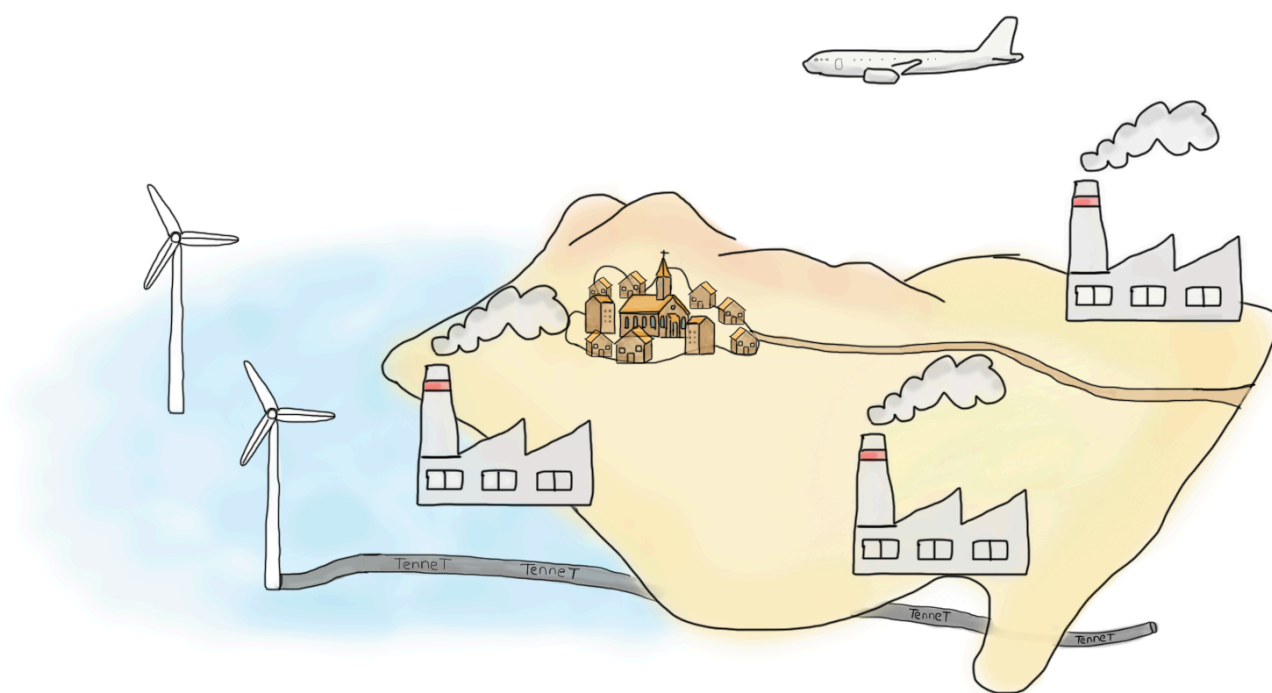


AN INFINITE ROAD TO REINVENTION

An ethnographic exploration of the embedding
effects of space and time through the lens of
inhabitants of the Dutch coastal village Wijk aan Zee



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Cover visual of Wijk aan Zee by Thomas Wobben

Foreword & Acknowledgements

The thesis you are about to read is the result of the final steps in my journey to become an anthropologist. Over the last two years, I have been working towards my master's degree at Utrecht University. I am thankful for the knowledge, tools, and feedback the professors at the department of Cultural Anthropology have offered me to guide me to where I am now.

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Special acknowledgement goes to Thomas Wobben for designing the visuals used in this thesis. Besides two informational visualizations of Wijk aan Zee, you will find his design of the “skyline” of Wijk aan Zee throughout the thesis to indicate the concluding remarks of each chapter.

Finally, I want to express my deepest appreciation to all the people I met during fieldwork. The story I am telling in this thesis is the result of three months of ethnographic fieldwork in the Dutch coastal village Wijk aan Zee, where I met many people willing to participate in my research. I am grateful for all the inspiring encounters and conversations I had. Thank you all for welcoming me and introducing me to Wijk aan Zee in such unexpected ways.

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Introduction

Imagine standing on a dune, the fresh sea wind blowing through your hair, looking over a four square kilometre village. You see a giant green meadow in the centre of that village surrounded by houses and centuries-old churches, and dunes separating the village from the wide-spread beach. Now imagine standing on that same exact dune, only this time facing the opposite direction. You feel and possibly smell industrial winds blowing through your hair and look over a 750-hectare industrial complex. These two seemingly incompatible elements uniting is the contemporary reality of Wijk aan Zee, a small coastal village in the Netherlands. The division between the two worlds I am depicting here, however, is in practice not as static as it seems when standing on that dune (the *Paasduin*). In fact, the two worlds are uniting both in a spatial as well as a temporal sense. This raises questions about how inhabitants of Wijk aan Zee perceive their place in the world in a contemporary capitalist and globalized society, and how this influences their perception of the space they inhabit and the time in which they live. As such, this thesis will give insight into the embedding effects of space and time in Wijk aan Zee, and how these are underpinned by the presence of powerhouses, particularly the abovementioned industrial complex Tata Steel IJmuiden (hereafter: Tata Steel). Thus, this thesis seeks to answer the following research question:

How do both space and time shape how inhabitants of the Dutch coastal village Wijk aan Zee perceive their place in the world?

Getting to know Wijk aan Zee during three months of conducting fieldwork in 2022 has shown me how seemingly incompatible things can unite in all their complexity. I have gotten to know Wijk aan Zee as a village of many contrasts: the contrast between nature and industry, the contrast between small- and large scale, and the contrast between “pro and anti” Tata Steel. On top of that, Wijk aan Zee is also a village that is somehow, despite being surrounded by (industrial) powerhouses, resisting the hegemonic discourses that these powerhouses embody. Marxist theorists, particularly Antonio Gramsci (1971), used the notion of hegemony to describe a dominating ideology that imposes or upholds a particular social order. It is oftentimes through this hegemony that positions of power are legitimized as inevitable or natural (Gramsci 1971). In a similar vein, John and Jean Comaroff, anthropologists who influentially applied the

concept of hegemony in their African studies and studies of the state (e.g., Comaroff and Comaroff 1991), define hegemony as “that order of signs and practices, relations and distinctions, images and epistemologies – drawn from a historically situated cultural field – that come to be taken-for-granted as the natural and received shape of the world” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991, 23). In other words, it often goes unnoticed. Yet, as I will show in this thesis, my interlocutors *are* aware of the hegemony materialized around them. In the case of Wijk aan Zee, this hegemony refers to the powerhouses and their contemporary system-thinking and “capitalist logic” (Tsing 2013). Powerhouses, as well as superpowers or great powers, are terms that many of my interlocutors have used throughout my fieldwork to refer to powerful entities in around Wijk aan Zee. In this thesis, I refer to those entities as powerhouses, referring to companies, organizations, and foundations with a lot of political and institutional power or influence in the surrounding area and beyond. I emphasize here that I do not imply positive connotations with the term, even though popular understandings of the term may suggest those connotations. Nor is my purpose to allocate blame. Rather, I use powerhouses as a neutral term like my interlocutors have, to draw a clearer image of the interplay between the diverse dynamics of those powerful entities and villagers, and how those dynamics define the conditions in Wijk aan Zee.

As such, in this thesis, I explore the lives of inhabitants of Wijk aan Zee in order to delineate how both space and time play a role in a small village standing up against the hegemonic discourses of the surrounding powerhouses. This research thus emphasizes the ambivalent characteristics of the village and how inhabitants contest the presence of these powerhouses on the one hand, whilst at the same time acknowledging that the same powerhouses constitute the fundamental basis of their past, present, and future. The general aim is then to provide an ethnographic narrative of space and time in a village where both are such debated and contested topics. The implications of space and time in Wijk aan Zee are crucial anthropological subjects because attention to them is also attention to the sociality in the village, to the ways in which inhabitants perceive their place in the world. By place in the world, I mean the spatial and temporal aspects of how inhabitants of Wijk aan Zee make sense of their home and belonging. To explore this sense of belonging, I draw on Nadia Lovell’s (1998) definition of this notion. In the book *Locality and Belonging*, both Lovell and other contributors provide accounts of the close relationship between territory and cultural identity (Lovell 1998). By embedding belonging in a sense of experience, Lovell argues that belonging is “defined as much by actual territorial emplacement as by memories of belonging to particular landscapes whose physical reality is enacted only through acts of collective remembering” (Lovell 1998, 1). Thus,

in what follows in this thesis, I engage with both notions of space and time. In terms of space, I draw from various approaches to (symbolic) islandness and remoteness (e.g., Ronström 2021). By employing Ingold's "dwelling perspective" (Ingold 1993), I explore how my interlocutors narrate about the conditions in the village, mainly the presence of powerhouses, that constitute such metaphorical islandness and remoteness. In terms of time, I draw from anthropological approaches to nostalgia (e.g., Pickering and Kneightley 2006), emphasizing the importance of history and familiarity in the relationship between Wijk aan Zee and powerhouse Tata Steel. Furthermore, I build on the idea that nostalgia is also very much concerned with the future (e.g., Boym 2008; Palmberger 2008). I connect the implications of both space and time to the notions of belonging (e.g., Lovell 1998) and social capital (Bourdieu 1986) and show how both play a role in my interlocutors cultivating alternatives to the hegemonic discourses they are embedded in.

In connecting the abstractness of globalization and system-thinking to the specificity of local practices in Wijk aan Zee, I apply Anna Tsing's analytical approach of scale-making (Tsing 2000). As such, I show how Wijk aan Zee embodies the particularities of global capitalism which, according to Tsing (2000, 347), should be explored as "projects". Any global project should be viewed in its context, and the uniqueness of local dynamics should be traced back through history (Tsing 2000). Tsing's fieldwork on the Indonesian island of Kalimantan consisted of tracing local particularities, leading her to the conclusion that global capitalist influence had come to dominate local life in the Indonesian rainforests, and vice versa (Tsing 2005). As such, projects of scale-making show how "cultures are made and remade" (Tsing 2005, 127). Acknowledging that Wijk aan Zee as well as its contexts are continuously being made and remade is important because the understanding of the influence of powerhouses and how the relationship with them is perceived in Wijk aan Zee has a relevance to how we as humans, especially in small villages, define our place in the contemporary globalized world. This is particularly relevant in the current context of globalization, where localized conceptions of belonging can appear to be at odds with broader national and international interests. Furthermore, to place this thesis in a wider anthropological context, demonstrating the relevance of the study, it is important to note that anthropologists have extensively researched industrial towns (e.g., Little 2014; Ringel 2018; Dewan 2020). However, to my knowledge, no such research has been executed in a Dutch industrial context. The Dutch context provides a relevant perspective because The Netherlands is one of the most densely populated areas in the world where people's everyday lives and industrial activities thus unite to a greater extent. In addition, research is rarely concerned with a contemporary industrial context, focused on

belonging within this context in a spatial as well as a temporal sense. As such, this thesis contributes to debates on the embedding effects of space and time in industrial towns, specifically in the Netherlands, and tells the story of how time and space both continually reconstruct one another while somehow also staying the same.

The field and population

As delineated above, the field site wherein I conducted research is Wijk aan Zee, a small Dutch coastal village in the province of North Holland. Wijk aan Zee (which literally translates to Neighbourhood at Sea) is a small village on the North Sea coast, part of the municipality Beverwijk, and has a population of approximately 2175 residents.¹ For centuries, Wijk aan Zee was an isolated fishing village. Every now and then, agitation emerged in the village, for example when the Dunkirkers or fleeing Russian soldiers disturbed the peace and quiet (De Vries 2003, 76). Despite these occurrences, at the beginning of the 15th century Wijk aan Zee was one of the largest villages on the Dutch coast. Fast forward, in the course of the nineteenth century, Wijk aan Zee lost its competition with other fishing villages in the region because there was no harbour. As a result, the fishing industry went extinct. It was also in the nineteenth century that the village started to develop into the small-scale seaside resort it still is today. The opening of the first bathers hotel in 1881 was the first step towards a new industry. The inhabitants of Wijk aan Zee started to focus on receiving bathers, first short-term visits and later more long-term stays during the summer. In the seventies of the twentieth century, the long-term stay of bathers in Wijk aan Zee largely came to an end. Since then, Wijk aan Zee has been more focused on daytime recreation. As a result, the village is now well-known as a popular tourist seaside location.²

In addition, Wijk aan Zee is notorious for being home to part of the Dutch branch of steelworks company Tata Steel. Tata Steel is a steel producer with operations in 26 countries and commercial offices in more than 35 countries.³ The Dutch branch is spread over several Dutch towns in the region of IJmuiden, including Wijk aan Zee. As illustrated in the beginning of this introduction and depicted in figure 1, this 750-hectare industrial complex directly neighbours Wijk aan Zee and thus constitutes an important part of the field site. The steelworks

¹ “Kerncijfers wijken en buurten 2021,” CBS, accessed June 27, 2022, <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/maatwerk/2021/31/kerncijfers-wijken-en-buurten-2021>

² “Historie,” TIP Wijk aan Zee, accessed May 12, 2022, <https://www.tipwijkkaanzee.nl/cultural-village/historie-en-bezienswaardigheden/>

³ “Tata Steel Homepage,” Tata Steel Europe, accessed June 27, 2022, <https://www.tatasteeleurope.com/nl/home>

company, originally established as Koninklijke Nederlandse Hoogovens, was founded in 1918 and has strongly impacted the region ever since, which has been extensively depicted in both Dutch and foreign media. The steel factory is notorious for generating an affluent area as well as for polluting its environment and being harmful to the health of people living in its vicinity. Among other things, Tata Steel emits toxic substances such as graphite and particulate matter, linked to health issues including brain development issues and cancer. Research from the National Institute for Public Health and Environment (RIVM) has shown that the amounts of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH) and metals in the settled dust outdoors are largest in Wijk aan Zee.⁴

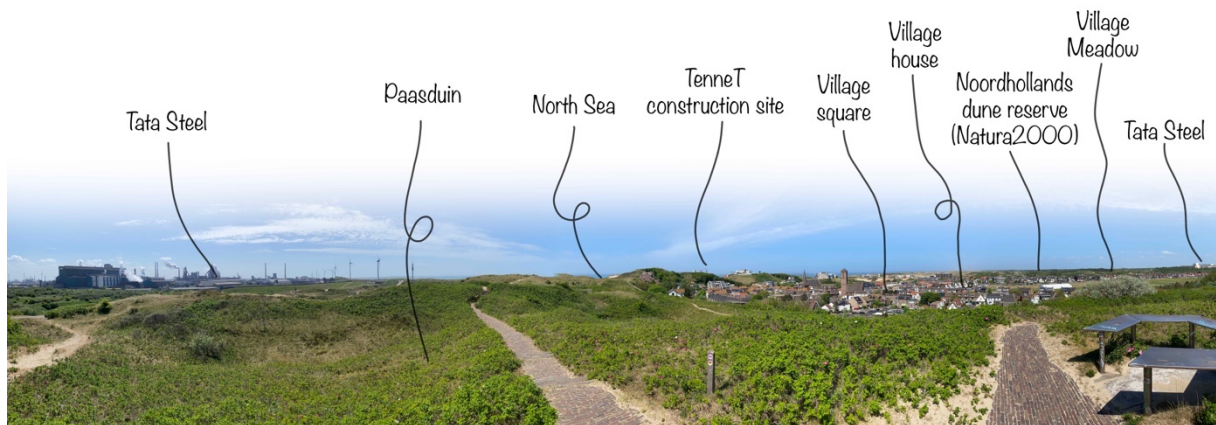


Figure 1 | A panorama picture of Wijk aan Zee taken from the Paasduin (Photo by author, visual by Thomas Wobben)

Within Wijk aan Zee as a field site, I selected situations and people within it to talk to, spend time with, and observe (O'Reilly 2012, 43). To get access to the community in Wijk aan Zee, I established several contacts through family and started contacting several clubs and organizations about my research. Quite unconsciously, a snowball effect arose, in which my initial contacts were fertile ground to generate further contacts (O'Reilly 2012, 44). Rather than imposing my own categories and understandings, I asked my initial interlocutors who should be included in the study (O'Reilly 2012, 43). Like many in Wijk aan Zee, my initial interlocutors were active in community life in the village. Paul and Marit, for instance, who were what O'Reilly would term gatekeepers (O'Reilly 2012, 114), actively took part in

⁴ "Stof in Ijmuiden bevat veel PAK en metalen," RIVM, accessed June 27, 2022, <https://www.rivm.nl/nieuws/stof-in-ijmond-bevat-veel-pak-en-metalen>

community life in the village, included me in their networks, and enabled me access to life in Wijk aan Zee. Paul is a retired man and one of many in Wijk aan Zee active in arts and in a cultural organization as a volunteer. Marit is a middle-aged woman who is active in a different cultural organization. Marit especially was my gatekeeper in enabling me to access many meetings and gatherings within this organization. Due to Paul and Marit's connections in the community life, they provided me with contacts who were also active therein. Therefore, my research population consists of inhabitants of Wijk aan Zee active in community life, be it the village council, cultural organizations, nature-conserving organizations, or churches. Furthermore, the research population is diverse in terms of gender, age, and education. Through being active in several communities, meetings, and gatherings, deciding who I spend time with was not a one-off decision. Rather, it was part of the ongoing ethnographic process.

Methodology and operationalization

For the purpose of this research, I have employed “a family of methods” (O'Reilly 2012, 10), that I elaborate on in this section. Although I used a range of qualitative ethnographic methods, my main method was participant observation, which involved accompanying inhabitants of Wijk aan Zee in their community activities. I participated in several activities that are part of everyday life in Wijk aan Zee, including attending village council meetings, volunteering in a cultural organization, attending a nature-conserving foundation meeting, attending a senior citizen gathering, and attending a choir repetition. While I want to be as specific as possible in illustrating what I have researched, I am deliberately vague about the nature of the activities and the communities I gathered with to ensure my interlocutors' anonymity. I therefore do not depict any names of the organizations, nor will I specifically mention their activities, with the exception of the public meetings of the village council. Since these activities are part of everyday life in Wijk aan Zee, participating in and observing these communities not only meant to actively engage in community life, but also the daily routine in Wijk aan Zee. Thus, increasing my knowledge and understanding of Wijk aan Zee and being able to join my interlocutors in their activities was a crucial part of doing participant observation. Moreover, participant observation served to establish rapport with my interlocutors (O'Reilly 2012, 93). This gradual establishing of trust was “crucial to the ethnographic process” (Madden 2017, 16-17) and led to doors opening to more local gatherings as well as interlocutors whom I conducted interviews with.

With some interlocutors, whom I mostly met through participant observation, I conducted semi-structured interviews. The primary goal of these semi-structured interviews

was to learn about my interlocutors' thoughts, feelings, and values when it comes to life in Wijk aan Zee. While I had in mind an outline of what I wished to explore, I was open to follow the flow of the interview based on my interlocutor's perspective. As William Foote Whyte argues: "the whole point of not fixing an interview structure with pre-determined questions is that it permits freedom to introduce materials and questions previously unanticipated" (Whyte 1981, 35). In the end, I conducted eleven in-depth semi-structured interviews with people living in Wijk aan Zee, of which four were walking interviews. In addition, I conducted two semi-structured interviews with people who used to live in Wijk aan Zee, but now live in Beverwijk and Ijmuiden. I consciously interviewed a mix of men and women; people who have been living in Wijk aan Zee their entire lives, people who moved back after being away for several years, people who used to live in Wijk aan Zee, but also people who moved to the village only several years ago.

Ethics and positionality

As a researcher, I have moral obligations towards the community of inhabitants of Wijk aan Zee as well as towards the anthropological discipline. Therefore, it is important to be aware of ethical considerations as well as my positionality as a researcher. By reflecting on the position from which I observed as a researcher, I have been consciously aware of its implications during fieldwork, and it is relevant that the reader is aware of this as well. Thus, it is important to note that this thesis is based on the point of view of me as a twenty-five-year-old, white, Dutch female student, originally from the south of the Netherlands, who had gotten to know about Wijk aan Zee through news articles about its' exposure to Tata Steel. Acknowledging this position, I emphasize that I have been consciously aware of any preconceived expectations. Furthermore, me not being from Wijk aan Zee or elsewhere in the Tata Steel region sometimes made it difficult to establish people's trust. In this sense, my positionality had some constraints. Some were hesitant towards my incentives for conducting research in Wijk aan Zee, as most "outsiders", according to them, were concerned with attributing blame to Tata Steel. In contrast, my positionality also opened doors, as some thought it was good to see an "outsider" study the context of Wijk aan Zee and its implications scientifically.

Besides my positionality as a researcher, it is important to touch upon some topics that were addressed during my fieldwork that may be perceived invasive. It was important for me to reflect on such ethical dilemmas once they arose in the field. As acknowledged by Bauman, these calls for ethics are "situated dilemmas" that should be resolved as they arise within a certain context (Bauman 1993). Certain topics that were essential to my research, such as

personal health or political opinions may invoke ethical questions. I therefore decided not to specifically ask my interlocutors about their health conditions and political opinions. However, when my interlocutor comfortably initiated the topic, I did pursue it to some extent as to what was relevant to the scope of my research. Given the circumstances in which Wijk aan Zee is situated, a very current political debate concerning the future of Tata Steel, it was inevitable that such topics would arise. It was therefore ever so important to diligently handle my data.

Translation and pseudonyms

The thesis contains several excerpts of conversations I had with interlocutors throughout the months I conducted fieldwork, all of which I translated from Dutch to English. In this translation, I have tried to capture both the meaning intended by my interlocutor as well as the tone I understood. Where possible, I applied the direct translation of Dutch words into English ones. In some cases, however, the meaning of a Dutch word was not reflected in a literal translation nor in an equivalent. In those cases, I used the Dutch word and provided an English explanation of the term in the Dutch context.

All interlocutors have been anonymized using pseudonyms to respect their privacy (O'Reilly 2012), with the rare exception of Bert Kisjes, who is a public figure in Wijk aan Zee. The conversation we had evolved around opinions and points of view that are already public, for example in several books written about him (e.g., De Vries 2015; Giesen 2010). All the pseudonyms used are names common in the Netherlands, but no pseudonym has been chosen based on its similarity to a person's actual name. In addition to pseudonymizing people, I asked myself repeatedly how best to represent the field and whether to pseudonymize Wijk aan Zee. I decided that my research cannot be viewed separately from the specific context of Wijk aan Zee. The interplay between the surrounding powerhouses and the village is so specific, that the reality of this interplay is a great part of life in Wijk aan Zee. Pseudonymizing Wijk aan Zee would not have allowed me to build up the arguments in this thesis. Furthermore, the main concern for ensuring anonymity rests in people from Wijk aan Zee possibly recognizing one another in this thesis since it is such a small village, not people from outside Wijk aan Zee recognizing them. This, I tried to overcome by deliberately remaining considerably vague about the kinds of activities I participated in. As such, I have tried to find a balance in being specific about my research activities and interlocutors whilst at the same time not disclosing too many specifics to ensure anonymity.

The structure

As stated before, this thesis explores the implications of space and time in a context wherein local and global scales unite. Structure wise, this means that this thesis is divided into three chapters.

The first chapter focusses predominantly on the embedding effects of space and draws a brief historical background of Wijk aan Zee intended to outline the context of the field. I explore how powerhouses have physically shaped the village in the past and how inhabitants now give meaning to this spatiality by using the phenomenon island as a socio-spatial metaphor. Unravelling the role of the powerhouses is a first elaboration on the hegemonic movements in which Wijk aan Zee is embedded.

This spatial context of the field sets the foundation to explore time in chapter two. Specifically, I focus on the relationship between powerhouse Tata Steel and Wijk aan Zee and how this relationship is constructed through the embedding effects of nostalgia and familiarity. Both through feelings of nostalgia and deep-rooted trust in Tata Steel, the steel factory is oftentimes perceived through the lens of alliance. Even if people do not perceive it as such, through the shared fascination for the industry the inhabitants create a tight community feeling manifesting itself through protecting “their” village.

In chapter 3, I show how both space and time shaped the small scale visions my interlocutors project upon the future. Due to the large-scale hegemony that my interlocutors deal with in their everyday lives, they increasingly value small scale and act upon this by means of bottom-up initiatives. As such, I show how my interlocutors define their place in the world through locating themselves in terms of space and time. Against the odds of being overruled by the hegemonic power of the surrounding powerhouses, they creatively use that very hegemony to reinforce the use of social capital.

Finally, I conclude by summarizing the arguments build up in this thesis, answering my research question and discussing the repercussions of my research.

The Island Wijk aan Zee: A Symbolic Interpretation

Wijk aan Zee really feels like an island to me. For some people it feels
oppressive, but I feel free here!

The above quote, showing what a middle-aged woman said to me in an informal conversation after a choir rehearsal in early April, is an example of how I often heard people describing Wijk aan Zee using the metaphor of an island. Only connected to the municipality Beverwijk by one single road, the *Zeestraat*, Wijk aan Zee has a remote feeling. Furthermore, surrounded by the North Sea, dunes, and industry, it feels as if the boundaries of the village are literally drawn by its surroundings. Therefore, the metaphor of an island is not only an emic notion used by my interlocutors like in the above quote; using the metaphor of an island is also helpful to explore the spatiality of Wijk aan Zee as well as the repercussions of this spatiality. Ethnologist Owe Ronström (2021) wrote an explorative overview of various approaches to islandness and remoteness and how such remoteness is established spatially and temporally. According to him, “to island a place or phenomenon, water is not necessary. All islands are not surrounded by water; nor are all places surrounded by water islanded. Even if totally surrounded by water, some places resist islanding by being large, central, or important. Conversely, smaller and less important places are more easily islanded also if they have no connection to water” (Ronström 2021, 280). By using Ronström’s notion of islanding, I do not imply that Wijk aan Zee is of less importance than larger places, to the contrary. I suggest however, that Wijk aan Zee, being the small remote-like village that it is, although not completely surrounded by water, is indeed islanded. If an island is a symbol for the conditions in Wijk aan Zee, as expressed by my interlocutors, then it suggests that the space has something to do with what it means to be an inhabitant of Wijk aan Zee, as well as the interpretation of notions of power and how inhabitants negotiate their place in the world. In other words, it is important to understand the space people in Wijk aan Zee inhabit in order to understand the people who inhabit it.

This chapter illustrates how the characteristics of Wijk aan Zee’s surroundings define the island-like feeling in the village. To do so, the chapter devotes attention to my interlocutors’ narratives related to the island as a socio-spatial metaphor in which people make sense of the place they call home. I first draw a brief historical background of Wijk aan Zee and how it came

to be “an island”. Secondly, I delve into the powerhouses surrounding Wijk aan Zee, how they tie the village into the global economy, and how inhabitants of Wijk aan Zee dwell in these surroundings. In the next section, I elaborate on the complex dualities that can be found in Wijk aan Zee because of this context of powerhouses. Finally, I show how my interlocutors give meaning to the spatiality of Wijk aan Zee and how they find secureness in being islanded.

A brief history of Wijk aan Zee

A bit of history offers a concrete illustration of how Wijk aan Zee came to be “an island” and sets the stage for the chapters that follow. I focus here on historical events that played a role in the physical shaping of the village.

During the tenth and eleventh centuries, several dunes formed in and around Wijk aan Zee, because persistent drought caused the coast to calve and sand to blow inland. In the basins that formed these dunes, clay could precipitate from the sea, allowing halophilic plants to thrive and form a peat layer once the plants died. With the retreat of the sea and the influx of fresh water from the dunes, the basins turned into relatively fertile dune fields suitable for human cultivation. Although several such fields were formed, the only remaining example is the village meadow, centrally located in Wijk aan Zee.⁵ The meadow is often referred to as characteristic for Wijk aan Zee, enhancing a feeling of the village “opening up” when approaching it from the one single road.

Centuries down the line, in the twentieth century, a turbulent time arose for Wijk aan Zee. In 1918, in the dune valley south of the village, a steel factory was built. The Dutch state, together with the municipality of Amsterdam, private investors, and several Dutch corporations, founded the Koninklijke Nederlandse Hoogovens, otherwise known as Hoogovens. Hoogovens was established in IJmuiden, Wijk aan Zee’s neighbouring town. IJmuiden was chosen as the location for the company because it was, and is to this day, strategically beneficial for both the import of raw materials and the export of coils of steel. With the demand for steel increasing and Dutch companies wanting to be less dependent on steel imports, capitalist futures were formed in the region, reinforced by the access to the sea. The first iron was produced in 1924 and much followed within years, especially after the Second World War.⁶ The company was regarded as the groundwork for Dutch industry and a source of national pride. The following

⁵ “Historie,” TIP Wijk aan Zee, accessed May 12, 2022, <https://www.tipwijkaanzee.nl/cultural-village/historie-en-bezienswaardigheden/>

⁶ “Tata Steel is hier om te blijven,” Oneindig Noord-Holland, accessed May 12, 2022, <https://onh.nl/verhaal/tata-steel-is-hier-om-te-blijven>

fragment of my interview with Toon, an 80-year-old inhabitant of Wijk aan Zee actively involved in several clubs and future-planning activities in the village, shows how the year 1966 played an important role in what inhabitants of Wijk aan Zee now experience as an island. He explains:

Then the Hoogovens also developed in a special way. Because the company Hoogovens crossed the *Zeestraat*. The first excavations were made in 1966, then the rolling mills came, and the village became, as it were, enclosed by the Hoogovens. That was a huge breakthrough and then the municipality Beverwijk made an agreement with the Hoogovens to keep that road [the *Zeestraat*] with the surrounding green area open as a kind of lock so that the village would always remain in contact with the rest of the world. However, that means that then it actually accentuated what we now experience as the only road to Wijk aan Zee. And then, suddenly, I always find that a wonderful experience: To this day, when I drive into the village, a kind of embrace that takes place there. It's in a kind of bowl, around the meadow. The intimacy of the village.

As a result of these developments, when looking at the map today, you will see that Wijk aan Zee is a small oasis, which Toon here refers to as “a kind of bowl”, in the middle of an impressive industrial complex. Wijk aan Zee almost even ceased to exist, because in the early 1970s there were plans to sacrifice the village to further expand the steel factory (De Vries 2003, 76). This, however, never happened. In the 80s, Hoogovens was privatized in several phases, epitomizing the implementation of neoliberalist ideology (Harvey 2007). In 1999, Hoogovens became Corus, when the British Steel Company bought the steel factory. Several years later, in 2007, the by then fully privatized Corus was acquired by the Indian conglomerate Tata Group. Throughout these years of privatization and beyond, inhabitants of Wijk aan Zee have increasingly contested the industrial pollution coming from the factory. Within neoliberalist ideologies, affective powers can be strong and have repercussions on the relationship between the state, the market, and society (Richard and Rudnyckj 2009), in this case the relationship with Wijk aan Zee that forms the foundation for the second chapter of this thesis.

Ultimately, only few villages have had to fight for their survival like Wijk aan Zee, not merely because of the steel factory. Especially at the end of the twentieth century, several plans threatened the survival of the village, such as building an airport in front of the coastline or

establishing a depot for contaminated sludge on the beach (De Vries 2003, 76). Furthermore, with the coming and growth of the steel factory, more and more industry came towards the village, making Wijk aan Zee an epicentre of contemporary global industrialism.

The above brief history of Wijk aan Zee shows us how “human life is a process that involves the passage of time” (Ingold 1993, 152). This life-process, in turn, “is also the process of formation of the landscapes in which people have lived” (Ingold 1993, 152). In the case of Wijk aan Zee, the landscape is formed with a backdrop of powerhouses causing inhabitants to live in an everchanging environment.

Dwelling with a backdrop of powerhouses

In Wijk aan Zee, industry is never far away: the construction sites on the beach, the endless rows of train wagons, the tall chimneys towering above the dunes, the ships unloading in the nearby harbour, and so on. It is especially impossible to forget the presence of industrial powerhouse Tata Steel. While not everybody in the village is on the same page when it comes to negotiating the presence of the steel factory, there is a multi-layered material universe that everybody must relate to. In the space of decades, Wijk aan Zee has become an epicentre of contemporary global industrialism, with its steel factory, windfarms, electricity production, export port, et cetera. Therefore, Wijk aan Zee’s story is very much a story about how global processes interact with local lives.

To understand Wijk aan Zee’s position within these contemporary global processes, it is thus important to explore the local context (Tsing 2000). While there is a sense of global consciousness in Wijk aan Zee because of the surrounding embodiments of global industrialism, the inhabitants’ global perspectives are firmly rooted in their own worlds of experience (Eriksen 2016, 3). Because these embodiments of global industrialism form the backdrop of life in the town, I use Ingold’s “dwelling perspective” (Ingold 1993, 152). This perspective reveals how people naturalize their surroundings, in this case the presence of powerhouses. Through this perspective, Ingold argues, “the landscape becomes part of us, just as we are part of it” (Ingold 1993, 154). Here, it is of key importance to acknowledge that Wijk aan Zee is (and has been for a long time) in continuous negotiation with outside forces of capitalism and globalization. Like in most areas, modernity has shifted into a higher gear around Wijk aan Zee. The once isolated fishing village is now a village surrounded by what my interlocutors have referred to as powerhouses. These powerhouses include the following as visualized in figure 2: Tata Steel, located on the south and east side of Wijk aan Zee; Natura2000, a European network of protected natural areas, on the north and west side of the

village; PWN, a water company controlling the groundwater, in the Natura2000 area; Rijkswaterstaat, the executive agency of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, and water authority Hoogheemraadschap on the west side along the coast; TenneT, a transmission system operator, under the ground, in the North Sea and south of the *Zeestraat*; KLM and Schiphol in the airspace. As a result of the presence of all these powerhouses, the landscape in Wijk aan Zee is heterogeneous because different agents bring different values into it. Different parts of a landscape are experienced diversely by the agents in it (Ingold 1993, 154). The interpretation of this complex web of agents by inhabitants of Wijk aan Zee enables us to understand what dwelling with a backdrop of powerhouses is like.

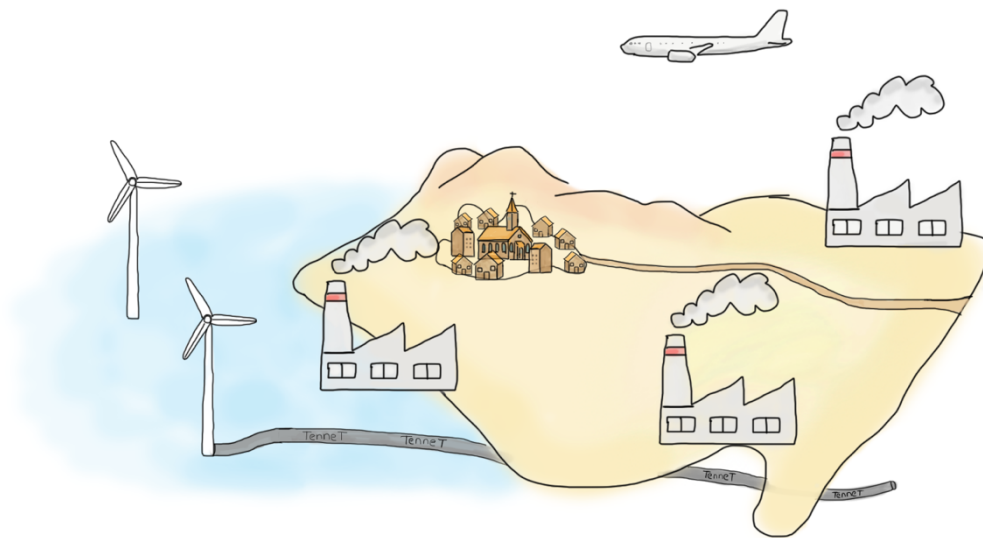


Figure 2 | A visualization of Wijk aan Zee as an island due to the surrounding powerhouses (Visual by Thomas Wobben)

Several interlocutors of mine have emphasized this backdrop of powerhouses. Bert Kisjes, an 80-year-old well-known inhabitant of Wijk aan Zee and former operator of the hotel Sonnevanck in the village, was one of the first people to explicitly mention some of these powerhouses to me:

You can't ignore Wijk aan Zee when it comes to Tata, that has been in the newspapers a lot. That's, let's say, we are primarily a small community. And every community has to do with what I call the great powers. Here, that is Tata Steel, which is obviously a big one. Then Schiphol, they have interests in the air.

Then the Pen, or that's TenneT now I believe, they have interests in the ground. All those pipes and so on have recently been enlarged enormously. And then you have PWN, the water company that actually manages the dunes. And lastly Rijkswaterstaat. Well, that's a number of great powers that you can't ignore. Then the province is added a tiny bit, but it is the smallest in the whole. You can say, we have come to the conclusion that a small village has to cope with great powers, and how do you deal with that?

Similarly, Toon told me:

Wijk aan Zee is of course a wondrous place. We are an enclave sandwiched between all kinds of superpowers. Tata on that side; Rijkswaterstaat on the coast; on the north side Natura2000 at the PWN area; KLM above us, aviation; underneath us TenneT, for the supply of the wind farm energy. And in addition, there's the location [of Wijk aan Zee]. It's an island, connected to Beverwijk with an umbilical cord.

The sense of remoteness as a figure of thought produced through the surrounding powerhouses acquires a certain materiality that helps to organize the village in terms space (Ronström 2021, 292). In addition, the ways in which people narrate about the village is also about how they see their own place in the world as well as in relation to hegemonic power. Following the same acumen, my interlocutors here narrate about islandness as a set of hierarchically structured figures of thought that have the power to island Wijk aan Zee. It is these figures of thought that establish a sense of islandness along with both the opportunities and disadvantages that such islandness entails (Ronström 2021, 292). Here, I refer back to Bert Kisjes telling me: “You can say, we have come to the conclusion that a small village has to cope with great powers, and how do you deal with that?” This narrative lends credibility to the notion that the island-symbol is meant to tell us something about how inhabitants of Wijk aan Zee and the embodiments of global modernity, the powerhouses, stand in relation to each other. Wijk aan Zee is shaped by a complex web of historically, economically, and politically influenced and continually shifting relationships with the surrounding powerhouses. As such, Wijk aan Zee is constructed as a global platform, which Manuel Castells would call “a space of flows” (Susser 2002, 359). The fact that these flows form such a crucial part of how my interlocutors relate to their home, reinforces Doreen Massey's argument that it is relevant to explore a sense of place that is

“extroverted”, including the total of linkages with the wider world and thus integrating the global and the local (Massey 1991). In Wijk aan Zee, this extroverted sense of place becomes evident in that there appears to be both a chronic reliance on the global hegemony of the powerhouses as well as a craving to control and resist them. This, then, is one of several dualities that can be found in Wijk aan Zee.

The dualities of the context

Living amidst all these powerhouses can engender assumptions that Wijk aan Zee is an unpleasant, polluted village. I had this assumption too when I first entered the field, based on the endless amounts of news articles produced about Tata Steel’s pollution. I could not image why people would want to live there, as Wijk aan Zee to me represented pollution and poor health. This, however, turned out to be not as straightforward. When it comes to life on “the island” Wijk aan Zee, dualities and dichotomies can be found everywhere. Godfrey Baldacchino, social scientist and former UNESCO Co-Chair in Island Studies and Sustainability, argues that an island, referring to a factual island, is a “nervous duality” that “confronts us as a juxtaposition and confluence of the understanding of local *and* global realities, of interior *and* exterior references of meaning, of having *roots* at home while also deploying *routes* away from home” (Baldacchino 2005, 248). Wijk aan Zee, indeed, although factually not an island, is made of such dualities, for example the duality between the village and the powerhouses (local and global realities), the duality of my interlocutors employing words such as “real Wijk aan Zeeërs” and “outsiders” (interior and exterior references of meaning), or by Wijk aan Zee being a commuter village (having roots at home while also deploying routes away from home). Due to these dualities, understandings of the local context are “formed and lived” in all their messiness (Gupta and Ferguson 1997, 6). In their work, Gupta and Ferguson (1997) focus on the ongoing historical and political contingency of place production and the interweaving of place, people, and power. Their book explores how the notion of place and of the people associated with that place is constructed through people’s actions. Through narrating stories of people in their efforts to cope with difficult circumstances, Gupta and Ferguson’s (1997) argument rejects a sense of enclosed homogeneity among people and “their” places. The dualities of the islandness in Wijk aan Zee I uncover in this section through the stories of my interlocutors strongly resonate with Gupta and Ferguson’s argument. For instance, when I was interviewing Marit, she told me:

The beauty, the ugliness, that entrance, the beach, that border actually on the other side. And that is a limit, but at the same time also a prospect. You know, nothing is more infinite than the sea you know, and offers new directions for you to go and yet it is also an end point, because you cannot go further. Yes, those are all beautiful things, if you're a little sensitive to them, they do something to you, you know.

Marit's story here uncovers the duality between a feeling of infinity as well as the finite coastline that the island-like spatiality engenders. I became aware of this feeling myself as soon as I realized that Wijk aan Zee does not have a thoroughfare. It literally ends, or indeed infinitely continues, at the sea. During the interview, Marit continued: "That doesn't make you think every night: I'm going to turn on the TV and sit in front of the TV until 11 o'clock and then I go to bed. I live my life, hmm, there's a kind of spirit in it, a kind of lust for life or something." That lust for life, as Marit explains, is rooted in the strong dualities in the village. "It's a place of contrasts", she tells me, "You know, the peace in the dunes, those animals that are grazing so very quietly. The beauty of that landscape of those dunes is really fantastic. And then on the other side that *pounding, squeaking* factory, you know, that *noise*." Similarly, Toon also told me stories about the contradictions in and around the village. "When you look to that side", he said pointing towards the coast, "then you see the sea, right?" "And then look over there, to the north, and then you see that beautiful nature reserve", he said while pointing north. "And then", he said with a sudden deeper voice, "you look the other way and look straight into *hell*." He continues in his normal voice: "People say: this can't exist, can it? Such gigantic contradictions on a piece of land. But it's a given and that's what makes it special. These are elements of which you would normally say: incompatible! But it is there. It is part of social reality. We live with it and it also has a certain special charm to it." Similar to Gupta and Ferguson's (1997) argument, these stories indeed uncover a juxtaposition of seemingly incompatible elements in a spatial setting and the intertwinement of place, people and power. In emphasizing this intertwinement, the particular way in which both Marit and Toon constructed their accounts of their experiences, seems to closely parallel Gupta and Ferguson's (1997) analysis in the sense that Marit and Toon strongly emphasize the heterogeneity of Wijk aan Zee and how their actions relate to the place they inhabit. The dualities of the context in Wijk aan Zee show how the meaning attached to the space is not about the separation between the industry and the village. Rather, it is about connection between the two and the feelings this engenders.

Finding secureness

Within the longstanding debate on literal and metaphorical understandings of islands (e.g., Dodds and Royle 2003; Fletcher 2010; Hay 2006; Ronström 2013), Ronström argues that it is rather about how the island is “constituted by the constant and wayward sliding between the physical places we call islands, and all the figures of thought that we attach to such places” (Ronström 2021, 271). In the case of Wijk aan Zee, my interlocutors have expressed their figures of thought in narratives about remoteness. “Remoteness”, Ronström argues, “is an expression of a hierarchical, unequal, and asymmetric relation between phenomena or places” (Ronström 2021, 273) and thus implies a connection to power relations. In the case of Wijk aan Zee, these power relations relate to the relationship between the village and the surrounding powerhouses as I have shown earlier in this chapter. Remoteness, then, is a form a relative association (Harms, Hussain, and Schneidermann 2014). As such, remoteness in Wijk aan Zee is not merely a geographical or spatial concept, but also a social one. In other words, it is both a place and “a way of being” (Harms, Hussain, and Schneidermann 2014, 362). In his book *Saigon’s edge*, anthropologist Erik Harms (2011) coins the concept of social edginess, referring to the way in which people living on the outskirts of cities oscillate between a sense of power and danger stemming from their position in relation to the bigger city against which their marginal position is defined. Harms (2011) argues that living on the outskirts of cities literally puts people on edge and makes them edgy both in empowering and disempowering ways. In Wijk aan Zee, this social edginess predominantly incorporates the village’s position in relation to the surrounding powerhouses. Anthropologist Edwin Ardener notes that it is “obviously necessary that ‘remoteness’ has a position in a topographical space, but it is defined within a *topological* space whose features are expressed in a cultural vocabulary” (Ardener 2012, 523). Ultimately, the topological space becomes a social construct, expressed in Wijk aan Zee through the meaning attached to the remote feeling of the village, namely the cultural vocabulary of islandness. It is the hierarchically structured figures of thought that have the power to island Wijk aan Zee (Ronström 2021, 292). This islandness then indicates a sense of belonging toward Wijk aan Zee as well as in the collective standing up against powerhouses. All my interlocutors have a same material reality to relate to which constitutes a crucial part of how they establish their social relations.

While this hierarchical structure may imply a sense of disempowerment for Wijk aan Zee, it is important to note here yet again that remoteness comes both with disempowerment *and* empowerment (Harms 2011). An indication of well-established remoteness, according to Ardener (2012), is a special engagement with connectedness. Remote areas are captivated by,

for example, the one road or one ferry that reaches it (Ardener 2012, 523). In this sense, the world is always calling (Ardener 2012, 524). Among inhabitants of Wijk aan Zee, such an engagement in connectivity is easily notable. The one road, the *Zeestraat*, was constantly emphasized and discussed during my fieldwork and often associated with secureness. When I was volunteering with a cultural organization, the island-like feeling in Wijk aan Zee came up. After Olivier, an entrepreneur in his fifties and active in cultural organizations in Wijk aan Zee, referred to Wijk aan Zee as an island, the following conversation arose:

Marit: It's nice what you say about an island. I really love islands so much. And I didn't really see Wijk aan Zee that way at all. But whether you are surrounded by water or by industry and powers.

Olivier: Yes, I really think it's an island.

Marit: Well, now I think yes, that is of course actually the case.

Olivier: Yes. A secure feeling.

Susan: Secure, yes. Of course I'm not from here at all, I've lived here for 5 years. But when I came to live here, that road, the *Zeestraat* towards the village, I immediately felt kind of really safe when I entered the village, very crazy. It actually brought me a lot, seriously.

Marit: And then it kind of opens up. It's not like you can sneak in from behind.

Olivier: A kind of amusement park or something, in a cart, a kind of Efteling [amusement park in the Netherlands] world.

Susan: You actually expect villagers to applaud like hey there you are again.

Olivier: It still kind of gives me a holiday feeling.

Susan: In the beginning I compared Wijk aan Zee to climbing up a hayloft. That is also such a secure place. Just such a nice feeling when you are there.

My interlocutors here attach meaning to remoteness in the sense of secureness. They present secureness as a consequence of different factors that they encounter in their interactions with Wijk aan Zee. The imaginative meanings attributed to the *Zeestraat* as well as the village appear to uncover a sense of belonging associated with secureness. In these expressions of engagement with connectedness (the *Zeestraat*), my interlocutors narrate about the aforementioned well-established remoteness and find value in it (Ardener 2012). Due to the village “opening up” as a kind of hayloft, amusement park, or island, and not being able to “sneak in”, my interlocutors express a sense of physical as well as emotional closeness to Wijk aan Zee as well as to the people who inhabit it. In other words, the secureness expressed in the above excerpt derives from perceptions of nearness to and remoteness from places and people. Furthermore, for some interlocutors, the meaning they attached to remoteness appears to tell something about how the powerhouses surrounding the village are perceived. Furthermore, for some of my interlocutors, a sense of secureness also emerges from the awareness of living in an affluent area. In this sense, secureness is not merely a physical awareness of Wijk aan Zee’s surroundings, it is also an actual living condition. Therefore, I argue that remoteness in Wijk aan Zee is bound up with perceptions of secureness as well as belonging, reflected in metaphors my interlocutors use to position themselves in the social and spatial landscape of Wijk aan Zee. In an interview, Marit told me about a song about Wijk aan Zee that represents similar notions:

Marit: It's also a kind of weird corner. You know, you also occasionally have people who are a bit lost or something or are just literally searching. The NUH [local band in Wijk aan Zee] had a song about washed up souls. Wijk aan Zee is a place for washed up souls. Actually, we all are, you know.

Silke: In what way?

Marit: Like, you kind of wash up here. It also ends here. It's not like there's only one way in, but there's the sea, you're the edge of the land, of the world really, so everyone washes up here and you dry up and wake up on the beach like Gulliver in Gulliver's Travels [a 1726 satire by the Irish writer Jonathan Swift in which the protagonist travels to multiple remote areas, later also made into children's books and a film]. You think oh where have I ended up, you know, and then there are more washed up souls. And then you find each other in that or something,

well, I don't know. It is just a beautiful imagery, there is no whole philosophy behind it.

Silke: It just comes about that way?

Marit: Yes, just like it arises in other places. But I do think that, the weird surroundings, the weird context contributes to that.

Marit here is referring to a song called *aangespoelde ziel* (which literally translates to washed up soul) from a local band from Wijk aan Zee called *NUH*. My translation of the lyrics is as follows:

*Washed up soul
Just arrived here
All alone*

*With my suitcase full of luggage
I'm on the beach
My tears left behind
Now I'm standing on the edge*

*Staring at the horizon
Don't look back
Staring at the horizon
She's now burning in my back*

*Washed up soul
As the crow flies alone
Here I am pondering
Where the hell it is going*

*Get a warm blanket
Just wrap it around you
Forget what you've lost
Here you are not alone*

*Washed up soul
Doesn't matter who or what you are
Washed up soul
You are a new talent*

Washed up soul
Washed up soul
*Washed up in Wijk aan Zee*⁷

Several elements in the lyrics of this song stand out. To begin with, the fact that Wijk aan Zee is referred to as the edge. This very much relates to both the literal spatial edginess enforced by the sea as well as the social edginess I elaborated on earlier in this chapter (Harms 2011). Furthermore, Wijk aan Zee is represented as a warm blanket, similar to Toon calling it “a kind of embrace”, highlighting the secure feeling my interlocutors have repeatedly mentioned, as well as a sense of belonging. As such, while Wijk aan Zee may seem isolated when approaching it through the *Zeestraat*, it is open from within (Saxer and Andersson 2019, 2). And finally, the referring to washed up souls as being new talent stands out. This uncovers a kind of “creative potential” for people who come to Wijk aan Zee (Tsing 1994). Tsing (1994) argues that margins are relevant as “an analytical placement that makes evident (...) the creative potential of rearticulating, enlivening, and rearranging the very social categories that peripheralize a group’s existence” (Tsing 1994, 279). This creative potential is an essential part of how my interlocutors find value in the spatiality of Wijk aan Zee as they act upon the future and I therefore attribute specific attention to this in chapter 3. Here, the key takeaway is that the song lyrics, perhaps unintended, symbolizes that while remoteness may no longer be defined solely by spatial relations, the spatial sense of remoteness and the epistemological difference that it implies (being on the edge or on the margins) is of great importance.

A sense of belonging is at the core of what it means to live on “the island” called Wijk aan Zee. It is these figures of thought about the powerhouses and the corresponding feelings of remoteness that establishes a sense of both social edginess and islandness along with both the opportunities and disadvantages it entails (Harms 2011; Ronström 2021, 292). As such, “the island” Wijk aan Zee is evidently a multirelational phenomenon embodied in the relation between fact (the set boundaries of the village) and fiction (the interpretation given to those boundaries) (Ronström 2021, 292).

⁷ NUH, “aangespoelde ziel,” track 10 on *Zo klinkt Wijk aan Zee CD 2*
For Dutch lyrics see: “Zo klinkt Wijk aan Zee,” accessed May 17, 2022,
https://www.j-p.nl/wp-content/uploads/ZoklinktWaZ_binnenwerk.pdf



Thus far, through my interlocutors' stories, I have provided an account of place, spatiality, and the relations it engenders as being a key part of understanding the dynamics in Wijk aan Zee. I did this similar to the way in which Ingold (1993; 2000) uses stories to describe people's experience of moving through and around places. Here, if our reading is metaphorical, we may allow the island to stand for the conditions in which inhabitants of Wijk aan Zee live. One could say an island is just a piece of land surrounded by water, but in this context, an island takes on additional meaning. The people of the village defend, as it were, their island against the tides from the powerhouses whilst also finding secureness being surrounded by them. This secureness derives from both living in an affluent area and a sense of belonging towards Wijk aan Zee as well as the people who inhabit it. In the context of contemporary capitalism and globalization, this means that the very materiality of the landscape made them feel secure. Islandness, then, is a metaphor as well as representative for the actual living conditions of a secured life. A sense of belonging is reflected in metaphors my interlocutors use in positioning themselves in a social and spatial landscape. This, in turn, affects their relative positioning in the world. While the external forces of powerhouses pull the village more tightly into the global hegemonic discourses, the internal action of the inhabitants operates differently but related, which I elaborate on in the chapters to come.

Lost and Found Common Ground

I also find it ugly, such a factory. And I think it smells too. And I also suffer from the soot and especially from the noise, but I feel like it belongs here. It's impossible to think about it not being here.

In the previous chapter, I illustrated through the metaphor of an island how Wijk aan Zee is a place of dualities. At the heart of Wijk aan Zee rests the notion of a distinction between powerhouses and the village whilst at the same time accentuating their interconnectedness. I have shown how the notion of space is important in understanding this relationship. In this chapter, I continue analysing this interplay between the village and the embodiments of global industrialism by zooming in on the powerhouse Tata Steel and the notion of time. The above quote, told to me by Sandra, a middle-aged woman involved in among other things the church community of Wijk aan Zee who pretty much lived in the village all her life, illustrates that the presence of the steel factory around Wijk aan Zee is a source of ambivalence and a site of contested futures. There reigns a sentiment of strongly negative connotations to the name Tata Steel in Wijk aan Zee, both for people who contest the presence of the factory and people who contest people who contest it. I witnessed various times that conversations were truncated once the topic of Tata Steel arose. Yet, as I have shown repeatedly, Wijk aan Zee represents intriguing contrasts. There are, as the above quote also shows, genuinely mixed feelings about “that pounding, squeaking factory”, as Marit put it. Wijk aan Zee is a dynamic site of contested futures, often symbolized by Tata Steel, epitomising the immense power of industrialism and deeply marked by ambivalence.

Therefore, this chapter devotes attention specifically to the presence of the steel factory and my interlocutors' relationship with it. I illustrate how the seemingly dominant discourse of contesting industrial pollution is in practice replaced by a multitude of perspectives projected from the village when it comes to the presence of Tata Steel. I do so firstly by elaborating on how the presence and role of Tata Steel is shaped by a sense of familiarity and belonging. Thereafter I focus on the role of nostalgia and how this relates to visions of the future projected from the village. Next, I focus on how there is a lost connection between Tata Steel and Wijk

aan Zee and within the village. Finally, I draw a parallel between perceived divisions and show how inhabitants of Wijk aan Zee (can) find common ground in their division and how the division constitutes, in fact, two sides of the same coin.

The familiarity of *our* village

Wijk aan Zee, especially in the media, has become synonymous with industry and pollution, to many of my interlocutors' dissatisfaction. The negative news stories about the quality of life, pollution, and environmental scandals are by them perceived to unjustly depict Wijk aan Zee in a negative light. When I was exploring the village with Karin, a woman in her sixties born and raised in Wijk aan Zee and involved in among other things nature conserving activities and the church community, she told me: "It hurts me, you know, when people say that Wijk aan Zee is a polluted environment, filthy, and dirty. Then I think, I don't live there at all!" I ask her whether she does not experience it like a dirty environment. Karin answers: "Not at all! I know it's true, but it just hurts. You know, because it is *my* village!" Later in the conversation she makes the following comparison: "Your boyfriend, you can think he's an asshole, but if I say that, you would be really annoyed! That feeling, you know what I mean?" Karin's explanation here uncovers feelings of territoriality and the urge to defend Wijk aan Zee. Karin provides a fruitful example of how a sense of belonging appears to be at stake. She attributes an affective and emotional meaning toward Wijk aan Zee which she in turn also uses to identify herself as being part of the village. Belonging in this sense is both about feeling at home as well as about emotional attachment. Furthermore, because belonging is multiscalar (Blunt and Dowling 2006), "it is possible for a variety of contradictory positionings and meaning to coexist within the same environment" (Davis, Ghorashi, and Smets 2018, 2). Thus, while the dominant discourse is often assumed to be that the backdrop of Tata Steel is continuously contested, it is important to note that living in Wijk aan Zee does not merely entail living amidst the smells and possible hazards of industrial activities. There is both a desire to contest industrial pollution as well as a deep-rooted reliance on Tata Steel. Thus, there is no unambiguous way in which the presence of Tata Steel is being dealt with in the local context of Wijk aan Zee.

The presence of Tata Steel, thus, is not only perceived as a kind of risk or uncertainty. Rather than a discourse in which risk is the predominant frame of reference, I show the centrality of a deep-rooted trust in Tata Steel stemming from the days it was Hoogovens, similar to Phillimore and Bell's (2007) conception of the German chemical town Ludwigshafen's corporate powerhouse BASF. While this does not mean that there is continuous unquestioned trust in Tata Steel, benefits are by many interlocutors perceived just as important as

disadvantages. Thus, while a focus on industrial pollution is the dominant discourse in the Netherlands when it comes to the influence of Tata Steel on Wijk aan Zee and research on side-effects of industrial activities by the RIVM has taken place and numerous reports exist on the poor quality of the air in Wijk aan Zee, most of my interlocutors draw on different experiences and interpret their surroundings differently while being within the same contemporary epistemological paradigm. This is not to say that they are immune to the problems identified by the RIVM, nor do they not acknowledge the possible negative effects of Tata Steel on their health. Most of my interlocutors would say that they believe Tata Steel could be cleaner; but they would also actively emphasize that they are not against industry. For example, Tess, a middle-aged woman involved in nature conserving activities as well as different kinds of volunteering in healthcare and leisure in Wijk aan Zee who has been living in the village for sixteen years, told me: “I’m not at all against that steel factory or anything, but they can do it in a different way. And those ways exist apparently. So that’s what I hope.” Similarly, Sandra told me: “Well on the one hand I think it's, I think yuck, gosh, I think it's pretty bad. Because, yes, that industry is there, but it also has to take into account where they are, the environment. But on the other hand, I also find all those, those groups that act like that and take action, I cannot stand them [laughs]. That they are so fierce, that it [Tata Steel] is so fiercely opposed. And that they actually want to litigate or something like that.” Both Tess’ and Sandra’s argument uncover that the fact that there may be a tension between industrial processes and environmental and health effects is acknowledged, and many indeed are keenly aware of some of the negative side-effects of the industry. Yet they do not believe that moving away from the industry is desirable nor necessary in a foreseeable future. The lack of anxiety and wariness towards the industry initially surprised me. Yet it stands to reason that people who have become accustomed to this industrial landscape are more reluctant to contest it, more shielded from the concerns, or simply more used to the presence of the industry. Therefore, I show how “the embedding effects of time and familiarity” play an important role in Wijk aan Zee (Phillimore and Bell 2007, 313) and thus uncover the everyday experience of living near a pollution-generating factory through the lens of familiarity and nostalgia. Due to this familiarity, negative reactions among these inhabitants tend to be muted, given the awareness that the same industry also offers prosperity, a sense of imagination, a sense of belonging, and a sense of nostalgia. There is a kind of epistemological clash, uncovering on the one hand a scientific state supported body and on the other hand people drawing on different experiences. It appears that my interlocutors show this different narrative because it serves them to protect their sense of belonging that is so deeply rooted in Wijk aan Zee and the village’s relationship with Tata Steel,

as Sandra's quote with which I started this chapter also illustrates. The current relationship between Tata Steel and Wijk aan Zee, fixed in more scientific narratives of pollution, clashes with many of my interlocutors' ideas of the past (how the relationship used to be) and thus also the future.

The examples I employed here show how narratives about the hazards and side-effects of Tata Steel take the shape of contested knowledge, oftentimes based on personal experiences and hearsay. My interlocutors have often downplayed the (effects of) industrial pollution by telling me that "it has always been this way" and providing the example of stories from earlier generations cleaning the black washing lines back in the days. "Especially with the wind towards the village", Sandra told me, "I clean my chairs and tables every day in the summer. And there is almost always dirty black soot. But that's no different than 50 years ago. My mother always cleaned the clotheslines beforehand and there was always a black stripe on the cloth". In a similar vein, in a gathering of senior citizens of Wijk aan Zee I attended early April, Nicole expressed that when she moved to Wijk aan Zee in the 80's, people did not complain. "When I hung my laundry", she said, "I first had to clean the thing. But we didn't make such a rebellion." Jacob replied: "Of course not, because you didn't know what it was!" Nicole calmly continues by saying that she "made do with it. Everything wiped and cleaned. Black, black, black." Angela adds: "Our entire lives already! My mother was always cleaning the lines when she did the laundry". Both in the gathering of senior citizens as well as in Sandra's story, belonging is not tied to a physical space. Rather, it is a way of remembering (Davis, Ghorashi, and Smets 2018, 2) and naturalizing the presence of Tata Steel. In fact, a sense of belonging here structures how people relate to each other, Wijk aan Zee, Tata Steel, and time. Therefore, in what follows, I show how belonging in Wijk aan Zee is part of everyday practices. These everyday practices, in turn, point towards belonging as an on-going process encompassing a sense of hope for the future. Having a sense that you are building a future, as Gilroy (2006) points out, may be just as crucial as rootedness for feeling that you belong. This sense of hope for the future, in turn, is embedded in the past of Wijk aan Zee.

Sustaining nostalgia

The continuous referral back in time shows how the notions of nostalgia and familiarity play an important role in understanding the relationship between Tata Steel and Wijk aan Zee. To define nostalgia, I use Pickering's and Keightley's phrasing as a "longing for what is lacking in a changed present ... a yearning for what is now unattainable, simply because of the irreversibility of time" (Pickering and Keightley 2006, 920). In Wijk aan Zee, people

continuously refer to the time when there used to be an “alliance” between Tata Steel and the village. For instance, when I interviewed Toon, he told me:

Look, of course we've benefited immensely from what happened around here. The fact that Tata is here and the whole development of the blast furnaces. We have been able to go through all kinds of developments that otherwise would never have happened here. And we emphasized that in 1999 with the sculpture park *Zee van Staal*, which was intended to represent and still represents a kind of alliance between the village and the factory. And that element, that feeling, of alliance, has been dismantled.

Likewise, Olivier told me in an interview: “The *Zee van Staal* is a really beautiful symbolism. It's a reconciliation between the steel factory and the village. I think that's a wonderful thing. With artists with steel from the steel factory. European artists who have created these beautiful works of art as a kind of buffer zone between the steel factory and the village.” Essentially, especially Toon here illustrates how the relationship between industrial powerhouse Tata Steel and Wijk aan Zee has evolved from an alliance to enmity. It used to be a case of social contract between them consisting of moral elements. In his book *Yearning for Yesterday*, Fred Davis argues that nostalgic feelings stem from anxieties of losing one's identity in the face of current fears, discontents, and uncertainties, when one's identity has been “badly bruised by the turmoil of the times” (Davis 1979, 107). Davis' argument here implies that nostalgia says more about contemporary social configurations than it does about the past itself (Davis 1979. 31). Indeed, in Wijk aan Zee, the longing my interlocutors express for a regained alliance between Tata Steel and the village is grounded in the very image that this alliance is now lost due to the severe measures taken to enforce Tata Steel to become more sustainable as well as the process of privatization of the factory. In the same interview as above, Toon told me a story about a steel plan with blast furnaces far into the North Sea. Allegedly, there was an action running against the plan and it was thence cancelled out of solidarity. However, he also described a shift:

Those threats that came to the village, of which I mentioned some, have finally been converted into positive energy. In the 80s/90s, the beginning of the new century, there was an enormous, yes, striving to turn the misery into something beautiful. Battle songs, manifestations, the well-known photo made of all the villagers on the meadow. That was a symbol like: we're still here, aren't we? (...)

I experienced that as a very interesting, beautiful period myself. So I think it's really sad that the current climate we're in no longer has that. That is also my view on how the current situation around Tata should be seen. (...) In my experience we slid into all kinds of methods and such that are actually no longer suitable with what we had in the 80s/90s. (...) We've drifted into lawsuits and proceedings. God mend what absolutely closed the door for me was to hire a criminal defence attorney to indict the board of the Hoogovens⁸. Ridiculous, *ridiculous!* And I'm, well, it hurts me a lot too. I suffer from it. I think it's an embarrassment for the village. And the village council is very proud of that, but I think it's, no, terrible.

Because I repeatedly heard Toon and other interlocutors using the term *saamhorigheid*, I thereafter asked Toon: “What is it that hurts you? That lack of *saamhorigheid*?” He replied: “Yes, it’s a *Splijtzwam*.” The phrasings Toon employs here equate the passage of time with a strongly negative meaning. He describes a shift from *saamhorigheid* to a *splijtzwam*. The latter refers to something that causes division, disagreement, and a profound difference of opinion. It is in this sense that Toon expressed a very affective notion of pain, connected to the loss of *saamhorigheid*, a Dutch term referring to a feeling of belonging together embedded in feelings of unity, consensus, solidarity, and connectedness. The sociality formed in the past has in his eyes been replaced with an alleged dichotomy in the village. This is a prime example of how the act of comparing is inextricably linked to nostalgia, as it is always a reaction to the current situation (Davis 1977, 417). In Wijk aan Zee, my interlocutors have predominantly used the term *saamhorigheid* to refer to unity and consensus when it comes to the village’s relationship with Tata Steel. While *saamhorigheid* is sometimes perceived to be lost, as Toon’s story shows, it is still felt today, especially in local village activities and as such it constitutes social relations and a sense of belonging. What stands out in the conversation I had with Toon is that he uses the pronoun “we” when talking about Wijk aan Zee. “*We* emphasized that”, “*we*’re still here, aren't *we*?”, et cetera. I have noticed the same thing repeatedly during my fieldwork in Wijk aan Zee during interviews as well as while conducting participant observation. In this sense, my interlocutors refer not only to a collective past but also to collective ideas about the future. In some way, this indicates the sense of *saamhorigheid* that persists in Wijk aan Zee despite the alleged dichotomy in the village. When I asked Toon about his perspective on the future of

⁸ While the steel factory is now named Tata Steel, the factory is locally often still referred to as “de Hoogovens”.

Wijk aan Zee, he adamantly told me: “They won’t just break this [Wijk aan Zee], no, I’m optimistic. We have to get over that Tata impasse. And if there are a few breakthroughs we have to stop whining, because there is always something to complain about, of course. We have to go back to the alliance between the company and the village.” Toon referring to the past to express his concerns about the present and his ideas about the future shows how nostalgia reveals relationships that exist between the past, the present and the future (Angé and Berliner 2015, 11). As Svetlana Boym lucidly puts it, “nostalgia is not always about the past; it can be retrospective but also prospective” (Boym 2008, xvi). Future reality is directly impacted by fantasies of the past shaped by needs of the present (Boym 2008, xvi). Thus, if the disappointment articulated by Toon is an expression of nostalgia, nostalgia then may be said to represent a critique of the present as well as a type of everyday disenchantment (Bryant 2015, 155). On the basis of the disenchantment is often a concern about the hegemonic knowledge regime of industrial pollution working against a balanced view of the relationship between Tata Steel and Wijk aan Zee. There is a fear of the alliance slipping further and further away. It is both the loss of social trust and the current precarious situation that strengthen the longing for the past. Following Boym’s line of reasoning, nostalgia here too seems to appear as “a defense mechanism in a time of accelerated rhythms of life and historical upheavals” (Boym 2008, xiv). Thus, nostalgia here resides on the ambivalences of both longing and belonging.

What is at stake here, is a remembered home that is likely not compatible with the contemporary neoliberal logic in which privatization, lawsuits, and pollution appear indivisible. In this sense, nostalgia is fundamentally paradoxical. According to Palmberger, nostalgia is a private sensation as well as “an experience communicated and shared, as well as negotiated and contested” (Palmberger 2008, 357). In the same line of reasoning, Boym argues that “longing can make us more empathetic toward fellow humans, yet the moment we try to repair longing with belonging, the apprehension of loss with a rediscovery of identity, we often part ways and put an end to mutual understanding” (Boym 2008, xv-xvi). Thus, in nostalgia, *algia* (longing) is what is shared, yet *nostos* (return home) is what divides (Boym 2008). The promise of recreating the perfect home is at the heart of the ideological vision of the relationship between Tata Steel and Wijk aan Zee, causing my interlocutors to diminish critical thinking in favour of emotional bonding, and thus maintaining a sense of belonging. Accordingly, time in Wijk aan Zee serves as a memory of collective belonging. In fact, the powerhouses, particularly Tata Steel, affirm the sense of belonging of my interlocutors by acting as material tokens of the very ambivalence of the landscape and its history, as I illustrated through using the island as a metaphor. Yet the same powerhouses are also at the heart of division.

Losing Connection

A sense of belonging to a particular place provokes the idea of loyalty to a place (Lovell 1998, 1). In the previous section, I have shown how my interlocutors have expressed acts of individual and collective remembering of such loyalty, or in my interlocutors' words: *saamhorigheid*. Yet, the implicit social contract between Hoogovens and Wijk aan Zee that used to be there in the past, premised on the idea of prosperity and national pride, has increasingly gotten lost. Social contract rests on the idea that moral rules based upon agreement among the agents who are affected by these rules are justified (Moehler 2018a, 11). The key idea of this so-called contractarianism is, philosopher Moehler argues, that "if agents agree, in the strict sense defined, with the rules that govern their interactions, then the agents have no reason to question the authority of these rules, because the agents themselves would have authorized the rules" (Moehler 2018a, 11). If agents, in this case Tata Steel and inhabitants of Wijk aan Zee, agree either implicitly or explicitly with moral rules, established in the past, be it unwritten ones, then the agents would accept the moral demands of these rules.

While this social contract goes both ways, many of my interlocutors have highlighted fellow inhabitants of Wijk aan Zee breaking this social contract by suing Tata Steel and lawsuits finding their way into the occasion. This relates to Moehler's argument that in the contemporary globalized world, societies also increasingly have to deal with values and value-neglecting tendencies within their own territories, not only from outside their geographical areas (Moehler 2018b, 3286). On the other hand, interlocutors have attributed attention to Hoogovens privatizing and becoming Tata Steel, which also meant that the connection with and caring for Wijk aan Zee was lost. In this sense, it could also be argued that Tata Steel is breaking the social contract. When I asked Karin whether Tata Steel is nostalgic to her, she replied:

"The Hoogovens are, but I'm not worried about Tata. That's India, that's not ours at all. The Hoogovens are nostalgic." "Did it get worse when it was taken over [by Tata Steel]?", I asked. "Not right when it was taken over", she responded, "but you just see it happening. It used to be *our* factory. Tata is completely from the other side of the world. Those people have absolutely no intrinsic interest in this factory, other than that it should yield as much as possible. So they have absolutely no interest in the environment as such. When they were still the Koninklijke Hoogovens, the village was much more involved. And vice versa, I think."

Karin's perception was also reflected in the village council meeting I attend early March. Here it is important to note that the village council is one of the core contributors to the opposition against Tata Steel. They meet regularly to discuss and propose ideas on how to mitigate the negative impact of the industry in the village. The following excerpt from my fieldnotes shows how during the meeting, a meeting between Tata Steel and the village council that took place two days earlier was discussed:

According to Ankie, member of the town council, Tata Steel revealed in the meeting that it does not want a hard deadline for the closure of the coke factory in 2030. Richard responds by saying that the Roadmap Plus [Tata Steel's roadmap towards a more sustainable process] was only created by Tata Steel to "please" [referring to Tata Steel not genuinely desiring it but only because they have to] the deadlines of Brussels [referring to the European Union]. He continues: "Tata only does what they have to do for Brussels [the European Union]. Nothing, *absolutely* nothing for the population or environment". He provides an example of a factory in Belgium where the production process is already cleaner, but "Tata can only do it in 2050." The town council wants a hard deadline for the withdrawal of Tata Steel's permit. Richard repeats that Tata Steel "only takes action if someone puts a knife to their throat". He continues: "They really don't do anything of their own accord." They also "do not take an extra step". According to Bart, this has to do with the fact that they hang from the umbilical cord of India [referring to the conglomerate Tata]. India [Tata] decides what happens. Ankie reveals that during the meeting, someone from Tata Steel made a comment that they perceived to be unacceptable. Once the town council indicated to stick up for the health of inhabitants, they received the following response: "What do we mean by health?" According to Richard this uncovers a "pure sick corporate mentality" and "conscience at Tata does not exist. There is no conscience, zero." The conclusion of the meeting, according to the village council, was once again that Tata Steel only takes action to improve their production process for the sake of the health of their environment when the Indian conglomerate Tata or the European Union obligates them to do so.

The above fragment shows the interpretation of measures Tata Steel has or has not taken to take care of the health and well-being of residents and their surroundings. My interlocutors here,

like Karin, strongly suggest a loss of social contract due to neoliberal ideologies and privatization. The fact that Tata Steel has no sense of rootedness in Wijk aan Zee is reflected in their phrasings. It shows how Tata Steel is very much part of a large-scale capitalist world, a world that is itself “fundamentally volatile and contradiction-ridden” (Eriksen 2016, 7). In a way, the factory has become what Tsing phrases as “a symbol of both the excitement and the terrors of supply-chain capitalism” (Tsing 2015, 118). Thus, the push for universalization is constantly met with a resistance of local values, as strategies for survival and resistance are being developed. Accordingly, most inhabitants of Wijk aan Zee take a decidedly local perspective when talking about these issues, speaking from their own experiences. The smell of Tata Steel tangles memory and history for many. It ties together a variety of ways of affective experiences. In other words, it shows history-in-the-making as it emerges from the encounter between different scales (Tsing 2015, 52). According to Bryant, nostalgia is often viewed as the symbolic ailment of modernity (Pickering and Keightley 2006; Turner 1987) because (1) modernity denotes a temporality that is linear and unreversible, and (2) because modernity is the temporal dwelling for disenchantment (Bryant 2015, 155-156). As such, nostalgia is not solely an expression of local longing, but a result of a new understanding of time and space that made the division into “local” and “universal” possible (Boym 2008, xvi). Within this division between local and universal, a sense of locality has gotten lost. Wijk aan Zee uncovers how “towns once again are sacrificed to the whim of capital” (Rich 2016, 302). As a reaction to this modern acceleration, one may imply that there is what Angé and Berliner term an “overdose of nostalgia” (Angé and Berliner 2015, 2) in the continuous longing for a relationship between the steel factory and the village that no longer exists. In this sense, nostalgia could be perceived as a discourse as well as a social practice. The defamiliarization my interlocutors experienced in the present motivated them to share these stories and to narrate stories of the past and how these connected to their visions of the future. Exemplary are, in this sense, the words from Olivier. He told me that he believes that “the steel factory has lost itself. Because they also need to start thinking on a smaller scale and become more involved in the village. If you're anonymous to each other, you don't take each other into account. But if you know each other then you refuse to be a nuisance to your neighbours. We need to be good neighbours again. And if that is possible anywhere, it is in Wijk aan Zee.”

Thus, while the social contract between Wijk aan Zee and Tata Steel justified as being mutually advantageous for both is no longer fulfilled, my interlocutors hold on to the social contract, uncovering a continuation of the contract and *saamhorigheid* into the present day. As

such, the islandness of Wijk aan Zee as well as the dualities it engenders, as depicted in chapter 1, are made sense of through social norms which are in turn rooted in nostalgic narratives.

Finding common ground

I think that everyone in Wijk aan Zee, and maybe there is also some kind of connection there, in one way or another is fascinated by it [the industry]. Whether you see it as evil, that must go. Tata has to go! Or that you see it as the holy Tata! The big employer and such. In both, there is actually the same great fascination. So maybe there's that chance of connection again, you know.

Although Wijk aan Zee in diverse ways represents division, the village can also be represented as continuous and interrelated. Significantly, my interlocutors seem to take change in the form of infrastructural developments and environmental and social transformations for granted. This is not to say that they do not notice the changes, nor do they always agree with them. These transformations, as I have shown in the previous section, reinforce a longing for belonging in diverse ways. As such, there are many parallels between the groups of people that consider themselves divided, as the above quote said by Marit illustrates. While some interlocutors refer to a kind of dichotomy indicating a form of polarization in Wijk aan Zee, there is actually an overarching ethos of being accepting of change and as such there is no sign of an ontological incommensurability. People find common ground in their fascination for industry, whether this fascination has a positive or a negative connotation; whether it is grounded in hatred, love, or nostalgia towards Tata Steel. Marit, for example, explained to me her fascination for the industry grounded in surrealism: “That weird factory as a backdrop. Yeah, it's like, I don't know if you know War of the Worlds, that old one, well that's a book or a film, a bit older. But that, that stamping, those sounds, that sight, you know, especially at night. Yes, of course that's insane. It's almost surreal.” Differently, Marieke, a cheerful woman in her sixties who spent her youth in Wijk aan Zee but currently lives in IJmuiden, is fascinated by the industry in the sense of determinedly contesting it. When I spoke to her, it immediately became clear to me that Marieke thinks it is extremely important that the story of her family and friends who “died of the Hoogovens”, as she put it, is told. When we talked about people wanting to live in Wijk aan Zee despite the detrimental health effects, she told me this is due to the dynamics and atmosphere in the village and the importance attributed to the social aspect. When I said to Marieke: “Apparently, for a lot of people that outweighs...”, she laughingly finished my

sentence with “yeah, dying.” While the stories highlighted here depict substantially different perspectives on Tata Steel, both interlocutors expressed optimism about the future and their vision on it in the conversations we had. As such, a sense of community is maintained through shared optimism, even if opinions vary so substantially when it comes to the presence of Tata Steel.

This future-oriented optimism also aligns with my elaboration on nostalgia. Although nostalgia is oftentimes perceived as making people feel stuck (e.g., Rich 2016; Cowie and Heathcott 2003), Wijk aan Zee offers a contrasting account. According to Cowie and Heathcott, depending on nostalgia reinforces an “aura of permanence” (Cowie and Heathcott 2003, 4). Palmberger also notes that nostalgia can result in “a constant state of waiting”, yet she also emphasizes that it can be “source for future aspirations” (Palmberger 2008, 358). These future aspirations are what brings people together in Wijk aan Zee. There is a creative power in their feelings of nostalgia, in the same vein as the aforementioned “creative potential” of Tsing (1994). It does not only serve them to protect their sense of belonging rooted in Wijk aan Zee and the village’s relationship with Tata Steel; it also serves them to simultaneously act upon their envisioned future, as I show in the final chapter. The question, however, is whether there is a way of going back to that longed for time in the current neoliberal era that is by many perceived to be socially unsustainable, for example by Toon who referred to it as a *splijtzwam*. Possibly, the envisioned future of my interlocutors is “seeking to repeat the unrepeatable” (Boym 2008, xvii).



In this chapter, I have shown how the presence of Tata Steel is a source of profound ambivalence in Wijk aan Zee, yet also a productive opening for finding common ground. While people negotiate the presence of the factory in different ways, some elements remain similar across these various perspectives; people find common ground in their connection to or fascination for the industry that is oftentimes grounded in a lengthy temporal horizon connecting the past, present, and future. The tension uncovered between disappointment about the present and a desire for the future rooted in the past makes Tata Steel a productive location to examine how inhabitants of Wijk aan Zee perceive their place in the world. A sense of belonging constructs how my interlocutors relate to each other, Wijk aan Zee, Tata Steel, and

time. This means that on the one hand, this sense of belonging or *saamhorigheid* is at stake or even perceived to be lost. On the other hand, powerhouses and particularly Tata Steel intensify this sense of belonging as I illustrated through the island metaphor. Therefore, the notion of belonging shows that “it is possible for a variety of contradictory positionings and meaning to coexist within the same environment” (Davis, Ghorashi, and Smets 2018, 2). What they do have in common, however, is future aspirations rooted in the creative power of nostalgia.

As both this and the previous chapter have shown, Wijk aan Zee is made up of everchanging dynamics. And as the world changes, so must Wijk aan Zee change. Due to the presence of powerhouses, Tata Steel in particular, my interlocutors have become accustomed to thinking flexibly about their future. And as long as the spoken and unspoken loyalty between them and Tata Steel is not affected, the village is creative, flexible and accepting of change as I further elaborate on in the following chapter.

The Pursuit of Reinvention

In the first two chapters of this thesis, I explored the spatial and temporal dynamics in which Wijk aan Zee is embedded, following the impacts of the powerhouses surrounding the village. In this chapter, I explore how both space (particularly the islandness of Wijk aan Zee) and time (particularly nostalgia and the future) play a role in my interlocutors claiming agency against the odds of being overruled by powerhouses. To set the stage for the arguments in this chapter, I build on Doreen Massey's conceptualizations of space and how this relates to the notion of time. Massey (1994), who influentially studied space and especially challenged the assumption that space is something we merely pass through, argues that space must be conceptualized integrally with time. She argues that space is not "some absolute independent dimension" (Massey 1994, 2). Rather, it is made of social relations that are "inherently dynamic" (Massey 1994, 2), which has already become clear in the dynamics the islandness of Wijk aan Zee engenders within the village. As I have shown in earlier chapters, the social ties that contribute to Wijk aan Zee's exceptionality are not all integral to the village itself. It is important to note here again that it encompasses relationships beyond the village; the global is a component of what makes up the local. The spatial then can be regarded as being created out of the variety of social relations present at all spatial scales, ranging from global to local (Massey 1994, 4). If the spatiality of Wijk aan Zee then is seen in the context of being created out of social interactions at various scales as well as at a specific moment in those networks of social ties, the integral link with time becomes clear (Massey 1994, 5).

As Wijk aan Zee has been subjected to projects threatening the future of the village for a long time, crisis came to feel as ordinary and collective bottom-up initiatives began to emerge. As such, my interlocutors' ideas about social capital I elaborate on in this chapter provide a useful analogy for thinking about the limits of being determined by hegemonic power and capitalism. The above delineated dynamic perspective on space is especially crucial in this context because social relations are "inevitably and everywhere imbued with power and meaning and symbolism" (Massey 1994, 3). Yet, while the village is encapsulated in regional, national, and global networks, it is simultaneously dissenting from the domination of modern system-thinking. Wijk aan Zee has built resilience and reinvents itself over and over again. My

interlocutors are continuously claiming their agency through volunteering and bottom-up initiatives and with that hegemonic movements of capitalism and system-thinking are rejected. Thus, this chapter illustrates how Wijk aan Zee's continuous negotiation with outside forces of capitalism and globalization reinforces inhabitants' mediation of alternatives through their everyday lives by reinforcing the power of small scale. To begin with, I draw a brief history of Wijk aan Zee as Cultural Village of Europe. Next, I show how my interlocutors employ counter-hegemonic practices to act upon their visions of the future. Finally, I elaborate on how structure and agency take shape in Wijk aan Zee and how agency is continuously claimed in the frontiers of hegemonic power.

Cultural Village of Europe

As I touched upon in earlier chapters, Wijk aan Zee has a history of standing up against various kinds of powerhouses. As a result, in 1999, now 80-something year old Bert Kisjes proclaimed Wijk aan Zee as Cultural Village of Europe. In his own words, he did so because of the "continuous threat from outside." It was when Wijk aan Zee managed to reject Rijkswaterstaat's plans to build a sludge depot on the beach, that the village decided to celebrate the fact that "a village can be something." Kisjes' story about the emergence of the Cultural Village of Europe initiative uncovers that in the past the village was already a site of contested futures. According to Kisjes, "the twentieth century has been extremely unfriendly to smaller communities. That such a small community can decide for itself, that was not conceivable. And we acknowledged that that position was wrong. So we showed that and we started celebrating it with Cultural Village of Europe." From Wijk aan Zee, an alliance of European villages emerged, Wijk aan Zee being one of them. Cultural Village is an alliance of eleven European villages, initiated by Bert Kisjes, and is centred around the power and value of small scale. According to the Cultural Village philosophy, smaller communities are valuable, there is less anonymity, the people are involved and therefore capable of great things. Cultural Village is not about the economy, infrastructure, or facilities. Rather, the philosophy is about self-awareness, individuality, vitality, and coming up with your own solutions and putting them into practice together. The belief is that through finding connection things can be done and a stand can be made if necessary (De Vries 2003).

Thus, what is important in the Cultural Village philosophy is the establishing of social capital. Pierre Bourdieu (1986) is one of the pioneers in introducing various forms of capital as opposed to traditional forms of economic capital. His conceptualization of social capital is based on the perception that capital is not merely economic and on the idea that social

exchanges need to include “capital and profit in all their forms” (Bourdieu 1986, 241). For Bourdieu (1986), this form of capital is not uniformly available to the collective. It is rather available to those who attempt to obtain it by gaining positions of power and prominence, as well as cultivating goodwill (Bourdieu 1986). Accordingly, social capital exists in the individual and is connected to social connections that individual utilizes for advancement. In the light of this social capital, Kisjes’ story about “standing up for the villages and showing that it is nonsensical to abolish it [villages]” provides a prime example:

We come from the period of what is called modernism. And that is marked by words such as manufacturability and such. And if one of the richest countries in the world, the Netherlands, does not behave as a completely satisfied country that actually has nothing left to be desired, but has [political] parties that want to change everything and so on. And radiates enormous dissatisfaction, then we have not achieved our goal. And if being fixated on that modernity makes no sense anymore, then you have to go in a different direction. And then you shouldn’t go in the direction of things, but then you should go in the direction of people. You have to think about the people again. Well *this*”, he said while pointing at the *Vital Villages* book about Cultural Village of Europe, “was about the people.

Kisjes is not alone in reminiscing on the time that Wijk aan Zee was Cultural Village of Europe. By many of my interlocutors, this time is referred to as an important and valuable time for Wijk aan Zee. While it happened more than two decades ago, the philosophy of thriving on social capital rather than financial capital still resonates with my interlocutors’ ideas about how Wijk aan Zee, and beyond, should operate. Previously, I have shown how nostalgic desires shape the lens through which my interlocutors perceive the presence of Tata Steel and other powerhouses. Nostalgia, in turn, also reinforces both the implicit and explicit philosophy of what Wijk aan Zee as a village should be. In this way, similar to what I have shown in chapter 2, nostalgia is “a force that does something” (Dames 2010, 272). In *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Milan Kundera wonderfully captures this transformational quality of nostalgia when he writes: “In the sunset of dissolution, everything is illuminated by the aura of nostalgia, even the guillotine” (Kundera 1984, 4). Thus, it is both nostalgic longing and progressive thinking that is at the heart of Wijk aan Zee’s philosophy. That is, it has not originated in isolation. Rather, it formed from tensions and dialogues with the powerhouses surrounding Wijk aan Zee.

Counter-hegemonic practices

The above story of how the Cultural Village of Europe initiative was a reaction to large scale and outside influences of powerhouses, shows us, to quote Ingold again, how “the landscape becomes part of us, just as we are part of it” (Ingold 1993, 154). The powerhouses form the backdrop of activities in the village and become part of a productive force of continually reviving the village by drawing on social capital, a principle rooted in the time Wijk aan Zee was Cultural Village of Europe. These social practices in Wijk aan Zee, either consciously or subconsciously informed by the presence of the powerhouses, form a “pattern of dwelling activities” (Ingold 1993, 153). This pattern is to be considered enduringly in process as Wijk aan Zee is in continuous negotiation with outside forces of capitalism and globalization. It is in these terms that Wijk aan Zee is not defined by the boundaries of the village. Rather, the exceptionality of Wijk aan Zee is created through the interaction with what is beyond the village: the powerhouses (Massey 1994). While hegemony, in the sense of the aforementioned capitalism and globalization, is often unnoticed (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991), the dwelling activities of my interlocutors show that they *are* aware of the “order of signs and practices, relations and distinctions, images and epistemologies – drawn from a historically situated cultural field” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991, 23). The interpretation of this complex web of activities and experiences in this thesis enables us to understand how my interlocutors are rejecting being determined by the hegemony of the surrounding powerhouses. Rather, as the following vignette shows, my interlocutors are drawing on social capital in the village and impose small-scale initiatives to counteract the very thing that shaped these practices:

On April 13th I went to *De Moriaan*, the village house of Wijk aan Zee, to attend the annual meeting of the village council. I had been to the monthly village council meetings, but I had different expectations about this particular one. Mostly because the urgency of the *Dorpsplan* [a plan for the future of Wijk aan Zee in regard to well-being, care and sports] was on the agenda to be thoroughly discussed during the meeting. Inhabitants would have the opportunity to actively give their input for next steps. Filled with curiosity about what the evening had in store, I walked in the meeting room, noticing that the setup was different than usual. There was a big projector in the corner of the room, displaying the new village council logo which said: “Who wards, wins”. As people started pouring in, the chairs became occupied by people from all walks of life, some whom I recognized as my interlocutors, and others whom I did not know. There must

have been some 40 people. Fast forward to a telling moment later in the meeting, when spatial planning was being discussed as one of several current affairs, the inhabitants' urge to (re)claim agency was revealed. Jakko explained that in an open call for vital cities and villages, 23 projects were selected for an innovation voucher. Wijk aan Zee was one of them and as such had the luck to work with an urban design studio, Jakko said. Together with local stakeholders and the urban design studio, the village council is working on Wijk aan Zee 2.0, as part of the *Dorpsplan*. As Jakko explained the next steps someone from the audience said: "This cannot die out. We have to keep going now!" Olivier agreed, stood up and said: "Let's take this opportunity to build ourselves. With our willpower we moved mountains in the past. If it's possible anywhere, it's in Wijk aan Zee. We now have the opportunity to adjust it to our own desires and not let others decide for us." A wave of agreement flows through the room. Marit took over by naming several examples of villages where such initiatives have already emerged. She said: "We would like to organize an excursion to such a village where these kinds of initiatives already take place." People in the room started applauding. Yet one inhabitant in the audience seemed somewhat hesitant. She said: "You say *we* are going to build. Who is *we*?" A little buzz resounded. There did not seem to be an answer. Jeanne intervened: "We should focus on what *can* we do ourselves as a village." A number of people answer: "Exactly!" "Where the danger lurks", Jeanne continued, "is the divided. We must try to arrive at a common ambition. We do not own the village, yet we do have ownership over it in the sense that we live here." Olivier agreed and proposed to unite stakeholders in a new entity. Attendees seemed very enthusiastic and various stakeholders present at the meeting said they would like to get involved in this new entity to facilitate building in the village. While they discussed arranging a follow-up meeting, I was left with a sense of wonder about what the future holds.

While there is "no place in the world", including Wijk aan Zee, that "is untouched by that global political economy built from the post-war development apparatus" (Tsing 2015, 3), this vignette illustrates that Wijk aan Zee is using it in its advantage. Both the fragility as well as the resilience of Wijk aan Zee is reflected in narratives of claiming agency within larger systems through initiating bottom-up actions, in this case the initiative of establishing a housing corporation. What the vignette shows is that inhabitants fear that the sparse space available, due

to the surrounding powerhouses, will be bought up by project developers who's only goal is, in my interlocutors' eyes, to make profit. Thus, they take measures into their own hands by raising the idea of starting a bottom-up housing corporation with several local stakeholders in the village. Here, the duality of collective self-making and the influence of outside forces becomes clear. Furthermore, the continuous usage of the pronoun "we" indicates finding common ground in challenges and using them to come up with creative solutions. Through co-creation the goal is to arrive at a broadly supported and future-proof housing development plan together. As inhabitants of Wijk aan Zee have gotten to know capitalism "beyond its heroic reifications" (Tsing 2015, x) due to the presence of powerhouses, they have envisioned a village unfettered from governments and officials. The state is perceived as a negative quantity to be replaced with a social order of one's own. That order, my interlocutors believe, can thrive on small-scale and bottom-up initiatives without the interfering of large-scale modes of thinking. As such, my interlocutors claiming agency could be perceived as being anarchist, a notion that Ringel (2012) conceptualized as "creative presentism". He defines this "creative presentism" as a form of temporal reasoning contradicting neoliberal temporal regimes (Ringel 2012). In Ringel's understanding, creative presentism represents "alternative modes of critical thought" in their lasting temporal and creative work (Miyazaki 2004, 1). With a strong emphasis on practice and local specificity, the practices uncovered here are strongly embedded in their spatial as well as temporal context. It is the kind of anarchism and an ominous vision of the large-scale world that provide the ideological fuel that drives the small scale way of thinking in Wijk aan Zee. Furthermore, as I have elaborated on earlier in this thesis, my interlocutors also find value in the imaginative meanings attributed to their village, for example in terms of being an island, which in turn also is a kind of fuel for the abovementioned philosophy. Exemplary in this sense is what Marit told me when I interviewed her: "Imagination is also important. And that is somewhat related to fascination for the crazy context in which we live. It excites, so it sparks imagination. And that's important too. That makes different things happen and makes sure we don't fall asleep." If we now relate this to the metaphor of Wijk aan Zee as an island that I elaborated on in the first chapter, one may say that it is the "unstable, floating capacity that makes [Wijk aan Zee] so attractive to project dreams and fantasies on" (Schalansky 2010). This dream, or philosophy if you will, becomes even more valuable by being away from the deterioration of ordinary life, by resisting hegemonic movements. In the same vein as Massey's argument (1994, 4), this shows how the spatial organization of life in Wijk aan Zee is integral to the construction of the social. Gillis (2004) argues that dreams about the small and remote have become so powerful in the current era: "Today our most significant places are not those

we dwell *in* physically but those we dwell *on* mentally. They are not physical locations, but cultural constructions” (Gillis 2004, 147). Following the same line of reasoning, I argue that Wijk aan Zee constitutes both a physical and mental place of belonging, reinforcing Gillis’ argument that “remoteness is to space what nostalgia is to time” (Gillis 2001, 55).

Claiming agency in the frontiers of hegemonic power

As I have shown repeatedly, there are many in Wijk aan Zee who feel attached to the village’s history. Not only toward the time that Hoogovens and the village were in a social contract, as I elaborated on in chapter 2, but also toward the time of Cultural Village of Europe, in which the small scale of villages was celebrated and further pursued. As such, two kinds of nostalgic narratives have become clear. While both kinds of narratives draw from different temporalities, there is something that they share. Both nostalgic visions of the past relate to how inhabitants of Wijk aan Zee want the future to be: based on social capital, social contract, and *saamhorigheid*. Both nostalgic visions then also play a role in serving as a memory of collective belonging and in the ways in which my interlocutors act upon their envisioned future. This strongly relates to my earlier arguments about the role of nostalgia. In the light of claiming agency, nostalgia can be seen as being used as “as weapon” (Berdahl 1999, 201). In a similar vein, Atia and Davies (2010) emphasize nostalgia’s “empowering agency” and “critical potential” (Atia and Davies 2010, 181). As such, nostalgia can be approached as a narrative of loss but also as a narrative of power or resistance (Angé and Berliner 2015, 5). While the sensation of Cultural Village of Europe has become a rather distant perception that several of my interlocutors long for and actively pursue to rekindle, the celebration of small scale in Wijk aan Zee is pursued through inhabitants continuously claiming agency and standing up against the influence of surrounding powerhouses. Tellingly, Olivier compares Wijk aan Zee and the surrounding powerhouses to the story of David and Goliath, characters from the biblical book *Book of Samuel*. The phrase “David and Goliath” has taken on a popular meaning denoting an underdog situation wherein unequal opponents face one another. When I interviewed Olivier, he told me about his incentives for bringing together all the clubs and associations of Wijk aan Zee to encourage connection throughout the village, revealing the abovementioned story:

That way, we're just trying to fuel that energy again. And that's not to make ourselves happy, but that's because we believe in small scale and that the village can regain its own strength. And that that is the way to contain the powerhouses and to find a balance. And that balance is just a bit off. And that balance is always

very fragile, yet it is always here in Wijk aan Zee. Every now and then it is gone, like it was gone fifteen years ago, and then it has to be regained. You can't get them away, the powerhouses. You just have to put yourself in your own power. It's a bit of a David and Goliath story. I don't know if that's familiar to you, but that's an old story of a giant and a little person and in the end the little person wins, because of creativity. That is an old story showing that small scale is sometimes much stronger than large scale.

If Wijk aan Zee here, is David (the little person), and the powerhouses are Goliath (the giant), it may be said that there is a willingness in Wijk aan Zee to counteract the immense (capitalist) power of the surrounding powerhouses. These major capitalist actors are often directly involved in the global economy. Wijk aan Zee then is only a small part of a much larger web of connections. In other words, the odds do not seem to be in Wijk aan Zee's favour. Perceived as someone from outside Wijk aan Zee, in my case as a researcher, and based on a superficial first impression when first entering the field, it is thus easy to believe that life in Wijk aan Zee operates according to systemic motions, implying that the behaviour of inhabitants is "shaped, molded, ordered, and defined by external social and cultural forces and formations: by culture, by mental structures, by capitalism" (Ortner 2006, 1-2). However, paying no attention to either human agency or the processes that produce and reproduce social practices is perceived to be increasingly problematic by anthropologists (Ortner 2006, 2). Justly, if I may say so, as agency is continuously being claimed in Wijk aan Zee in the midst of the powerhouses and being "islanded" (Ronström 2021).

The fact that paying no attention to agency is increasingly perceived problematic by anthropologists is reflected in the structure-agency debate. The former refers to "the social world as constituted", while the latter refers to "the interested practices of real people" (Ortner 2006, 16). In Wijk aan Zee, an interaction is evident and shaped through the village's systemic context and its relationship with the inhabitants. Practice theory (Bourdieu 1977) is a useful means to try and overcome the so-called structure/agency opposition. In his founding works of practice theory, Bourdieu (1977) has emphasized a relationship between structure and what he terms habitus, as well as with the practices of an individual agent. With habitus, he refers to "a structuring structure, which organizes practices and the perception of practices" (Bourdieu 1984, 170). This practice theory, according to Ortner, "restored the actor to the social process without losing sight of the larger structures that constrain (but also enable) social action"

(Ortner 2006, 3). When I was interviewing Marit, she very consciously spoke about the very evident structures that people in Wijk aan Zee cope with in their daily lives:

I do think that the context in which we are surrounded by superpowers means that things like capitalism, the loss of a lot of beautiful small scale, the scaling up of everything, the large scale of everything, which really is a thorn in my side, they are visible but also invisible. (...) It's kind of a colossus, the economy, over which you have little influence. And it's in everything. It is so woven into everything that you can hardly see it anymore. The world we live in is simply economically driven. So you are very often completely unaware that you are also part of the system. And the industry that surrounds us here is so in your face, literally, that it might mean that you can suddenly do something about it. (...) I think it's mainly because it's so magnified. And that magnification makes it very intense, but also makes it kind of exciting and fascinating. And yes, I think those are sources for creativity. The upscaling, that large scale, that driving economy all the time, the idea that everything always has to grow has no face. (...) But we see it *every* day. Every day you are simply confronted with that insane ugliness, but at the same time beauty of such a steel factory, you know.

Marit's perception on the structures in Wijk aan Zee relates very much to Tsing's exploration of the coming into being of alternatives to the capitalist mode of life (Tsing 2015). In her book *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*, Tsing (2015) analyses these alternatives through exploring matsutake mushrooms. It is the matsutake's "willingness to emerge in blasted landscapes that allows us to explore the ruin that has become our collective home" (Tsing 2015, 3). This is what Tsing refers to as "third nature", that is, what manages to live despite capitalism (Tsing 2015, viii). While the structures of capitalism tend to take in space like "a giant bulldozer" (Tsing 2015, 61) and all seems to depend on the logics of capitalism, as Marit also explicitly mentions, Wijk aan Zee is showing a different but related narrative. The village, in other words, exists "simultaneously inside and outside of capitalism" (Tsing 2015, 63). This would then be what Tsing refers to as a translation between noncapitalist and capitalist value systems, a "pericapitalist" site (Tsing 2015, 63). Perceiving Wijk aan Zee as such a pericapitalist site, in the sense that the powerhouses are both contested as well as a fundamental basis of inhabitants' small-scale practices, is helpful in exploring its ambivalence and raises the question whether the contested (the powerhouses) is

in fact at the centre of what my interlocutors are seeking. It appears that they use the rhythms of capitalism and globalization in their advantage. It is the precarity of the capitalist structures that lets creativity arise and thus forms a productive source. The value of the context can thus be found in the fact that changing together with the everchanging circumstances is the way to continuous revival (Tsing 2015, 27).

As a way of adapting to the everchanging conditions of life in Wijk aan Zee, its inhabitants gather into what Tsing (2015, 21-22) calls “world-making projects” that represent alternative modes of life. Building on Tsing’s reasoning, I assert that, while most (not all) of my interlocutors who dwell in Wijk aan Zee are not directly or consciously concerned with opposing global structures and the corresponding powerhouses, they do form, in a sense, an opposition against the ideology of the global in centralizing social capital and small scale. Their bottom-up “world-making projects” (Tsing 2015), like establishing their own housing corporation, are a reaction to capitalist ideology’s indifference towards their alleged insignificant modes of life, like the devotedly contested idea that small villages have no future (De Vries 2003, 90). In this vein, Wijk aan Zee provides an interesting counter-hegemonic movement, thriving on bottom-up initiatives. In addition, my interlocutors have shared examples of intentionally avoiding governmental support for their initiatives. Olivier, for example, uncovers his bottom-up belief by providing an example of municipalities providing subsidies:

“What is common nowadays”, he says, “is that you get subsidy from the municipality, and you hire people. And you become a consumer of a party that is offered to you. No! If you build the party together, the part already starts early on. Then the final piece, the party itself, that’s just the tip of the iceberg. But that whole experience, then you see that there is a lot of power in a group of people.” Later he continues: “And I also noticed that there is a lot of knowledge in small scale. You don’t keep a village alive by building 6000 houses. You keep a village alive by working together, by showing initiatives together. That is why we are careful with subsidies. Because if you get a subsidy, you can buy things, but you have to do it together.”

The experience Olivier describes here seems to be dualistic, in that it is caught between the understanding of how the world is constructed and the realities of life in Wijk aan Zee. Or, in other words, between systemic structures and local particularities (Tsing 2000; Tsing 2015).

The anti-hegemonic sentiments narrated by Olivier reject the notion of citizens as consumers, as for example the municipality is equated with company-like behaviour. In contrast, there is an emphasis on social capital and value, which is at the core of how my interlocutors act upon the future and reject the hegemony of their surroundings. This thus uncovers a sense of belonging towards the social landscape of collectively standing up against powerhouses or collectively initiating alternative modes of thinking in terms of small scale. This social landscape, as such, structures the relationship people have with one another, with the space they inhabit together with the corresponding powerhouses, and time. Belonging then is part of everyday practices, for example establishing a bottom-up housing corporation. These everyday practices, in turn, indicate belonging as an on-going process with a willingness to act upon an envisioned future of small scale rather than large scale. As I have shown earlier, building on Gilroy's (2006) argument, this sensation of building a future is just as crucial for a feeling of belonging as rootedness in Wijk aan Zee. Furthermore, this also relates to Gillis' (2004) argument that dreams about the small have become powerful in the current era and that the most significant places are cultural constructions rather than physical locations. Through their narratives, my interlocutors have shown that Wijk aan Zee is not only the physical place in which they belong, but also a mental place of belonging.



In this chapter, I have shown that, as the contemporary situation in Wijk aan Zee came into being through the embedding effects of space and time, it is important to perceive the situation in Wijk aan Zee as always in flux. The ways in which the village evolved spatially throughout time continues to have implications in the small scale visions my interlocutors project upon the future. The instability of the metaphorical island makes for a fertile foundation to find alternative modes of acting upon the future and rejecting hegemonic discourses of capitalism and modern system-thinking that are so inherently part of the space in which they live. As these visions of the future are grounded in resilience, agency, and small scale, Wijk aan Zee offers a telling example of the possibility of living inside systemic societal structures while simultaneously exceeding them, a state of being that Tsing has conceptualized as “pericapitalist” (Tsing 2015). In my interlocutors’ practices within this “pericapitalist” site, there is an inherent temporal reasoning in using the capitalist or systemic forces of the context

to develop resilience. As such, my interlocutors define their place in the world through locating themselves not only in terms of space, but also in terms of time. Against the odds of being overruled by the hegemonic power of the surrounding powerhouses, they creatively use that very hegemony to reinforce the use of social capital. It is thus in the connectedness my interlocutors find in this social capital and define their place in the world.

Conclusion

By applying Tsing's analytical approach of scale-making, and thus zooming in on the interaction between the local and the global (Tsing 2000), this thesis explored the connection between powerhouses as the embodiments of globalization and contemporary system-thinking and the specificity of local practices in Wijk aan Zee, a small Dutch coastal village. Wijk aan Zee, as such, has been depicted as an embodiment of the particularities of global hegemony, whilst simultaneously showing how my interlocutors perform alternative modes of constituting their place in the world. Applying Tsing's (2000) approach has questioned the fixedness of modern system-thinking by showing the complex relationship between powerhouses and Wijk aan Zee when viewed from the perspective of the experiences of my interlocutors and their practices performed in the village. Furthermore, the context of powerhouses uncovered the multifaceted features of the embedding effects of space and time. It is both in spatial and temporal terms that Wijk aan Zee has been attributed meaning to by my interlocutors.

This thesis explored the exceptional context of Wijk aan Zee through the lens of its inhabitants. The purpose was not merely to explore the powerhouse context of the village and how it is individually experienced but also to offer an anthropological lens on the effects of space and time and how these are collectively perceived and made sense of. As such, this thesis aimed to answer the following question:

How do both space and time shape how inhabitants of the Dutch coastal village Wijk aan Zee perceive their place in the world?

By providing an account of the spatiality of Wijk aan Zee and how this evolved throughout time, I began to build up the arguments necessary to answer my research question. I illustrated how spatiality is crucial in understanding the dynamics in Wijk aan Zee. By applying Ingold's "dwelling perspective" (Ingold 1993; 2000), I have shown diverse narratives on how the contexts of Wijk aan Zee, the powerhouses, are equated with symbolic islandness. By using the island and its remote-like feeling as a socio-spatial metaphor, the conditions in which my interlocutors dwell became apparent in highlighting complex dualities as well as them finding a secureness in the imaginative meanings attributed to their village. The meaning attached to

such islandness, in turn, reinforces their sense of belonging and relative positioning in the world.

The next layer of arguments evolved around zooming in on the relationship between Tata Steel, the most significant powerhouse in causing the island-like feeling, and Wijk aan Zee as a source of ambivalence in the village. The arguments showed that while the ambivalence is often the focal point, the steel factory is also a useful opening for finding common ground. This common ground has become evident in my research both through a shared, yet diverse, fascination for the industry as well as in optimistic future aspirations and the creative power of nostalgic sentiments. These nostalgic sentiments serve my interlocutors both in protecting their sense of belonging rooted in Wijk aan Zee as well as in acting upon their envisioned future, which in turn is based on their nostalgic feelings of the past. In this sense, I read Wijk aan Zee's present through the lens both of its past that is so devotedly remembered as well as my interlocutors' collective visions of the future that emerge from this kind of remembrance.

So far, the argument build has evolved around Wijk aan Zee's ability to move along with the everchanging dynamics of the contemporary capitalist world. Both being accepting of change as well as claiming the agency to act upon the changes are crucial factors in my interlocutors' resilience towards powerhouses. These factors, then, were the foundation of the story I told in the final chapter of this thesis. I have showed how in being in the frontiers of hegemonic movements, a small-scale system of self-governance appears to have arisen among my interlocutors. While Wijk aan Zee can be perceived as being spatially and socially edgy (Harms 2011), my interlocutors have shown that they employ this edginess mostly in its empowering ways. In this manner, Wijk aan Zee offers a prime example of the possibility of living inside systemic societal structures while simultaneously transcending them. Therein exists also a deep-rooted temporal reasoning in using the capitalist or systemic forces of the context that have evolved in an infinite temporal horizon of connecting the past, present, and the future, to develop their resilience. In other words, the fluctuation of living on the metaphorical island Wijk aan Zee is employed as an implicit and sometimes even unconscious tool that provides the foundation for both shaping envisioned futures as well as finding alternative ways to act upon that future. Imagining Wijk aan Zee and my interlocutors' practices outside of hegemonic systems is therefore impossible; their very practices arose within this system. Ultimately, the landscape in which inhabitants of Wijk aan Zee dwell is everchanging and acted upon through bottom-up initiatives. As such, in using their islandness as a productive site and by those means naturalizing flexible thinking toward the future, my interlocutors perceive their place in the world through locating themselves not only in terms of space, but

also in terms of time. This thesis thus emphasized the ambivalent characteristics of the village and how my interlocutors contest the presence of powerhouses on the one hand, whilst at the same time acknowledging that the same powerhouses constitute the fundamental basis of their place in the world.



Reflecting on the contribution of my research as stated in the introduction, my fieldwork in Wijk aan Zee has contributed to understanding how the interaction with embodiments of the contemporary globalized world shape how inhabitants of Wijk aan Zee perceive their place in the world both in spatial and temporal terms. Societally speaking, this is important because in a world that is increasingly globalized, the danger lurks to lose sight of particularities. More specifically, in the light of extensive popular debates on capital-driven actions of powerhouses, for example Tata Steel's pollution, my research shows that despite living in potential or in this case scientifically substantiated hazardous circumstances, victimizing inhabitants of Wijk aan Zee underestimates and even neglects their resilience, agency and creative potential. Furthermore, I have shown that a multitude of perspectives exist simultaneously in Wijk aan Zee and cannot be reduced to the singular argument that is oftentimes told through media platforms.

Within the anthropological discipline, this thesis has contributed to debates on the embedding effects of space and time and has been the first to do so in a Dutch industrial context. Because anthropology is concerned with specifics rather than generalizations, it is important to attribute anthropological attention to the specific implications of the exceptional context of Wijk aan Zee. As such, the anthropological contribution lies in giving meaning to the context of the village by exploring it ethnographically. That is, narrating the stories of inhabitants of Wijk aan Zee based on having accompanied them in their daily activities and interactions for an extended period of time.

To conclude, a further engagement with the topics explored in this thesis could be invested with a more extensive exploration of inhabitants of Wijk aan Zee's relationship with the abundance of nature surrounding the village that also plays a role in the sensation of metaphorical islandness. While I elaborated extensively on the powerhouses surrounding the village, this research has devoted little attention to the nature surrounding it, particularly the sea

and the dunes. I believe this research topic would strongly benefit from a further exploration of nature's role in Wijk aan Zee's infinite road to reinvention.

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