meshwork as life unfolds not in places but along paths. Nowadays this meshwork is formed by the coming together of other lines; the shrinkage region, environmentalist organisations, newcomers, changing interests, recognition of the Wadden Sea as UNESCO World Heritage area and the NAM forming a meshwork, something new (Ingold 2011, 148). This demonstrates that Paesens-Moddergat is a place that is always in the making and a matter of becoming rather than being (Ingold 2011, 12).

## **Discussion**

The village of Paesens-Moddergat is located in a shrinkage region of whom there are several in the Netherlands. In this regard this thesis adds to the discourse on shrinkage regions and can be used as an example for what happens when there is a decline of people in a region making the region more interesting to highly educated people from urban parts of the Netherlands that move to the region. This thesis demonstrated that a threat for such a village, part of a shrinkage region, is that it can undermine the social cohesion of such a village threatening the feelings of belonging one has to the place. For further research it is interesting to look at other villages that are part of a shrinkage region to see if these villages deal with similar issues, that arise out of a discrepancy of different human-environment relations and changing feelings of belonging.

Furthermore, this research also has some limitations. First, due to a limited amount of time of three months to do fieldwork it was not feasible to interview part-time inhabitants. There is a considerable group of German people that own recreational houses within the village. Most of them bought these houses years ago and visit their houses in weekends and on holiday. Including their perspective to this thesis would make it more complete. Secondly, I did not join on a fishing boat with one of the fishermen. Although I was welcome to join with one of the fishermen, they also discouraged me going with them on a fishing trip. This was due to the fact that most people can experience seasickness and these fishermen stay on the sea for up to 4 days. Joining such a trip would have added an extra dimension

to this research as it would have allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the fishermen's life and daily work.



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<sup>74</sup> Picture taken by me. Standing behind the dike looking out on the Wadden Sea. Taken on 13-02-2018

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