The Transition to Smart Shrinkage for a Region in Decline

A case study in the municipality of Eemsdelta, Groningen

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The transition from shrinkage to ‘smart shrinkage’ in the Eemsdelta

Exploring the roles and responsibilities within governance arrangements

1. Abstract

Shrinkage is a driver for economic and social bust situations, influencing the liveability within regions. Those ‘shrinking regions’, are faced with an outmigration of youth, closing facilities and an ageing population. The ambition of the municipality to minimize the negative effects of shrinkage and keep high levels of liveability, is called smart shrinkage. In contrast to shrinkage, smart shrinkage aims at creating liveability levels among citizens that are not negatively affected by shrinkage. This thesis investigates the transition from shrinkage towards smart shrinkage by focusing on the importance of citizen participation. The area under study is the municipality of Eemsdelta, located in the north-eastern part of the province of Groningen. In this case study, consisting of interview and questionnaires, citizen participation, governance and institutional capacity building are analysed through the lens of Evolutionary Governance Theory (EGT). EGT creates an overview of the different path-, inter- and goal dependencies within Eemsdelta. By investigating how these dependencies evolved, I aim to contribute to developing possible strategies for the future. The data resulted in guidelines which are visualized in the wheel of shrinkage, that shows from an abstract level towards a place-based strategy, a possible direction to go within the transition towards smart shrinkage. The multi-actor, multi-dimensional and multi-scale characteristics of the transition explain the importance of citizen participation and form the heart of the wheel. A successful transition goes hand in hand with active leadership, trust, ambition and especially cooperation. Citizen participation is thus a cornerstone within this transition.

Keywords: Citizen participation, smart shrinkage, Evolutionary Governance Theory, capacity building, rural, Governance

Figure 1: Making places better together (Own made, based on ESB professionals)

2. Preface

The subject smart shrinkage has become more important over the last years. The population and economic differences between rural and urban parts of the Netherlands have increased. Where households are often moving towards the surroundings of cities, students and the youth are moving the opposite way towards the city centres. Which make cities often crowded and become the economic centres, at the expense of the rural parts. I originally come from a Haaksbergen, a village in the eastern part of the Netherlands. I would not call it the rural side, because that is not true, even though many people think so. While being a student at the university of Groningen, I have experienced the pleasures of both areas. Where the city of Groningen is vibrant, cosy and full of activities, Haaksbergen has quietness, space and joviality, or as we call it 'noaberschap'. I love both places but in my opinion, rural areas are struggling with the communication paradox. The negative image of the non-urban areas is in most cases not true. With this thesis I have shown that even though rural areas, in this case specifically Eemsdelta, experiences shrinkage, it can still be a joyful living environment with a high quality of live. I am convinced that by thinking and acting differently, we tighter can make sure that every place in the Netherlands remains a nice place to live in. As a graduating master student in Environmental and Infrastructure Planning, I will try to do the best I can to create better and more sustainable places. The most famous quote we learn within our bachelor and master programme does not need any further introduction 'making places better Together'. We need to do it together, and together we can achieve great things!

The writing of this thesis had its ups and downs. The biggest 'up' was being able to finish my thesis in time. Despite struggling with my data collection and sometimes with my motivation, I managed to finish it in time and I am very satisfied with the result. The corona pandemic (I do not want to mention it, but I unfortunately cannot move around it) made it hard to stay focused. And while I normally hate those authors that begin their report, thesis or paper by thanking a lot of people, I have to do the same. First of all, without trying to sound arrogant, I want to thank myself. Finishing my bachelor and master within four years during the corona pandemic was difficult. I had days, even weeks, in which I lacked motivation to continue working. Now, after finishing my study, I can look forward to a nice summer holiday and, hopefully, a good start of my professional career. Secondly, I want to thank my supervisor dr. Gwenda van der Vaart. I could not have wished for a better supervisor, at least if she also gives me a good mark in the end. Thank you for being flexible, thinking along and sharing your ideas to improve my thesis, it really helped. Lastly, I would like to thank my friends and family in Groningen and Haaksbergen for providing their continuous support and moments to relax. Special thanks to my parents and grandmother for the Friday afternoon drinks, those were really helpful.

Enjoy reading!

Thom Busschers

3. Table of contents

4. List of Tables & Figures

5. List of Abbreviations

EGT	Evolutionary Governance Theory
KKNN	Kennisnetwerk Krimp Noord-Nederland *(Knowledge network Shrinkage North-Netherlands)*
NPM	New Public Management
ROB	Raad Openbaar Bestuur (*The Dutch government advisory council)*
RWLP	Raad Woon- en Leefbaarheidsplan *(council for Living and Liveability plans)*
SPG	Sociaal Planbureau Groningen *(Social Planning Agency Groningen)*

6. Introduction

'With few exceptions, cities and towns all across Europe currently face the effects of ageing and depopulation. In the future, the entire continent is expected to feel the impact of shrinkage on its towns, cities, and regions' (Grisel, 2012, p.8). These are the words of Mart Grisel, director of the European Urban Knowledge Network. He and other authors explain that everywhere in Europe, cities, towns, and villages, from old industrial areas and peripheral places to new towns and capitals, will lose inhabitants (Haase et al., 2012).

Population decline and shrinkage are quite new focus points within planning practice and bring lots of uncertainty and worries (Haartsen & Venhorst, 2010). Haartsen and Venhorst point to the possibility of negative spirals and sorting of groups of people. These spirals are characterized by the co-evolution of different developments, like a reduced number of jobs and an ageing population. These in turn have consequences for the number of private and public resources for new investment, which will further reduce the number of jobs in the area and will, in the end, lead to young people leaving the area. This triggers a sorting of people as highly educated and young people leave the area, which increases the social problems and can lead to segregation. Population decline can be seen as a driver for economic and social bust situations (van Assche et al., 2019). These processes strongly influence the liveability of regions dealing with population decline and shrinkage and the communities living within these regions (Korsten and Goedvolk, 2008). It will result in more empty houses and shops and more facilities will shut down. Those empty buildings trigger vandalism and will affect the social cohesion and safety within the region (Haase et al., 2012). The existing physical and social structure is under pressure and affects the liveability within shrinking regions (Haase et al., 2012). The effects of this phenomenon can thus be numerous and municipalities in shrinking areas are looking for ways of dealing with this.

It is important to notice that shrinkage is not necessary a negative development, it is a trend. Many municipalities are struggling with anticipating on this demographic, economic and especially social trend (Haartsen & Venhorst, 2010). However, the first thing to do, according to me, would be to throw away this negative image of shrinkage. Municipalities have to strive for facing shrinkage without affecting liveability and quality of life of citizens living in those 'shrinking area' (Hospers, 2010).

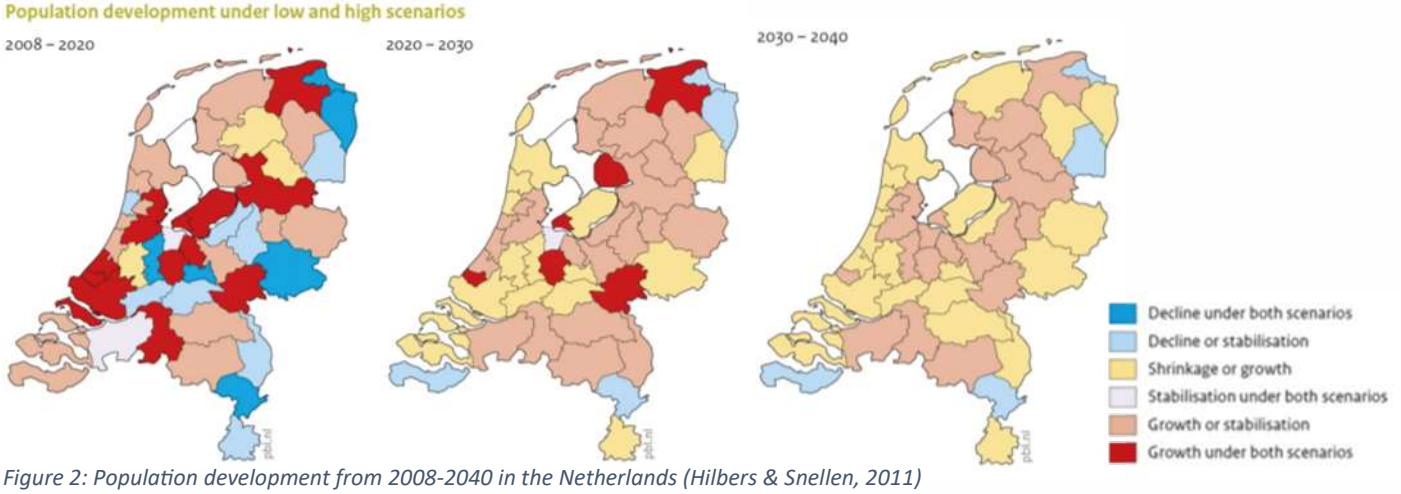

Figure 2: Population development from 2008-2040 in the Netherlands (Hilbers & Snellen, 2011)

Shrinkage, an ageing rural population, and outmigration of young, educated people, and the effect these trends have on the region, are now recognised as urgent policy problems in the northeast of the province of Groningen. One of the ways to anticipate this trend of shrinkage is a regional collaboration between different public, semi-public and private parties, and citizens. However, looking at the contemporary academic literature, it is unclear what the effects of different forms of collaboration are on liveability of regions facing shrinkage and what forms of collaboration would suit best. Consequently, there is much debate about which type of governance is most appropriate to deal with shrinkage and liveability. Whereas Healey (2003) explores the importance of collaborative planning and public participation, Ines and Booher (2004) mention that this participation also brings a lot of dilemmas and uncertainties with it. This thesis adds to the understanding and exploration of a new integrative form of governance: transition management. Transition management addresses complex adaptive societal systems that face changes in which no clear solutions are existing in the short-term, so long-term visions have to be established (Loorbach et al., 2015). For this reason, it shows it potential, as shrinkage is such a complex problem without clear solutions in the short-term.

This thesis relies on a framework that combines participation, governance, and institutional capacity building through the lens of 'Evolutionary Governance Theory' (EGT), to understand what the effects of shrinkage are and how these affect liveability. EGT helps to investigate the problem of shrinkage from an institutional perspective by focusing on path dependencies, goal dependencies and interdependencies between municipality and residents (Van Assche et al., 2019; Ubels et al., 2019). In this way, governance will be used in a descriptive and normative way to give insight into the complexity of forming governance arrangements.

The academic literature on shrinkage has grown massively over the last years, especially on urban shrinkage. Haase et al. (2013), Wiechmann & Bontje (2015) and Reckien & Martinez-Fernandez (2011) all show the importance of the phenomenon shrinkage and the effects it will have on the whole country. These ongoing processes of urbanization have long diverted attention from developments in regions experiencing significant depopulation (Beunen et al., 2020). Many places have undergone transformations. Recently, with increasingly interconnected markets, rapid alternations of prosperity and decline seem to be a familiar pattern in rural areas (Van Assche et al.,2019). Van Assche explains these transformations as cycles of 'booms and bust'. The cycles of booms and bust depend on observed effects in economic terms, population terms and multiple other factors like housing, environment, facilities and, above all, the capacity to coordinate collective action.

Moving from a regional scale towards the national scale, we see that shrinkage gained also more attention nationally. Once shrinkage and an ageing population were recognised as an urgent policy problem, policymakers accepted the need to adapt existing modes of governance to handle the related challenges. The 'Action Plan Population Decline' states that much progress has been made regarding shrinkage and population decline (Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, 2016). Many academics have written about citizen participation, governance, and collaborative planning as possibilities to deal with this trend of shrinkage (Ines & Booher, 2004; Lowndes & Wilson, 2001; Wellbrock et al., 2013). However, many regions are struggling with this citizen participation in practice. Just like Ines & Booher (2004) show with citizen participation, we, as society, have to face the facts that we know, but which we prefer to ignore.

Firstly, demographics and the economy are changing worldwide. The world population is unlikely to stop growing this century and will increase to 12.3 billion in 2100 (Gerland et al., 2014). This growth also counts for the Netherlands. The overall population in the Netherlands is expected to increase to about 18.4 million by 2060 (Stoeldraijer et al., 2017). Secondly, most of this population growth is accounted for by growing urban populations (O'Neill et al., 2010). Urbanization is a complex process of change from rural lifestyles into urban ones in which nowadays not only the urban but also the rural areas are affected (Antrop, 2004). This trend is visible in the Netherlands when looking at the Randstad functioning as a magnet for population and economic growth resulting in rural parts that are shrinking consequently. This introduces the third fact, where one area grows, other areas will shrink. This predicted urbanization will create increasing regional differences (De Jong & Daalhuizen, 2014), as rural areas will shrink as a result of this urbanization. Multiple areas in the Netherlands are already experiencing shrinkage (Ubels et al., 2019; Beunen et al., 2020; Gieling & Haartsen, 2017), while others will experience it in the (near) future. In the Netherlands, this is the case for about one-third of the municipalities, of which most are located in the peripheral rural areas, as can be seen in figure 2 (Haartsen and Venhorst, 2010; Planbureau voor de Leefomgeving, 2010). The fourth fact, that follows from the previous one, is that these processes raise concerns among residents and policymakers that a good quality of life in rural areas is not guaranteed. It places pressure on the liveability in these rural areas in a variety of ways (Ubels et al., 2019).

Careful consideration of citizen participation and governance is needed. Collaboration and citizen participation in modern governance does not automatically lead to good governance outcomes (Robins et al., 2011). Still, many actors, like Ines & Booher (2004) and Laurian & Shaw (2009), state that the possible benefits of citizen participation outweigh the negative effects. So, even though planners, politicians and regions are struggling with citizen participation and governance, they must look at the opportunities these concepts bring in dealing with shrinkage, think of identifying solutions, increase legitimacy of planning processes, increase community empowerment and capacity-building and fostering social capital (Laurian & Shaw, 2009). A clear understanding of the forms, functions and effects of citizen participation and governance is needed to explain which type is most appropriate to enhance smart shrinkage and successful governance arrangements. Especially as in the meanwhile the gap between the growing urban and the shrinking rural is increasing, not only in Groningen, but in many parts of the Netherlands, Europe and even the world. The results of this thesis can be valuable for other municipalities, areas and regions that are facing shrinkage and/or declining levels of liveability.

One of these rural areas that already experiences a high percentage of shrinkage is the northeast of the province of Groningen. This thesis focusses on the municipality Eemsdelta, a municipality formed in 2021 by uniting several other municipalities. Eemsdelta belongs together with regions in Zeeland and Parkstad-Limburg to the top declining regions of the Netherlands (Dijkstal & Mans, 2009). Population decline will affect more than 250.000 inhabitants in the short-, medium-, and long term within the province (Geuting et al., 2019). Predictions for Eemsdelta are that in 2040, the number of adults older than 75 years has grown by 60%, the working population has shrunk by 37% and 35% of young people will have left the area (KKNN, 2020). These are shocking numbers, but it is the likely future that these areas face. This research aims at formulating how governance arrangements can be formed within the transition to smart shrinkage and in which ways these arrangements can enhance the liveability within Eemsdelta. Hereby, the thesis specifically focuses on the role of citizen participation in these governance arrangements. The main objective is to understand the importance of this citizen participation and the different roles that the local government can play to support smart shrinkage. How can these governance arrangements transform the decision-making process regarding shrinkage and liveability? This resulted in the following research question:

'*What is the importance of citizen participation within governance arrangements to stimulate a transition to smart shrinkage for regions in decline?*

In the following section, the theoretical framework is explained as the foundation of this research and will function as a guideline throughout this thesis. In this section shrinkage, liveability and governance arrangements are further explored. In the 3rd section, this thesis elaborates on the research design and methodology and will explain the context of shrinkage and population decline in North-East of the province Groningen in more detail. The 4th section discusses the results coming from the used research methods. It explores in what ways Eemsdelta is dealing with population decline and visualises how the municipality should deal with shrinkage in the future to prevent any possible further negative spirals. The result section provides guidelines that will be visualized in the wheel of smart shrinkage, which provides a direction within the transition towards smart shrinkage. The last section provides an answer to my research question and some general lessons that can be drawn to enhance smart shrinkage. I will reflect on the findings and explore to what extent the results are generalisable.

7. Theoretical Framework

7.1 Rural Shrinkage: Concepts, Causes and Consequences

7.1.1. Concepts of shrinkage

Shrinkage is intertwined with population decline but also has a broader view. Shrinkage constitutes population loss, economic downturn, and employment decline, as well as social and structural problems that can be seen as symptoms of a crisis (Martinez-Fernandez et al., 2012). Shrinkage happens because of an interplay between different macro-processes (Haase et al., 2013). The complexity of shrinkage is explained as stated in the introduction, by its multi-dimensional and multi-scale character (Bontje & Musterd, 2012). It will lead to a sorting of people, in which the most marginalized and vulnerable people will remain in the shrinking region, like lower educated, unemployed people and the elderly (Haartsen & Venhorst, 2010; Hoekstra et al., 2020). Shrinkage thus affects the economy, demography, geography, and social and physical dimensions that evolve because of global and local developments and transitions (Martinez-Fernandez et al., 2012). Population decline is still recognized as one of the most important aspects of shrinkage. There are multiple types of shrinkage, with urban shrinkage and rural shrinkage as the most common ones. Where urban shrinkage finds its origins in declining cities with deindustrialization, rural shrinkage explains the deflation of peripheral regions. In particular, towards the rural parts of countries, it is possible to detect population decline, ageing, and a decrease of young people (Hospers & Reverda, 2015). These peripheral regions are often characterised by old industries which are highly vulnerable to transitions in global capital (Martinez-Fernandez et al., 2012). Rural shrinkage is considered a major policy and planning issue as populations are more and more concentrated in cities, which results in rural areas losing their populations (Tietjen & Jørgensen, 2016). A lot has been written about shrinking cities (Oswalt, 2005; Haase et al., 2013; Hospers, 2014) while planning issues regarding rural areas dealing with shrinkage are much less investigated (Hospers & Syssner, 2018).

7.1.2. Causes of rural shrinkage

Explaining the causes of rural shrinkage is not an easy task. Shrinkage can occur in single municipalities, but often shrinkage occurs as a regional problem. Where the last paragraphs show that shrinkage affects the local, regional, and national level, I especially focus on the local municipal level. Every local situation is unique, which make every region facing shrinkage a context-dependent case (Tietjen & Jørgensen, 2016), resulting in a different mix of causes for every (Hospers, 2010). An economic decline, changing societal needs or natural disasters like flooding can all be causes of shrinkage. Still, there are two overarching causes of rural shrinkage that can be distinguished (Wolff & Wiechmann, 2018). The first cause is the natural demographic changes those regions are experiencing. The second cause of rural shrinkage relates to demographic changes because of inland migration, of which the main factor is urbanisation, that explains the outflow of the rural community to places with more (economic) prospects. Both causes are briefly discussed below.

<u>Natural demographic changes</u>

Natural demographic changes are explained by the natural increase or decline of populations, in this case the natural changes refer to population decline in general. Population decline explains the decline of the number of inhabitants of a settlement, municipality, or region (Bontje & Musterd, 2014). It can have multiple reasons in which population loss and economic downturn together form the foundation (Martinez-Fernandez et al. 2012; Haartsen & Venhorst, 2009). We must take into account the general demographic changes like birth rate and an ageing population (Haase et al., 2016), but also the composition of that population and the number of households, as these give insight into future perspectives (Peters et al., 2018). The three most important demographic changes are listed below.

Firstly, birth rates. Birth rates have fallen in Europe and form the most important determinant of Europe's demographic future (Hospers, 2014). This works according to Hospers cumulatively: children that are not born, cannot give birth to children themselves. Secondly, with an average of 1,5 children, the fertility rates are too low to sustain a stable population (Hospers, 2010). A population composition normally forms a pyramid, but the current composition already shows an 'urn-form' and is on its way to becoming a 'mushroom-composition' with many elderly and fewer young people, which is for example already happening in Japan. Thirdly, the average life expectancy is still increasing, so the

EU and thus the Netherlands is getting older (Hospers, 2014). Lastly, because of higher divorce rates, the number and composition of households have changed and sometimes even declined (Haartsen & Venhorst, 2009). The normal definition of 'families' as couples with children is no longer leading. We live in an age in which household composition is more varied than ever (Wiechmann & Bontje, 2015). All these factors make that the population in Europe and the Netherlands is declining.

Demographic changes because of inland migration

Over the centuries, the world has experienced multiple natural dynamics like urbanisation, suburbanisation, and re-urbanisation. There is internal migration of people moving out from declining local centres to areas with better future chances (Lee & Mason, 2011), or put it differently a migration from rural areas to urban areas. Cities work as magnets and attract people when it comes to living, working, and recreating (Hospers & Syssner, 2018). This urbanisation has massive implications for rural areas. People moving to the cities often causes the economy and demography to grow, which results in higher incomes for the municipality which can be invested in the local infrastructure. This creates an upwards spiral and attracts even more people and companies (Hospers, 2010). However, the downside of this growth is that it happens at the expense of the surrounding rural areas. These processes stimulate the growth of cities but influence processes in the countryside as well (Antrop, 2004). Where much focus is put on urban shrinkage, there is relatively little literature on the effects for the rural areas (Hospers & Syssner, 2018). Hospers & Syssner (2018) continue their argument by explaining that there are many policies to prevent urban shrinkage but those are not useful for rural areas, rural shrinkage must be seen separately and needs new plans and policies.

7.1.3. Consequences of shrinkage

Population growth and shrinkage are connected. Hospers (2010) explains that growing urban areas go at the expense of rural areas. When urban areas grow, rural areas most of the time face shrinkage, they are intertwined (Hospers, 2010). Hospers extends his argument by explaining the effects of shrinkage on the hardware, software and mindware of a region. Hardware relates to spatial physical aspects that are clearly visible. While Hospers explains the vacancy and pauperisation of buildings and the public space, Venhorst & Haartsen (2010) take a broader view and explain the diminishing levels of public and private resources for new investment, with a negative spiral resulting in more economic decline. The closing of facilities causes great concerns as they form the beating heart of society and stimulate interaction and social cohesion (Gieling et al, 2019). These place pressure on the liveability of the communities within these shrinking regions in a variety of ways, including vacant houses, disappearing services and facilities, decreasing community finances, increased crime rates, and other socio-cultural factors, as explained by many authors (Ubels et al., 2019; Martinez-Fernandez et al., 2012; Peters et al., 2018).

Software relates to the changes within the population composition. The composition has massive effects on the future of a rural area (Hospers, 2010), it is a social-cultural factor that is continuously changing. The outmigration of the young educated people and an ageing population that stays within the area explain the changes in population composition. The children from the young, migrated people will grow up in another region which makes that schools and youth facilities will shut down. On the other side of the spectrum is the ageing population in need of facilities like nurse homes and senior facilities. How should health care and housing be organised in this new composition? What about the care staff, as the new generation is migrating to more attractive places (Hospers & Syssner, 2018)? The software change led to the sorting of people; the social structure is changing (Haartsen & Venhorst, 2010). All these consequences affect the quality of life within rural areas (Peters et al., 2018). This is what Hospers (2010) refers to with mindware, the image of the area. A shrinking area receives negative housing advice, it becomes an inferior region (Hospers, 2010). It is a communication paradox, mentioning and defining areas as a shrinking region can backfire and make the image of the area more negative which leads to more shrinkage. This negative spiral is difficult to breakthrough. It all leads to declining quality of life within the shrinking region. Shrinkage, population decline and a change in the composition of the population have a deep influence on the functioning of social institutions within a region and even within a village (Hospers & Reverda, 2015). All influence the political relationships, affect the economy, and leave their mark on civil society.

7.2 Liveability

Liveability is difficult to measure and in the first place difficult to define (Haan et al., 2014). There is no clear definition of liveability, the concept appears to be re-invented over the years with each new generation (Lloyd et al., 2016). There have been many different approaches to the concept. Where liveability was initially focused on the physical amenities and facilities (Xu & Guo, 2016), it soon shifted to focus on socioeconomic factors because of globalization (Kashef, 2016; Paul & Sen, 2020). In the last decades, the focus shifted more to socio-cultural factors. Liveability explains the desires regarding the physical environment and personal development (Lloyd, 2016). Liveability is very personal and is dependent on how people perceive their environment (Buys, 2013). It is commonly agreed that liveability explains the degree to which the physical and social living environment fits an individual's wishes and desires (Gieling & Haartsen, 2016). Liveability is the sum of socio-physical and socio-cultural factors that explain the living standards within an environment.

A key factor across these various definitions is that liveability reflects the quality of life of a person (Haan et al., 2014). Liveability and quality of life are often used as synonyms, but the concepts are slightly different (van Kamp, 2003). Quality of life is explained by subjective and objective indicators. Subjective indicators focus on attitudes, feelings, and satisfaction rates of people within an area (Peters et al, 2018), these indicators differ across people within and between areas. Objective indicators focus on the physical properties of space. The focus within the concept of quality of life lies mostly on subjective indicators, like feelings, social wellbeing, and life satisfaction (Gieling & Haartsen, 2016), as subjective indicators matter more in understanding the quality of life in a place than objective indicators which explain the assessment done by an outsider (Peters et al., 2018). Gieling & Haartsen built on this by explaining that liveability takes a broader view by incorporating the spatial dimension. Liveability is concerned with an individual's appraisal of the quality of a neighbourhood or area and thus becomes a reflection of the quality of life (Haan et al.,2014). This broader view makes that liveability provides a guideline for further exploration of the quality of life within rural (shrinking) areas (Gieling & Haartsen, 2016).

7.2.1. Smart Shrinkage: 1 step backwards, 2 steps forward

Shrinkage is a phenomenon that governments, society, and all other stakeholders should anticipate on. It is not necessarily something negative, it is a trend that needs plans and strategies to assure communities, institutions and municipalities learn how to anticipate on it. Research showed that inhabitants in shrinking regions are not always less satisfied with their liveability in the region (Hollander, 2011; Bontje & Musterd, 2014). Governments and society have opportunities to make smart decisions amid shrinkage, which may mitigate its negative effects on quality of life (Peters et al., 2018). Peters et al. strengthen their argument by stating that depopulation, and thus shrinkage, is a process that needs to be managed properly, by scaling down services, facilities and infrastructure while maintaining social equity. This approach is called smart shrinkage, which argues that a place can face population decline while still keeping high levels of liveability (Peters et al., 2018). However, this will be difficult as shrinkage limits the provision of social and public services (Hospers, 2012). Still, Hollander (2011) found that shrinking communities can still experience a high quality of life, focussing on subjective indicators like place perception.

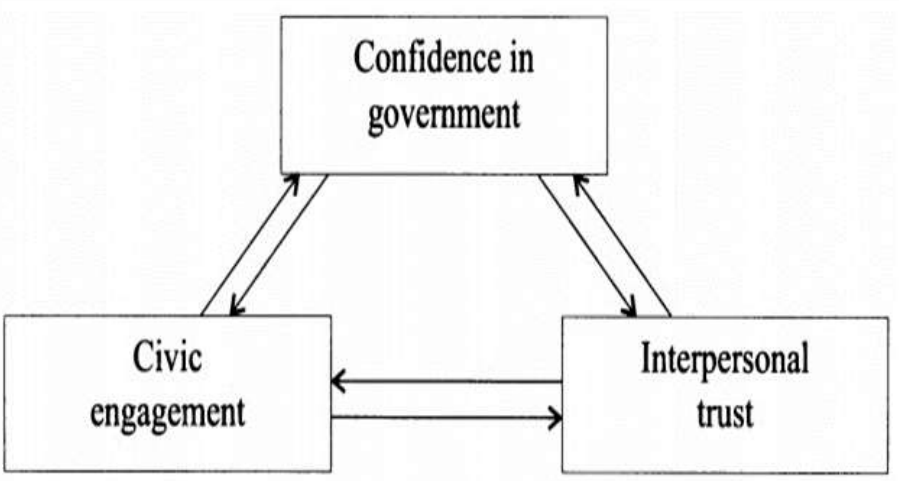

Figure 3: The structural model of Social Capital, causes and consequences (Brehm & Rahn,1997)

Even though shrinkage has many negative effects and can create a vicious circle, it is possible to break this negative circle for areas facing shrinkage and declining levels of liveability. Smart shrinkage is proposed as a paradigm shift in responding to shrinkage, by reconfiguring the community, instead of responding with economical strategies (Peter et al., 2018). There is a growing consensus that relying on these market mechanisms only is not sufficient (Hoekstra et al., 2020). Hoekstra et al. continue by stating that government interventions and public participation are needed to solve the problem of liveability within shrinking areas (see also: Hollander, 2011; Gieling & Haartsen, 2016).

Smart shrinkage should accommodate and acknowledge diverse voices within the area, processes should allow for democratic public participation and effective negotiation to reach consensus (Peters et al., 2020). There is a positive relationship between public participation and a positive evaluation of the environment (Gieling & Haartsen, 2016). Shrinking areas, experiencing smart shrinkage, often have diverse social linkages and stronger participation ambitions (Peters, 2017). At the heart of these social linkages lie social capital, social inclusion, and social cohesion (Lloyd, 2016). Social capital is based on trust, safety, participation and above all social cohesion. It shows how high citizens do value an area, based on the factors mentioned above. Social capital has already been explained in 1997 in a structural model of Brehm and Rahn shown in figure 3 (Brehm & Rahn, 1997). It is something that exists between actors. There is a relationship between trust, civic engagement, and confidence in the government. This can be related to the bonding and bridging explained by Putnam (1993). The more people trust each other within a community, the more they will participate in their community and the higher the participation with the government on different levels. This phenomenon is called bonding; participation within a community or region. Bonding is only successful when people within the community can forge ties with others in the community but also outside the community, like with the municipality. When areas, like for example Eemsdelta also forge ties with the surrounding region and municipalities, then it is called bridging (Putnam, 1993). Together, bonding and bridging reinforce social capital resulting in higher levels of smart shrinkage by improving social linkages.

Hollander & Németh (2011) came up with 4 rules to find theoretically grounded guidance for smart shrinkage. Those four rules form the foundation for the transition and show the important aspects of smart shrinkage. They are mentioned below and will come back in the conclusion, where they are combined with the empirical data.

1. Smart shrinkage planning processes must include and recognize multiple voices; the central goal is to include all stakeholders and remove the barriers that effectively quiet the public.
2. Smart decline planning processes should be political and deliberative in nature
3. Smart decline planners should be cognizant of different communication techniques and should provide information that enables citizens to recognize and challenge power imbalances and structures of domination
4. Smart decline planning processes should be regional in scope, but local in control and implementation.

This positive link between public participation and these social linkages works in both directions as it can create more sense of place (Leby & Hashim, 2010). Shrinkage can trigger citizens within the area to participate in an attempt to prevent further shrinkage of the area, this, in turn, leads to people getting to know each other better, which results in more social linkages and higher levels of liveability (Hospers, 2014; Gieling & Haartsen, 2016). Still, smart governance is a quite new theory and provides little practical guidance (Hollander, 2011). Economic, social-cultural, and political situations differ from place to place and from context to context. Smart shrinkage offers a set of criteria for the functioning of a shrinking area, for instance, political interventions and representation, working between levels (Brehm and Rahn, 1997) and public participation. Working between levels refers to the multi-scale characteristic of the transition, especially the interaction between different governmental levels and sectors involved.

7.3 Wicked problem

There is no one-size fit all solution for shrinkage, nor for the decline of the quality of life for people living in rural shrinking areas (Haase et al., 2013). Both shrinkage and a decline of liveability can be seen as wicked problems. Rittel and Webber (1973) explained that wicked problems are problems in which linear strategies and definite solutions cannot be applied to solve the issue. Wicked problems contain much uncertainty and need an argumentative process in which the problem, as well as the issue, emerge gradually among all participants (Tietjen & Jørgensen, 2016). Shrinkage is a multidimensional (multiple factors involved), a multi-scalar problem (different levels involved) and a multi-temporal problem (different timescales involved). It affects all levels of society as well as the government. It has demographic, social, political, and economic effects (Hospers, 2013). All these sectors are interlinked, which makes clear solutions lacking as every aspect is linked to another problem and another sector (Kotzé, 2020). Also, issues surrounding liveability come with strong uncertainty and a high expectation management context (Barvika et al., 2019). Rural communities have to make smart decisions to mitigate the negative effects of shrinkage on the quality of life (Peters et al., 2018). Hollander (2011) argued that governments, citizens groups and non-profit organisations must anticipate this shrinkage by focusing on long-term goals and in this way improve the quality of life within these shrinking areas. To prevent a decline of liveability because of shrinkage, people have to anticipate and act pro-active together with the local government, even though it is the latter that is most of the time trapped within their thinking of growth and have difficulties in understanding shrinkage (Hospers, 2010). Solving wicked problems asks for a multi-actor network and collaborative partnerships to address the issues regarding liveability and shrinkage (Tietjen & Jørgensen, 2016). The multilevel nature of governance arrangements is crucial for understanding responses to shrinkage and liveability (Haase et al., 2013). For that reason, the focus now turns towards the governance and the type of governance arrangements, these form the basis within the transition towards smart shrinkage.

7.4 Governance

To deal with the problems caused by shrinkage as mentioned above, areas facing shrinkage need a multi-actor, multidimensional and multiscale solution to solve this wicked problem. Citizen participation and local governance are important concepts in this regard. Citizen participation is increasingly being related to governance (Fung, 2015). Many issues, like shrinkage, social exclusion, and community regeneration, cannot be solved by a government alone. Last decades a 'hollowing out of the state' can be seen followed by an emerging multi-level governance approach (Rhodes, 1997; Newman et al., 2004). The role of the state is shifting from governing to governance. The following sections explore the differences between government and governance. Here, Evolutionary Governance Theory (EGT) is used as a framework to discuss how governance arrangements evolve. With the EGT, the challenge that shrinkage brings can be described from an institutional perspective by investigating the evolving governance arrangements within the regions facing shrinkage. This provides a background for solving the challenge and a foundation on which future strategies to deal with shrinkage and liveability can be built. After explaining the difference between governance and government and the role of EGT, the focus will shift towards the different types of governance are and the role of citizen participation within those types. First, the three more traditional forms of governance are discussed after which I advocate for transition management as a fourth type of governance. All four governance arrangements can be seen in figure 4.

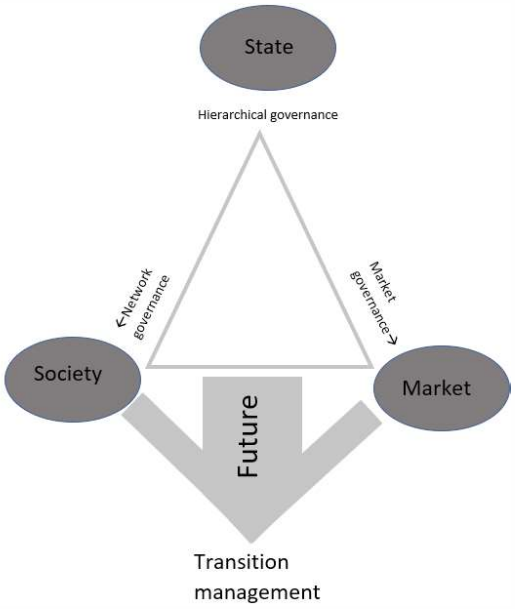

Figure 4: The four types of governance arrangements (own made)

7.4.1. Government vs. Governance

The concepts of government and governance have been around for a long time, but governance has become very popular in the last years and even decades (Blakeley, 2010). For a long time, it was a synonym of governing, government as a process. However, today it cannot be seen as synonyms anymore. Governance rather signifies a change in the meaning of government, relating to a new way of governing (Rhodes, 1996). Government occurs, according to literature, when people with legally and formally derived authority and policing power execute and implement activities (Bingham et al., 2005). There was growing disappointment in the belief that government alone can function as a political steering wheel and determine the future development of areas or sectors within society. It is the contrary, the development is shaped through the interaction of many actors (Bressers & Kuks, 2003; Newman et al., 2005). Government is thus often replaced by the broader concept of governance.

Governance refers to the creation, execution, and implementation of activities backed by the shared goals of citizens and organizations, who may or may not have formal authority and policing power (Newman, 2004; Bingham, 2005). It pays attention to changes in the ways governing and processes take place, a look at the combination of both informal and formal relationships with a broader scale of actors involved (Blakeley, 2010). Governance aims to include the multi-actor, multidimensional and multiscale dimensions that growing complex problems like shrinkage need. The state must collaborate with a wide range of actors in networks that work across different sectors and operate across different levels of decision-making (Newman et al., 2004). Still, in practice, it seems rather difficult to form governance arrangements. Despite the 'hollowing out' of the state due to the plurality and complexity of governance arrangement, the state has maintained most of its power (Blakeley, 2010). Secondly, where government achieves to include citizens participation within the governance arrangement, it does not necessarily enhance the power of the citizens. Governments are often persistent with the traditional forms of both government and governance, a hierarchical approach. Still, it is argued that governance will be important in the coming decades. Networks of public, private, and non-profit organizations must be seen as new structures of governance as opposed to hierarchical decision-making (Bingham et al.,2005).

A government can take on various roles, depending on the issue, depending on the wishes of the actors involved, and above all depending on the level of governance (de Roo, 2002). This explains that there is a wide range of possible governance arrangements that can be formed. The form of governance depends on how the public can participate and on the focus of the problem: an object-oriented or an intersubjective approach (Zuidema, 2016). Public participation can be done in different ways, in which the ladder of Arnstein (1969) visualizes the different roles. Citizens can be informed, can collaborate, can form partnerships with the governments. The degree of participation goes with responsibility, trust, and ambition. Citizen participation will be discussed and explored later in this chapter. An object-oriented approach relates to technical rationality and assumes that knowledge is universal. Rationality is focused on selecting the most effective means to reach a predefined end, it is a straightforward process. An object-oriented approach helps to understand the possible consequences that can be expected by relying on governance approaches (Zuidema, 2016). An intersubjective approach on the other hand accepts that issues cannot be objectively known, it moves beyond the object-oriented approach by accepting that people all have different preferences and interests. Various groups involved have different opinions of what is true and what is not. Rationality is formed by collaboration; issues can be solved by

communicative action. This collaboration and communication are the cornerstones of the intersubjective approach. The degree of complexity provides arguments for the type of governance approach, but the way governments, markets and societies respond can still be different and is based on an intersubjectively mediated choice.

7.4.2. Evolutionary Governance Theory: Changes in governance

To make clear strategies to deal with trends like shrinkage and liveability, every researcher is obliged to investigate the past (Beunen et al., 2015). In the previous paragraphs, I have explained that government often is replaced by governance, as governance is better able to deal with complex problems (Newman et al., 2004). If we want to find answers to complex transitions, then we need to understand how changes have evolved. Understanding change has become one of the most important challenges for developing new strategies, governance arrangements and theories (van Assche et al., 2014).

Governance creates and solves problems, it finds solutions and uses different tools, but again it evolves (Beunen et al., 2015). Van Assche et al. (2019) explain that institutional capacity building is an important factor that influences the way transitions are dealt with. Other factors that contribute to this are the role of government, the governance systems, actors involved and the extent to which societies are able and willing to imagine alternative futures. These factors are interdependent and co-evolve (Ubels et al., 2019). EGT shows how they evolve and help in creating a better understanding of the influence of these factors on new strategies (van Assche et al., 2014). This evolutionary perspective is necessary as governance arrangements are influenced by dynamic networks of actors and institutions, both formal and informal ones. The history of laws, policies and plans cannot be understood without reference to these networks and institutions, it is necessary to know how these are changing in relation to each other (van Assche et al., 2014).

This evolution of governance arrangements follows a certain path, in which actors, institutions and expertise co-evolve (van Assche et al., 2014). Certain problems can be more easily anticipated in certain governance paths. As governance is often a multi-level approach, several paths can exist next to each other, and they influence each other. Once a certain path is chosen, actors cannot freely change the course of that path, or the course of governance. The path is subject to dependencies. This thesis explores three interconnected dependencies within governance: path dependency, interdependency, and goal dependency (Ubels et al., 2019; van Assche et al., 2014; Beunen et al.,2015)

Path dependency refers to any legacy from the past that influences governance arrangements and decision-making processes that are currently used (Ubels et al., 2019). Much literature refers to this as 'history matters'. Governance builds, one way or another, upon that what was before (Beunen et al., 2015). Path dependencies show that arrangements with the presence of powerful actors restrict the options for change in the future (Beunen et al., 2020). It can be found within decision-making processes, division of roles and responsibilities and the division of expertise, knowledge, and resources. This path dependency can make it difficult to see other futures, to see possibilities for change. It makes it difficult to adapt governance arrangements to changing circumstances and trends (van Assche et al., 2012).

Interdependency relates to how actions and decisions of one actor depend on those of others (Alexander, 2001), it is the interrelations between actors within a governance process, but also relations between institutions and different governance paths (Ubels et al., 2019; van Assche et al., 2014). Interdependencies between actors influence the way actors act, interact, and take decisions (Beunen et al., 2020). Actors and institutions are dependent on each other, looking at power and knowledge differences. Actors are dependent on each other, on knowledge sharing and the power of institutions involved (Beunen et al., 2015). Trust is seen as vital to overcome conflicts between actors (de Vries et al., 2014), and determines the roles of governmental actors in relation to other actors like NGO's and citizens (Beunen et al., 2020). Interdependence is relevant for actors in strategizing their own goals, but also in finding common goals (van Assche et al., 2014), which are needed to deal with trends like shrinkage. The potential of a next step is conditioned not only by previous steps taken (path dependency) but also co-determined by structural cooperation, collaboration and coupling between different functions within the system, the pattern of actors and institutions that co-evolved over time (van Assche et al., 2014)

Goal dependency relates to the influence of shared visions for the future and the influence these ideas have on decision-making processes in the present (Ubels et al., 2019; van Assche et al., 2014). Shared visions about the future embedded in laws, plans and institutions can act as points of reference that help explain why certain actions and decisions are made or must be made (Beunen et al., 2020). You can speak of goal dependency if these visions, plans, and laws affect the co-evolution of actors and institutions (Beunen et al., 2015). Goal dependency is important, especially when faced with shrinkage, as politics becomes more than coordination. Visions of the future are/must be translated into policies (van Assche et al., 2014). When these plans are not implemented, they still affect the current situation by inspiring actors and by creating linkages between institutions. This shared envisioned future and the willingness to share and relate futures among stakeholders can create ties strong enough to engender further learning (Beunen et al., 2015), in this way the visions for the future within goal dependency can become reality or can shape reality in certain regards.

Evolutionary Governance theory explains that governance arrangements evolve. This evolution is visible throughout history. There are three classical governance approaches but in the last years, a new type of governance is emerging. The first three are (1) hierarchical governance approach, (2) market governance approach and (3) network governance approach. These three approaches show a clear evolution regarding multi-actor and multi-scale characteristics and are

in the literature often seen as the traditional approaches to governance (Lupova-Henry & Dotti, 2018; de Roo, 2002; Rhodes, 1996 etc.). Last decades a fourth approach to governance is emerging in the form of (4) transition management (Loorbach, 2010). Especially its focus on solving complex problems in the long-term and thus including the multi-dimensional characteristic makes this type of governance interesting. All four governance types will be analysed and explained to explore which type is most appropriate to deal with the complex problem of shrinkage and the declining levels of liveability.

7.4.3. Hierarchical governance: Powerful from above

Hierarchical governance has a long history within planning practice and is based upon a division between government and society. In the 20th century, this governance approach relied on both objective knowledge and rationality (Zuidema, 2016). In this type, governance and government can be used as synonyms, it explains how traditional top-down government is organised. The government has the task to steer society and is operating as an entity that collects information, set goals and implements policies. There is a clear division of tasks and responsibilities as the government represents the public interests. Hierarchical governance is based on command and control (Ysa, 2007). The elected officials that form government hold ultimate authority and they have to defend the public interests; it is thus bureaucratic in nature. This type of governance is more symbolic. By using an object-oriented approach, the government will be able to understand, with the advice of other actors, the issues, and effects a problem brings (Zuidema, 2016). The other actors within the process have a limited role, all actors that are not part of the government are seen as part of the society and can only deliver information and advice, but the government possess the power to implement policies and set goals. In this type of governance, the local level plays a minor role, it is often the higher level that decides and has power (de Roo & Porter, 2007).

However, the hierarchical, top-down approaches to governance have been challenged in favour of the broader involvement of other stakeholders (Lupova-Henry & Dotti, 2018). Only relying on this object-oriented approach has limits and it is argued that it should be backed up by intersubjective approaches (Zuidema, 2016). The argument is that more actors are needed to be involved and societal problems can be resolved by the government but also by these other actors, by collaborating (Görg, 2005).

7.4.4. Market governance: starting to collaborate

Market governance is often called the neoliberal turn within governance approaches and has similarities with the new public management (NPM) paradigm (Stoker, 2006). NPM seeks to dismantle the bureaucratic pillars within hierarchical governance, also called traditional public administration (Stoker,2006). This demand for a shift away from the hierarchical governance approach was formed during the late 1970s when many Western governments faced a financial crisis, inflexibility and decreasing public trust (Pollitt et al., 2007). It was argued that the state functions inefficient and ineffective when compared with markets, so the market must cover for the inefficiency. Private market models were prescribed for public sector tasks, resulting in numerous reforms. Politicians still play an important role as they are the voice of the public but should set tough targets and tough budgets (Hospers & Syssner, 2018). This is where the market jumps in. Within the policy decision-making process, the government should negotiate, bargain, and find compromises with all other stakeholders to find agreed outcomes relying on market mechanisms (Zuidema, 2016). According to Rhodes (1996), these mechanisms within market governance, or NPM, consist of two important concepts: managerialism and institutional economics. The former refers to the introduction of the private sector management methods as explained above. Think of methods like economic standards, managing by results and value for money. Institutional economics refers to the introduction of incentive structures to the public sector, like market competition in the form of contracting out from the government to companies. The government should focus on policymaking and should leave the delivering of services to the market (Bevir, 2009). Market governance was the first collaboration between government and other sectors and stakeholders. It results in a shift: less government more governance, or put in different words, less rowing more steering (Rhodes, 1996; Bressers & Kuks, 2003). Market governance comprises dealing with issues, like shrinkage, from an economic perspective. Using funds in the right way at the right places, limiting spill-overs, implement strategies and projects as efficient as possible. Regional issues should be solved from below instead of from above, to enhance local growth (Hospers & Syssner, 2018). Government, market, and other stakeholders depend on each other, the state retains most of its power, but they have to exchange resources with the market and other stakeholders to reach the goals and targets set by themselves.

7.4.5. Network governance: the power to the citizens

By the end of the 20th century, a paradigm shift towards network governance took place, also called the communicative turn towards new public value (Healey, 1969). While market governance proved to be based on underlying logic, it did not fully take contextual factors into account. These explain that trends and experiences are differently recognized in different areas (Blakeley, 2010). The idea that planning is simply technical expertise and rationale has proved to be wrong. According to de Roo & Voogd (2019). It is not possible to abandon the technical rational approach, but for many issues, a different strategy with a stronger focus on social interaction, engagement and participation processes is needed. it needs to be backed up by what Fischer (2000) called 'cultural rationality' or what Innes & Booher (2010) called a 'collaborative rational'. These types of rationality give equal value to personal experience than to technical calculations, it involves engaging in interactively dialogues to expand knowledge to achieve consensus among all stakeholders. Hierarchical and/or market governance can deal with a lot of issues, however, network governance is

particularly relevant when governments are faced with wicked problems, like shrinkage. Healey (2010) explains that these problems affect multiple levels, sectors and stakeholders and create a fragmented governance context. Network governance requires the state to steer society through the development of social complex networks and the rise of bottom-up approaches within government (Stoker, 2006).

These decentralised, pluralistic networks combine the public, private, and voluntary sectors and focus on the inclusion of all levels of decision-making, including the citizens (Newman et al., 2004; Robins et al., 2011). It is the right of the citizens to participate and collectively decide together with the other actors. The goal is to move away from the expert status that the industry and government have within market governance, towards an environment in which citizens have opportunities and equal chances to contribute within the decision-making process about issues that affect their living environment (Fisher, 2000). Empowering the people makes planning processes more effective, this self-determination is according to Arnstein (1969) a cornerstone of our democracy. This decentralised form of decision-making allows for place-based development. Place-based development connects the best area-specific solution for a local problem, which can only be achieved with a collective agency (Wellbrock et al., 2013). Within network governance, policy documents are not leading anymore and are replaced by concepts like collaboration, public-private partnership, capacity building and place-based approaches. Network governance enables people to cooperate and make joint decisions, it can bring interests together to solve common problems. Network governance is flexible and, in this regard, better able to deal with the complexity that many societal issues bring with it (Stoker, 2006). It is more flexible as the gap between formal policy-making and informal partnership gets blurred, this leads to a common perspective and creates bonds of trust between the different actors (Robins et al., 2011).

7.5 Transition management

Where hierarchical, market and network governance are seen as the three classical and often used forms of governance, in the last years a new type of governance is emerging. Transition management, also called transition governance, is a new mode of governance that reduces the lack of direction and coordination that is sometimes missing within networks in general (Loorbach, 2010). Transition management focuses on complex adaptive societal systems that face nonlinear changes in which clear solutions are not existing and cannot be solved with short-term approaches (Loorbach et al., 2015), or so-called wicked problems. This new form of governance is especially appropriate to deal with long-term changes which are rooted in different domains of society, across varying levels (Loorbach, 2010). Many places are confronted with these complex and unstructured problems that need a long-term solution strategy at the level of the society. Good examples of the kind of problems are issues relating to the environment, energy, mobility, welfare systems (Loorbach, 2010) which lead to a redefinition of how to govern society. I would argue that liveability and shrinkage also belong to this list of complex issues which need a long-term strategy. These trends necessitate a more explorative and reflexive approach to deal with structural uncertainties. Transitions are defined as the result of the co-evolving process in the economy, society, technology, and other sectors that build-up towards a revolutionary systematic change in the long term (Loorbach et al., 2015). These transitions take place when the societal system functions differently, which trigger a fundamental change (Frantzeskaki & de Haan, 2009). Where the three 'more traditional' forms of governance show a clear evolution of the multi-scale and multi-actor approach, transition management expands by including the multi-dimensional approach. Loorbach (2010) explains that transition management includes the factor time, not only focusing on short-term solutions but especially focussing on long-term solutions as these problems cannot be solved with 'simple' short-term solutions only.

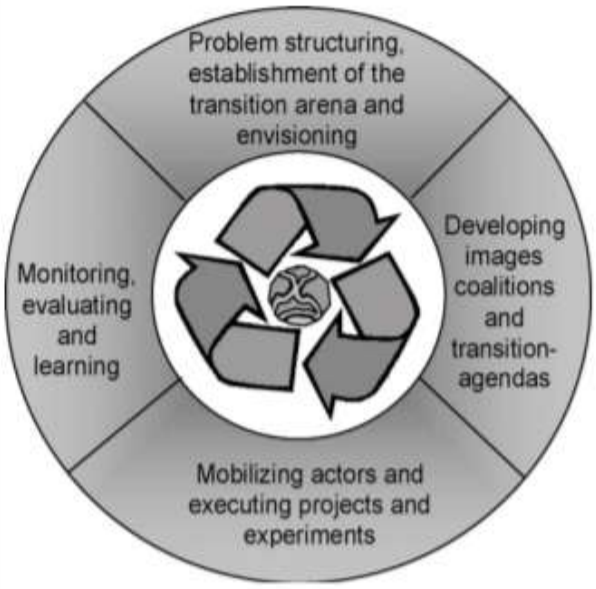

Figure 5: The transition cycle(Loorbach, 2010)

Transition management is a relatively new concept within the social sciences that has rapidly emerged over the past few years as a new approach to deal with these complex societal problems (Loorbach & Rotmans, 2009). Loorbach & Rotmans extent their argument by stating that especially in the Netherlands, serious efforts have been undertaken to develop transition policies, for example in areas regarding energy, water management and housing. It is not coincidental that it happens in the Netherlands, as this country is well known for its collaborative policymaking and long-term innovative planning (van Buuren & Loorbach, 2009). One of the best examples in which transition management is applied is *Parkstad Limburg,* which is defined, just like Eemsdelta, as a 'shrinking region'. With the help of guiding principles, a vision for the development of this region was formulated (Kerngroep Structuurvisie Parkstad Limburg, 2003). Loorbach & Rotmans (2009) strengthened the argument by combining general basic principles for transition management and they came up with the so-called 'transition cycle' in figure 5, to structure and operationalise the transition. Moving through these implementation steps, four governance activities within the societal transition can be distinguished, namely strategic (activities with long-term perspective), Tactical (activities related to build up and break down of structures and institutions), Operational (activities with short-term perspectives, everyday actions) and Reflexive (activities related to the evaluation of existing situations). (Loorbach & Rotmans, 2009). The characteristics of these activities make it possible to explore different dependencies and help to develop process strategies for short- and long-term development. The governance activities are linked to the various steps of the transition cycle. These four steps move from problem structuring towards monitoring and provide direction with the transition. The four governance activities can be placed within the different steps of the cycle.

7.5.1. Roles and responsibilities

Within network governance, there is thus an important role to play for citizens or so-called civil society. The ROB, Raad Openbaar Besuur (the Dutch advisory council), defines civil society as a diversity of organizations, institutions and social movements in which citizens undertake socially-oriented activities (ROB, 2012). This shift from the government towards real network governance forms with the participation of civil society can be done in different ways and asks for different roles and responsibilities to be played by both societies as well as the governmental layers. Especially the local government level as this is the level closest to the people and they have the capacity to facilitate opportunities for citizens to act on local issues (Cuthill & Fien, 2005; ROB, 2012). It requires those who have 'power' to devolve it to those who do not have this power. Participation without this redistribution of power is a frustrating process for the powerless (Arnstein, 2019). This makes citizen participation a contested concept, but still an important building block for a democratic society. It helps to build strong local democracy by developing high forms of social capital which in its turn lays the foundation for collaborative actions for the common good of the community or even broader the whole society (Cuthill & Fien, 2005). Cuthill & Fien continue their argument by stating that the ultimate goal of citizen participation is to reach institutional capacity building. This is a combination of social, intellectual, and political capital and makes groups better able to participate and collaborate within local issues. Institutional capacity building operationalises citizen participation (Ines & Booher, 2004).

To describe citizens participation the ladder of Arnstein will be used (Arnstein, 1969), which consist of three categories namely, non-participation, degrees of tokenism and degrees of citizen power, as can be seen in figure 6. Non-participation is not about enabling people to participate but about educating them about participation and planning processes. The middle category concerns tokenism. It includes the rungs of the ladder in which citizens may share their opinions and be heard, but because of power differences it cannot be ensured that their views and opinions will be adopted by the powerful, often governmental, stakeholders. These powerful stakeholders keep the power to make the decisions. The last category is that of citizen power, which is the level at which actual control of the process is partly or fully held by community members. There has been a shift in power which allows citizens to take part in the decision-making process. This is the level at which governmental layers, market parties, citizens and all other stakeholders together build capacity and strive to achieve common goals for the local issue at hand.

Under network governance, public value has to be created by the cooperation of all three domains, the government, the market, and society. Within the category of citizen power, the government is giving more tasks, powers, and responsibilities to local stakeholders, like communities and neighbourhood associations (ROB, 2012). Where the previous section focused explicitly on the role of citizens within policymaking, the ladder of the Dutch government advisory council (ROB) takes another perspective by defining the participation level of the government instead of the citizens. Each government has to define which role it must or wishes to adopt in this shift towards enlarging citizens' power. The ROB came up with a 5-trap ladder showed in figure 6. The level of power and authority for governments increases with each rung on the ladder, and thus functions in another way as the ladder of Arnstein. The highest level is 'regulating', which is a synonym for traditional public participation like public hearings. The government regulates intervention by the community and decides hierarchically. The second-highest level the 'directing' level based on network steering, in which the government coordinates the process, regulates the negotiation between stakeholders and defines the rules of the game. The government creates a network of public and private stakeholders in which decisions are co-decided with the network. The middle level is 'stimulating', in which the government supports the project structurally for a longer period, the government forms a network with the initiators and make co-decisions. The second-lowest level is 'facilitating' in which the government facilitates a flow of ideas, resources and people while still maintaining the boundary between the initiative and the institutional level. The government helps the initiators to find their way into the municipal organisation and provides a limited amount of resources. The lowest level is the 'letting go' level in which the government is not involved in any direct way, this hands-off governance in which initiatives are

self-coordinated and governed by the local community of initiators. Citizens have full responsibility.

Governments need to make well-considered choices when descending the ladder. In lots of issues, they should strive for climbing the ladder as little as possible, but also need to be aware that citizens need help and back-up within projects (Mees et al., 2019). Still, many projects and issues within an area are the responsibility of the local government in which society wants to have a voice, to be heard and to give their opinion. The government has to consider what role it must take and to combine that with the roles of citizens participation (ROB, 2012). For each situation, the role of the government can be different, a shift towards minimising government responsibility does not automatically lead to more room for the participation of citizens. Every issue needs a place-based approach in which cooperation, interaction and a clear division of responsibilities and tasks between government, market and citizens are needed, especially facing massive local trends like ageing, declining liveability, and shrinkage.

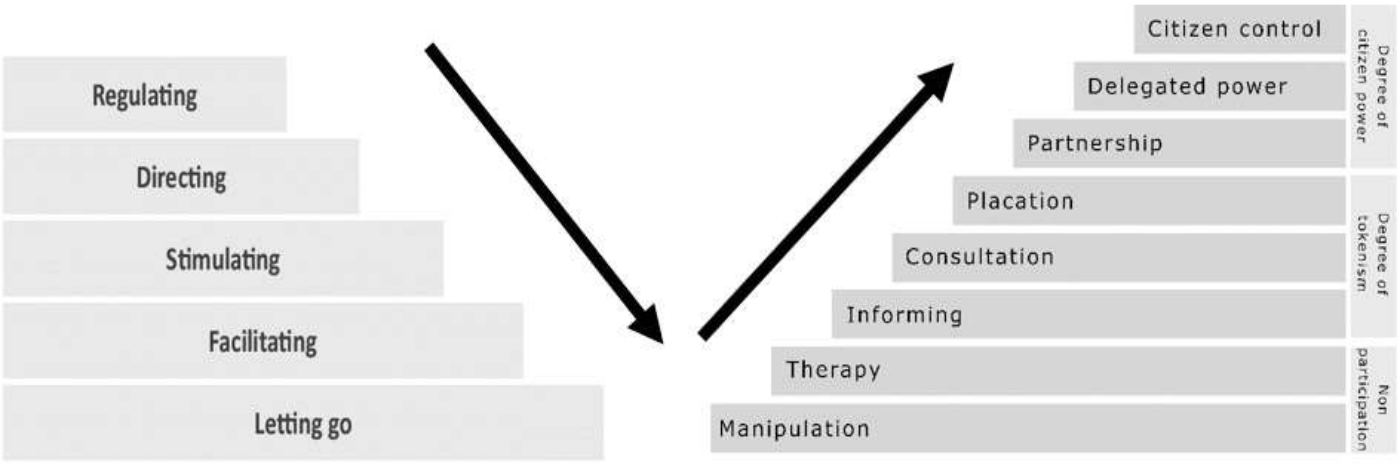

Figure 6: Left: The 5-trap ladder of government roles (ROB, 2012). Right: The ladder of citizens participation (Arnstein, 1969).

7.5.2. Bringing it together

With the help of the three dependencies of EGT, I will be able to explore which types of governance were used in the past within Eemsdelta and what effects they had. Subsequently, this can provide guidelines for future development processes related to shrinkage and liveability. These dependencies must not be seen as separate, they interact, and this increases the level of uncertainty (van Assche et al., 2014). This evolution of the different elements is important; actors, institutions and expertise/knowledge all contribute to changes in the path chosen and in the development of the abovementioned dependencies. It is important to explore the interplay between those factors, as these create the next step in a governance path (van Assche et al., 2014), and result in governance (Beunen et al., 2015). In figure 7, the conceptual model explains the connections between the different key concepts explained above. This framework is used to explore what type of governance is needed to maintain liveability when facing shrinkage in the municipality of Eemsdelta. The hypothesis is that a transition is needed in the way the municipality, community and the market want to anticipate this trend of shrinkage. With the help of this framework and extensive policy analysis of plans, policies, and visions in Eemsdelta guidelines will be developed that show direction within the transition towards smart shrinkage. The three dependencies show how actors, institutions, knowledge, trust, plans and policies have evolved and what effects they had on the municipality but also the society and communities living within this area. This will form the basis for the transition towards smart shrinkage as can be seen in the conceptual model.

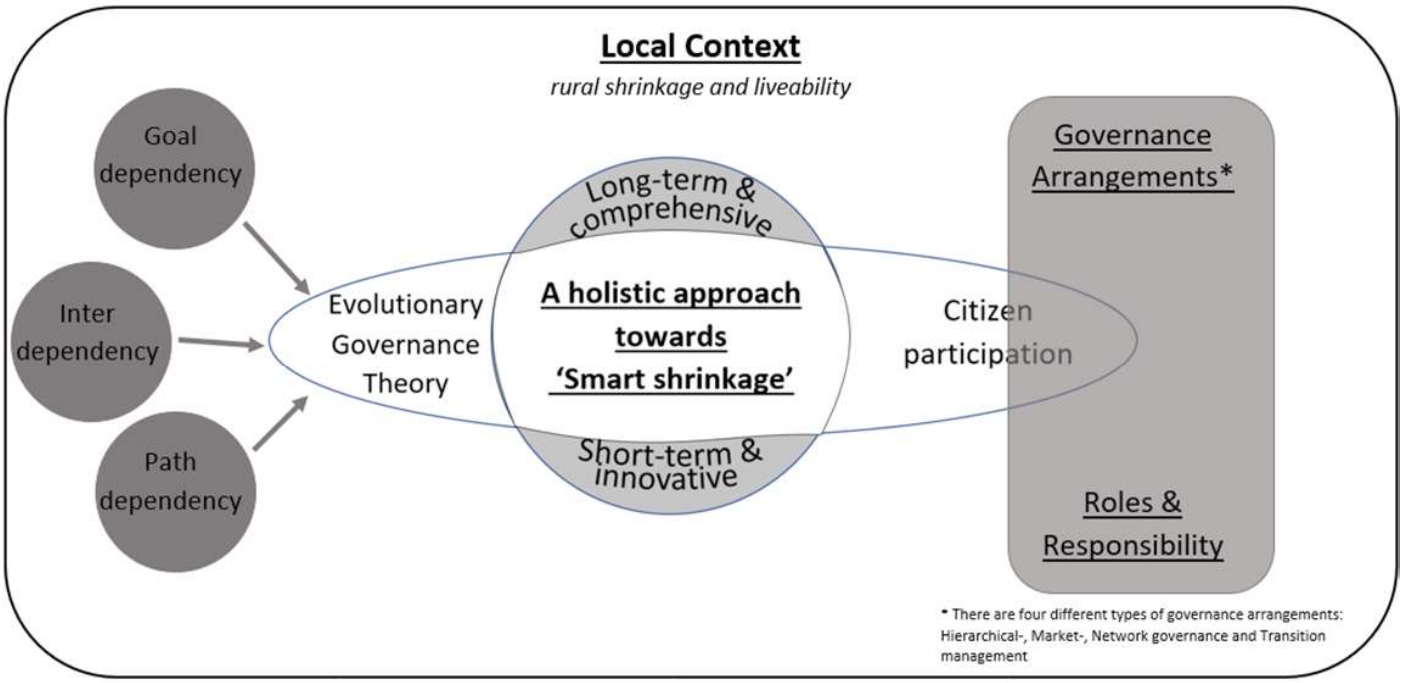

Figure 7: Conceptual model

8. Research design

8.1 Research strategy

In this chapter, the research design and methodology used for answering my research question and developing guidelines, that stimulate smart shrinkage within the municipality of Eemsdelta, are explained. This study will be performed through an interpretive-constructivist worldview (Tuli, 2010). Ontological questions in social research are related to the nature of reality and in this study. This thesis uses constructionist ontology. Ontology explains what reality looks like, the nature of reality (Uddin & Hamiduzzaman, 2009). Constructionist ontology sees ontology not irrespective of people, reality is humanly constructed as people make their own sense of social realities. The reality 'out there' is socially constructed through interactions and social realities (Tuli, 2010). The interpretive/constructivist perspective sees the world thus constructed and interpreted by people and their interactions with each other in a wider social system (Maxwell, 2006). This perspective is suitable as it helps to understand a particular phenomenon (shrinkage) within the research area. To unfold the real-world situation within Eemsdelta, a deep understanding of the situation is needed without manipulating or controlling the situation as a researcher. To gain an in-depth understanding of the case study at hand, a mixed-methods approach is used which combines the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative research while compensating at the same time for the weaknesses of both (Punch, 2014). Quantitative research has the strengths of conceptualising variables, tracing trends, and exploring relationships between different actors, sectors, and ideas within the Eemsdelta. It gives a broad view of the interests, stakes, and opinions within the area. On the other hand, qualitative data provides a deeper insight into the context provided by the participant (Tuli, 2010). Qualitative methods are oriented towards the discovery of process, it gives meaning, context and flexibility to the numbers generated with quantitative methods. This makes it possible to study the process of change over the years within the municipality (Punch, 2014), which is important to discover the different dependencies of Evolutionary Governance Theory and to form an in-depth understanding of smart shrinkage within Eemsdelta.

8.1.1. Case & policy study

To gain more insight into how governance systems and citizen participation influence the transition to smart shrinkage, a detailed case study within the municipality of Eemsdelta was performed. A case study aims to get a full understanding of the region, its natural settings, its complexity, and its context (Punch, 2014). Even though the focus is on Eemsdelta, the aim is to answer the research question in such a way that it is generalisable for other regions facing shrinkage. Every case is unique in many ways, but every case is, in some respects, also similar (Punch, 2014), so focusing on these similarities creates opportunities to generalise the main conclusions within this case study. Eemsdelta provides a highly interesting case study as this municipality is called one of the 'top shrinking regions' in the Netherlands (Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, 2016), and can function as example research for other regions which experience shrinkage (in the future). This case study allows for a holistic approach meaning an in-depth analysis. As Eemsdelta has 45.000 inhabitants working in many different fields, I use a random sampling strategy as not all inhabitants can

be involved. At the start of this research, an extensive literature review was done as it broadens ideas and improves the understanding of the research area (Healey & Healey, 2016). Academic papers are analysed to create a theoretical framework and these theories and concepts are combined with an extensive policy report analysis. A total of 20 reports, ambitions, plans of national, regional, and local authorities are analysed. This includes papers, reports and policies of the municipalities of Appingedam, Delfzijl and Loppersum as well as the ambitions of the Eemsdelta. The reports showed what paths are chosen by the different municipalities and the reports from 2021 onwards show the ambitions that Eemsdelta has formed after uniting the municipalities of Appingedam, Delfzijl and Loppersum. The case study and policy review form the start and input for the gathering and analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data.

8.1.2. Quantitative data

The first method of collecting data used is questionnaire research among citizens within the municipality Eemsdelta. Questionnaire research is an important tool in geography and is particularly useful for eliciting people's attitudes and opinions about social issues like shrinkage, quality of life and liveability (McLafferty, 2016). Questionnaires are valuable for finding out about complex behaviour and social interactions. The questionnaire was part of a larger researcher within the area, about liveability and education. However, separate questions were added so the questionnaires completely fitted my research, including a series of questions that address the topics of shrinkage, citizen participation and liveability. The Questionnaire consist of both closed questions in the form of Likert scale and multiple-choice questions, as well as open questions to allow the participant to provide their in-depth opinion about the area. The questionnaire is distributed through email, firstly, because we live in a pandemic time which makes it hard to meet physically, secondly, because it is convenient for participants, and I can reach many participants within a short timeframe (McLafferty, 2016). The questionnaire is sent to pupils as well as their parents of 4 different schools within Eemsdelta. As the larger research focuses on the quality of education and liveability both groups are of importance. This thesis uses only the data of the parents as those are mainly involved in liveability projects and citizen participation. 140 parents filled in the questionnaires and after a first data analysis, 139 responses are used in this thesis. Those respondents give a good representation of the larger population within Eemsdelta as they are approached within a strategic random sampling strategy.

Whereas the sampling group is pre-defined, every participant has an equal chance to give their opinion which ensures validity. Both validity and reliability are important within questionnaires. The questionnaire aims to create indicators that can be linked to the concepts of shrinkage, citizen participation and liveability. These indicators break down the concept and make it more suitable for participants to give profound answers (Punch, 2014). Reliability is concerned with the consistency of the measurement. Even though the questionnaires are designed in such a way that the variance is as low as possible, it is important to keep in mind that social research concerning social measurement includes some form of unreliability (Punch, 2014), especially in the case of shrinkage and liveability as these change over time. Validity is concerned with the right indicators, do these indicators represent the concept it purports to measures (Punch, 2014). The questionnaire does not differentiate between people, will be combined with the qualitative data and is consistent with the overall research strategy and thus possesses high validity. After all online questionnaires have been filled in, a computer software analysis is done to see how the indicators, like liveability, citizen participation and trust, are answered and if significant results can be found. In this way, statements could be made about the representativeness of the sampling group.

8.1.3. Qualitative data

The main research question of this thesis is concerned with perceptions, meanings, and constructions of reality within Eemsdelta about citizen participation, liveability and (smart) shrinkage. To get access to these value-driven understandings I will use the most prominent data tool of qualitative research: interviews (Punch, 2014). Many distinctions are made within interviews, with as most known distinction the one between structured and unstructured interviews (Fontana & Frey, 1994). Combining the two types results in founding a middle ground by using semi-structured interviews which allow using the strength of a pre-established question guide, coming from the structured interview, and the strength of understanding the language, culture, and interpretation of people by allowing flexibility, coming from the unstructured interviews (Punch, 2014). Semi-structured structure the interview but add flexibility to go in-depth and to look at the case holistically by understanding the context around opinions, interests, and meanings of the participants. It is important in qualitative research to convey this full picture so that a reader understands the findings of the thesis including the information about the specific context to stimulate transferability and generalisability of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, cited by Punch, 2014).

Whereas the questionnaires provide a clear overview of the opinions and needs of the people in Eemsdelta, the interviews provide an in-depth insight into the thinking of experts about liveability and citizen participation. Interviews are held with experts from the municipality and the educational sector with knowledge about citizen participation, liveability and the interaction between citizens and government. Comparisons between those different subgroups give an accurate representation of the reality within Eemsdelta. A total of six interviews was done between March and May. The pseudonyms of all interviewees can be found in table 1. Because of the covid pandemic and the distance between me as a researcher and the participants, the interviews were held in an online environment. At the start of the interview, participants were informed of their rights and responsibilities, and they all explicitly had to agree to those rights and responsibilities. The interviews took around 1 hour a person and were, with permission of the participant,

recorded, transcribed, and afterwards coded to attach meaning to the data provided. Coding entails the process of putting labels, tags, and names to the transcribed interviews. This is done with the help of Atlas.ti. these codes help to break up the different concepts and to see linkages between them. Coding will be done using both an inductive as well as deductive way. The inductive approach helps to move from concepts in the data to a higher level of abstraction to see interrelationships and to make generalization possible (Punch, 2014). The deductive approach helps with the verification of theory and concepts, it is the hypothesis examination. The code tree used to attach meaning to the data can be found in appendix A.

The data collection ended in May 2021 and resulted, firstly, in a questionnaire output based on opinions of 139 citizens of Eemsdelta, coming from different fields and backgrounds, 6 transcribed and coded interviews with experts from both the municipality as well as the educational sector. Secondly, the policy and literature review provided the theoretical background which formed the foundation for the result sections. The data gathered has been tested against the policy and literature review. Combining a thorough policy review with the quantitative data coming from the parents in Eemsdelta and the more in-depth qualitative data coming from the interviews, guidelines can be formed to develop a possible future pathway towards smart shrinkage.

8.1.4. Ethical implications

During my research, I have to carefully consider the ethical implications of my research. Ethical behaviour protects the individuals, communities, and environments under study, it creates a safe and favourable climate for research, and it makes this research more accountable (Hay, 2016). The quantitative data is sent by the directors of the schools to assure that the privacy of the participants was guaranteed. Before participants could be fill in the questionnaire they were informed about their rights and responsibilities, and all participants explicitly confirmed that they agreed. This means that they could stop at any moment during the questionnaire and did not have to answer if they did not want to. Personal information was only provided by participants if it was their own choice. During the collection of the qualitative data more ethical considerations were made. The information and answers that participants provided are treated confidentially and the recordings and transcripts remained between me, my supervisor and the research and will not be shared with other parties. This thesis is part of larger research within Eemsdelta about education and liveability, this is the reason that also a research team can access the data. I asked every participant for permission to record the interview and to use the data that they provided. All names are replaced by pseudonyms to ensure that information cannot be traced back to the participants. In this way, the data becomes more reliable, transferable and the result becomes more generalizable. The participants of the interviews are listed in table 1.

Pseudonym	*Role within the municipality*
Francis	*Educational sector*
John	*Educational sector*
Lynn	*Educational sector/ municipality*
Tim	*Municipality*
Max	*Municipality*
Simon	*Social organisation*

Table 1: List of participants mentioned by pseudonym and their function

8.2 Research context: The case of shrinkage within Eemsdelta

This thesis analyses opinions, interpretations, policies and plans of how to deal with shrinkage in Eemsdelta. Shrinkage is a complex issue in the province of Groningen and affects 250.000 citizens in the short- and long term. It has consequences for housing, economy, and liveability (Geuting et al., 2019). According to CBS (Statistics Netherlands), shrinkage is most visible in the municipalities Eemsdelta and de Marne. Eemsdelta was formed in 2021 by merging the municipalities of Delfzijl, Appingedam and Loppersum and is located in the north-eastern part of the Netherlands as can be seen in figure 8. As noted, designating the region as a ‘shrinking region’ can work counterproductive and give inhabitants the feeling of inferiority. Inferred from this, shrinkage in Eemsdelta must not become a self-fulfilling prophecy but while analyzing papers, reports, plans and programs many problems are linked to shrinkage. One of the biggest triggers for shrinkage was the gas extraction in Groningen (RWLP, 2016). Gas extraction is facilitated by the different governmental layers and done by the energy exploration and production company NAM. It had massive economic values, but it created earthquakes as well (Voortman, 2019). Because of these earthquakes, people moved out of the region. The government and NAM continued with gas extraction which led to a further outmigration of people and a sense of anger and powerlessness among the citizens (Voortman, 2019). North-east Groningen became a top ‘shrinking region’ in Dutch policy plans, with Eemsdelta as the best example. Shrinkage in Groningen both affects the hardware and software of the people living there. Hardware refers to the spatial physical aspects as explained in the theoretical framework (Hospers, 2010).

In their report about Groningen, Dijkstal & Mans (2009) mention three problems. Firstly, in Eemsdelta there is a growing vacancy and a decrease in value of many buildings and business premises. Secondly, many facilities are under pressure as the number of people within the region is shrinking. Many facilities have to close, which creates longer distances to facilities for the people of Eemsdelta. Lastly, the public space is deteriorating due to vacancy, segregation, and the stagnation of new construction. The lack of transforming vacant business premises into new residential locations are often limited. There are also clear changes in the software of the people which relates to changes in population composition. The total population of Eemsdelta has in 2040 shrunk with 11.000 (-17%) people, the labour force has shrunk by 12.000 (-31%) and the number of households has declined by 3000 people (-10%) (Verwest & van Dam, 2010). These numbers go hand in hand with emerging trends of ageing and a massive moving-out of young, educated people (KKNN, 2020; OECD, 2013). Verwest & van Dam continue by stating that the municipality did *not anticipate* this shrinkage, they *reacted*. The municipality stimulated supply and demand in an effort to counter shrinkage instead of accepting demographic shrinkage. Shrinkage is ongoing for 30 years; hence, it is not something new. In Eemsdelta 20% of the housing stock has been demolished. This is both done because of the earthquake problems, but also because of massive vacancy caused by shrinkage. Before 2030 the number of pupils in schools will shrink by 50% and 60% of the people will be older than 50 which will increase the health care costs (Dijkstal & Mans, 2009). Shrinkage affects all sectors: living, working, care, education, recreation and so on. Many of these issues can be seen in the Eemsdelta, even though the province of Groningen explained that shrinkage also brings opportunities for creating a better living environment, a better quality of life and better facilities (Province of Groningen, 2013). The municipality has started multiple pilot projects, public hearings and has used multiple strategies to deal with shrinkage (Zuidema, 2013; Province of Groningen, 2013; RWLP, 2016). Not all strategies, which will be explained in the result section, were successful. Smart shrinkage is still not the standard, and some indicators show that liveability is still declining, for example, trust in institutions, satisfaction with living and the living environment (CBS, 2020).

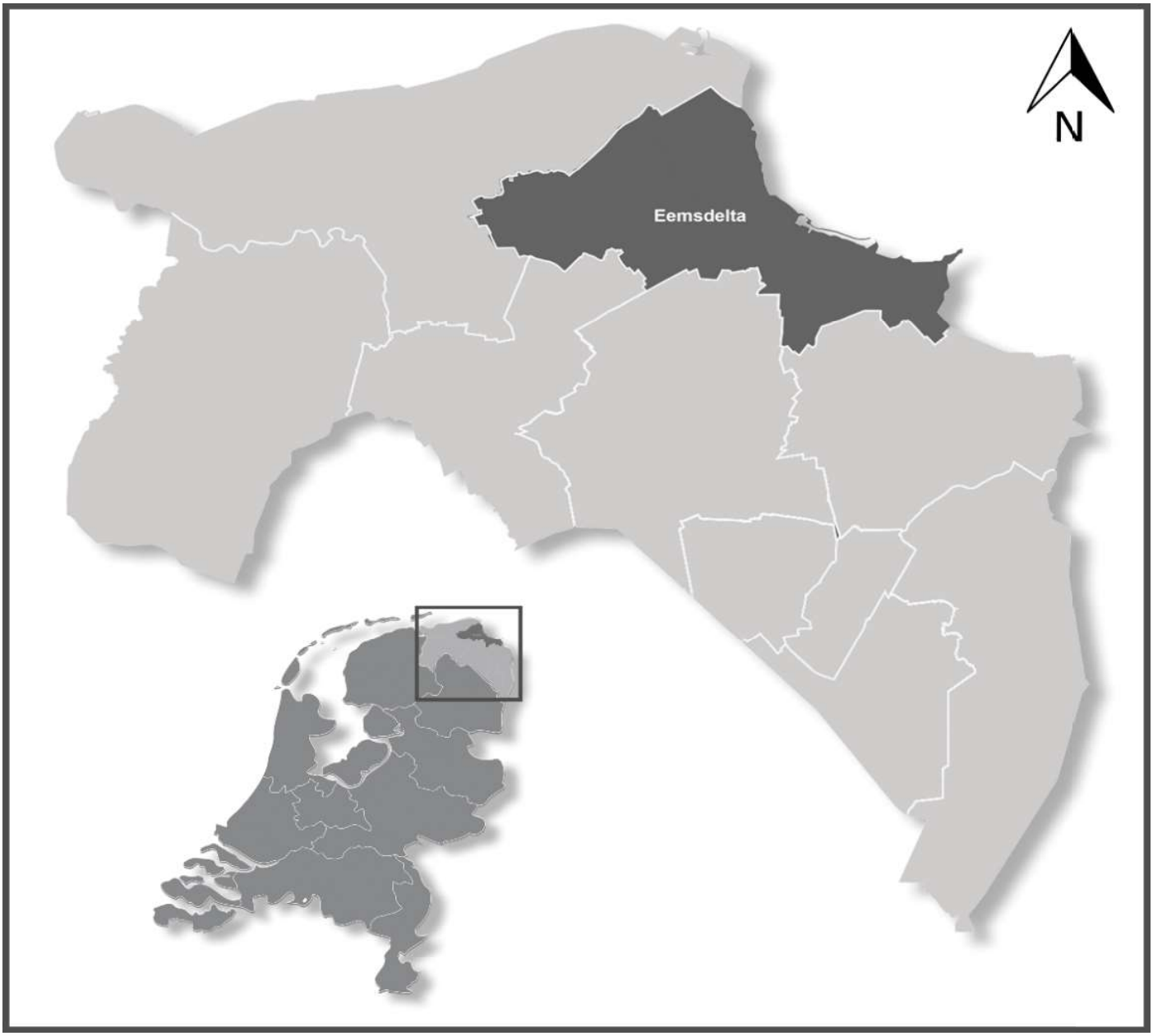

Figure 8: Research area in the North-East of the Netherlands

9. Results

After the data was collected and analysed, I found multiple results. This chapter is divided into three parts. Firstly, after the literature and policy analyses, this thesis argues in favour of a transition within Eemsdelta. This analysis showed that the more traditional forms of governance are not sufficient in the case of Eemsdelta and that the move from shrinkage towards smart shrinkage must be seen as a transition. This serves as an introduction to the second part of this chapter in which I discuss how governance arrangements have evolved using the dependencies of EGT. I explain what changes have occurred over time and how they evolved. As noted, understanding change has become one of the most important challenges for developing new strategies, governance arrangements and theories (van Assche et al., 2014). Within this second part, interdependency is used to explain the role of citizens participation and the roles that the municipality and other governmental layers can take within the transition towards smart shrinkage. It is important here to look both at willingness to act as well as the ability to act, applicable to citizens and government. The last part of this result section combines the first two parts and offers a future perspective. The analyses made in the first two parts form the basis for guidelines that shape a possible future path for the municipality Eemsdelta. These guidelines form the foundation of the smart shrinkage wheel presented in this part. This wheel functions as a reference point within the transition towards smart shrinkage according to the principles of transition management. Important to note up front is the fact that this wheel shows how the municipality of Eemsdelta could act, it does not dictate that it definitely should act this way. It forms a possible pathway including all important aspects of the transition, but it is not the only pathway.

9.1 The transition towards smart shrinkage

Shrinkage and declining levels of liveability have been the reason for the province, the municipality and many institutions connected to take action a couple of years ago. Since then, many policy documents have been published, all focused on the effects of shrinkage and its influence on liveability (Dijkstal & Mans, 2009; Province of Groningen, 2015; Municipality of Eemsdelta, 2020; Geuting et al., 2019; RWLP, 2016). Policy analysis shows that the way towards smart shrinkage must be seen as a transition. To enhance liveability within areas facing shrinkage, Dijkstal & Mans (2009) performed an independent analysis focusing on three goals, (1) a paradigm shift in thinking and acting upon shrinkage, (2) formulating governance arrangements and creating strategies for problems in the short-term, and (3) the development of a perspective and structural solution in the long term. These development goals do fit within the view of sustainable development as explained by Loorbach (2010), referring to persistent problems in which clear solutions are not existing and cannot be solved in the short term (Loorbach et al., 2015), but need long-term visions through specific types of networks and decision-making (Loorbach, 2010). As noted, these problems, shrinkage and declining levels of liveability, are wicked problems problem which are highly complex. The quantitative data shows that citizens experience declining levels of liveability caused by closing facilities, declining safety levels, the housing market and employment opportunities. Solutions to these persistent problems should be seen as transitions, in which transition management is based on multi-level, multi-phase and multi-dimensional processes of structural change in societal systems (Loorbach, 2010). These policy documents, plans and programmes show thus an important guideline.

Guideline 1: Smart shrinkage requires a multi-actor, multi-level and multi-dimensional governance approach

To explain that Eemsdelta should see the move towards smart shrinkage as a transition, the context surrounding the goals stated by Dijkstal & Mans (2009) will be explored further below.

A paradigm shift within shrinkage.

The societal challenges in Appingedam, Loppersum and Delfzijl became more difficult every year, are highly complex and dynamic and ask for a joint and supported approach (ADL, 2021). It is impossible to escape the effects of shrinkage, but it is possible to change course (Province of Groningen, 2013). Until recently the municipality of Eemsdelta failed to anticipate shrinkage, they have responded (Verwest & van Dam, 2009). To achieve smart shrinkage a paradigm shift is needed from fighting against shrinkage towards anticipating and accompany shrinkage (ROB, 2012). Eemsdelta started late with acknowledging and anticipating shrinkage (Dijkstal & Mans, 2009), but the first steps have been made, by not combatting shrinkage but by lowering the negative effects of shrinkage (Province of Groningen, 2020). Smart shrinkage requires a new way of planning, away from the blueprint planning and zoning plans. Planning instruments must be used in a different way which asks for a different attitude (Zuidema, 2013). An attitude that deals with uncertainty and structural complexity, to work from there on towards high levels of liveability within Eemsdelta (Zuidema, 2013). It means no clear-cut rules and policies, but local and regional guidelines. While steps have been taken in the direction of smart shrinkage, it is too early to say that Eemsdelta achieved smart shrinkage (Province of Groningen, 2020). EGT is one of the two pillars of achieving smart shrinkage, as shown in the conceptual model in figure 7. Exploring the path chosen in the past and the goal dependencies between actors and institutions are helping to see how to structure the paradigm shift. It gives direction within the transition.

Short term- long term

A second important aspect of transition management is that this form of governance is especially appropriate to deal with long-term changes which are rooted in different domains of society, across varying levels (Loorbach, 2010). For those wicked problems, it is difficult to find solutions in the short term. A multi-dimensional approach is needed in which both short- and long-term visions are established. This is also visualized in the conceptual model in figure 7. Where EGT and citizen participation form the pillars of achieving smart shrinkage, it is the multi-dimensional approach that comprehensive foundation surrounding the transition. The interaction between short-term and innovative ideas and the long-term comprehensive visions showed within the conceptual model visualizes the importance.

Shrinkage with a long-term perspective does not have to be a big problem as informed decisions can be made. However, in Eemsdelta shrinkage both influences the number of people, as well as the number of households and the effects, are already visible (Dijkstal & Mans, 2009). John, working in the educational sector in Eemsdelta, clearly explains this by stating

'It [problems caused by shrinkage] has to do with social problems. Traditionally, within the boundaries of the Municipality of Delfzijl, there were quite some people at the bottom of the social ladder. People who are dependent on social security, people who are at a distance from the labour market. There is a certain social disruption, that must be anticipated. That is of course quite a challenge for the municipality. You will have to help people find jobs. You will have to offer people a future perspective'

This makes shrinkage a structural problem which make the problems urgent. There are no clear solutions in the short term and the effects are already felt at the moment. It is not possible anymore to develop well-considered solutions for the long-term, because Eemsdelta needs the solutions as soon as possible. In Eemsdelta shrinkage is already urgent, while not all municipal administrators seem to realize that (Dijkstal & Mans, 2009). It is an urgent trend, and it will continue to be so, as, according to the province of Groningen (2020), it will form risks for liveability and economy in the coming 10 to 20 years. The effects of shrinkage are thus expected to continue for at least one generation.

Where in situations of growth it is easier to implement concrete plans and see that plan carried out, the function of plans in areas facing shrinkage is twofold (Zuidema, 2013). Firstly, it must form a guideline for the future and secondly it must make proposals feasible for intervention. Zuidema (2013) explains that the short- and long-term must be related and the interaction between short term interventions and long-term ambitions are becoming more important in regions facing shrinkage. . It is remarkable that this long-term vision is not mentioned in the coalition agreement of Eemsdelta (Municipality of Eemsdelta, 2020). Relating short- and long-term means that plans must be able to deal with uncertainties and must be adaptable (Zuidema, 2013). When making plans for shrinkage, in the best scenario smart shrinkage, Eemsdelta must take a broader view, looking at development on a larger scale within multiple sectors. It should take the long term as a starting point for thinking about plans. These plans should be adaptive, based on cooperation across levels that can reflect the speed of development (Zuidema, 2013).

Citizen involvement and governance

Citizen participation and governance is the second pillar of the transition, as visualized in the conceptual model. The coalition agreement of 2021, states that the mission is to create a futureproof and liveable Eemsdelta which should be reached in collaboration with all citizens (Municipality of Eemsdelta, 2020). To reach smart shrinkage municipalities must collaborate with other governments, social institutions, and all citizens, it is even argued that governments should ask more responsibility and effort from their citizens to reach the goals (Province of Groningen, 2015). . The societal challenges caused by shrinkage ask for the collaboration of all stakeholders (Province of Groningen, 2020). Citizen participation is thus a cornerstone, for that reason one of the two pillars, within the transition. Research of the SPG (2016) [the social planning agency of Groningen] showed that 90% of the citizens agree with the municipality and citizens working together, but only 36% thinks that the municipality involves the citizens sufficiently. The quantitative data of this thesis shows even worse results, only 24% of the respondents feel sufficiently involved by the municipality. While the municipality and province state that one of their main goals is to include citizens (Province of Groningen, 2013; Municipality of Eemsdelta, 2020), this is thus not felt this way by citizens. Simon, working for a social organisation, explains how this problem is felt by youth in the area,

' Youth should be more included by the municipality, when they are involved then they will have a stronger feeling and stay longer in the region. When you are not involved, and everything is decided on your behalf then they leave. I am convinced that young people can contribute they have great ideas, but it feels like the municipality favours housing development and facilities over the youth within the area.'

9.2 Evolutionary Governance Theory

Understanding the evolving character of governance arrangements and change is important for developing new short- and long-term policies and strategies. EGT shows how exploring this evolution can form the basis for a new understanding of changes within society (van Assche et al., 2014). The conceptual model visualises that smart shrinkage depends on EGT and citizen participation. By using the three dependencies I discovered what paths have been chosen in the past and how it influences decision-making processes in the present. Every governance path is subject to dependencies: path dependency, interdependency, and goal dependency (Ubels et al., 2019; Beunen et al., 2015). Combined with policy documents and the quantitative and qualitative data, this section will form guidelines that can be operationalised and provide direction in the transition towards smart shrinkage.

9.2.1. Path dependency

Shrinkage has an impact on many social domains with housing, facilities, and economic vitality as the most important ones (Province of Groningen, 2015). Those important domains show a clear path chosen in Eemsdelta, a path focusing on the spatial physical aspects within the municipality, the hardware of shrinkage (Hospers, 2010). Specific policies have been addressed to deal with the particularities of shrinkage, especially focusing on housing development (Beunen et al., 2020). The housing development was only allowed if these were needed to facilitate internal growth. Governments needed to find a balance between new developments, restructuring and demolishing houses (Beunen et al., 2020), which should be formed in the living and liveability plans (Province of Groningen, 2020). Dijkstal & Mans (2009) showed that in the last 10 years more than 5500 social rental houses have been built, 31% of the total social rental houses within Eemsdelta. Eemsdelta realised that new housing development was not the solution for shrinkage. The municipality accepted population decline as a permanent phenomenon and policies needed to be revised by including all stakeholders (Beunen et al., 2020). The new to be taken actions are presented in the Living and Liveability plans, which did not focus only on housing development but on creating an attractive living and working area(Municipality of Eemsdelta, 2020, Province of Groningen, 2015 etc.). However, when analysing the plans for 2020 of Loppersum, Delfzijl & Appingedam, the word 'liveability' is mentioned only 10 times in all documents (Municipality of Appingedam, 2020; Municipality of Delfzijl, 2020; Municipality of Loppersum, 2020). In practice, the focus remains on the construction and strengthening of houses, for a future population, new sustainable housing for youth and tiny housing for the elderly (Municipality of Eemsdelta, 2020). However, there is limited demand, and this led to the deterioration of houses, the public space and social segregation which is strongly present within some neighbourhoods (Dijkstal & Mans, 2009). Max, working for the municipality of Eemsdelta, explains how this social segregation is caused,

'If people are high on the social ladder and have a lot of perspective, they often leave Eemsdelta and then you will be left with the socially weaker ones, which of course affects the social quality of life. The social foundation of certain areas is removed, by which I mean the people who are able to organize and make connections, the cement of an area falls away'

The focus on hardware does also include a focus on the facilities within the area. Due to shrinkage, many facilities are forced to close their doors and the municipality of Eemsdelta has to improve and concentrate the facilities that are left within the region (Province of Groningen, 2015). It is difficult to attract new shops and facilities to the region, and it became impossible for the municipality to finance the facilities within the region as the financial resources diminished (Municipality of Eemsdelta, 2020). Basic facilities like a school and a doctor facility are needed, but the concentration of facilities within the centre of villages has led to a decrease in the total amount of facilities (Municipality of Eemsdelta, 2020). Beunen et al. (2020) pointed out that for many citizens, the loss of facilities and services is not a big issue as they can go to the city or travel a bit further. However, we have to take in mind that facilities also have a social function. This social function is often forgotten by the municipality, as explained by Max,

'Since the new municipality was formed there is more attention for the social factor of liveability, that was hardly or not at all before. I think in terms of social problems and the social quality of the neighbourhoods in particular that the social quality of life is moderate to poor. Still, since January {after merging into Eemsdelta} there is a social program, focusing on social cohesion and connection within neighbourhoods, but its impossible to say something about the results'

Based on the policy analysis it can be stated that the focus is mainly on hardware, the facilities, and physical structures within the municipality, it seems that the mindware of the citizens is often forgotten, which affect the quality of life. The quantitative data, the opinion of the citizens, confirms this view, as they state that the biggest challenge lies with the social component of shrinkage. If Eemsdelta wants to achieve smart shrinkage, it must put a stronger focus on social structures and services for all citizens. This will also stimulate highly educated and youth to stay within the area, which relates to the software of the population (Hospers, 2010). Inferred from this, guideline 2 is formulated as follows.

Guideline 2: In order to achieve smart shrinkage, hardware as well as mindware must be on the agenda, to reduce the negative effects of shrinkage on the software, the socio-cultural composition of the population.

9.2.2. Interdependencies

Interdependencies relate to the interaction, collaboration and trust between different actors and institutions. What structures stimulate this interaction and how do the decisions of one actor influence the decisions of other actors. These interdependencies shape the roles of government, institutions, and citizens. The goal of the municipality of Eemsdelta is to realise a future-proof and liveable environment, which should be created with courage, ambition and especially with the enthusiasm and help of its citizens (Eemsdelta, 2020). Eemsdelta strives for inclusive participation in which all citizens are participating, still, clear interdependencies and different roles for both citizens and municipality can be discovered. Two interdependencies stand out in particular based on the questionnaires and interviews. Firstly, within government, the interaction and collaboration between municipality, province, and the national government. Secondly, between government and citizens. The relation between citizen participation and municipality is not that easy as it sounds, it requires interaction, trust, and close cooperation (Province of Groningen, 2015). As the data revealed, some of these things are missing or lacking quality. This results in different roles for citizens and municipalities to play to achieve governance arrangements that stimulate smart shrinkage. First, the two interdependencies will be discussed after which the focus shift towards the roles of both citizens as well as the municipality during the process of citizen participation.

<u>Within government</u>

The effects of shrinkage are visible and affect the liveability in Eemsdelta in multiple. The quantitative data shows that only 60% of the participants are satisfied with the liveability within Eemsdelta and 80% of the participants agrees or does not disagree with the fact that shrinkage influences liveability within the municipality. Beunen et al. (2020) state that the municipality acknowledges the need for regional cooperation between them, the province, the national government, and other organizations. A joint approach is needed in which a coherent strategy regarding housing development, facilities and public space is created. Whereas every governmental level has its own role within the policy process, this regional cooperation proves to be difficult (Dijkstal & Mans, 2009). The province has a prominent coordination and funding role (Beunen et al., 2020), but Dijkstal & Mans (2009) highlight the other side of the spectrum by indicating that the municipality is bothered by all the detailed interferences of the province. The municipality is restricted by limited funding, knowledge and ideas from the province which gives the municipality of Eemsdelta limited power to make their own decisions, as explained by Tim who works for the municipality of Eemsdelta,

‘ We as the municipality receive [money] from the national government and the province and we are obliged to spend it to certain sectors and projects, think of social support and youth care. The municipality is bounded by many requirements on how we should spend the money, more than we have. Often it is said that the municipality has become the executive body of the province, we make few decisions ourselves. In that sense, the space that municipalities have to organize their own municipality is limited, also in Eemsdelta.’

So, while the municipality is sometimes struggling within the cooperation with the province, experts also explain that the province is doing quite well and that it should play a more explicit role as a director within the transition towards smart shrinkage (Dijkstal & Mans, 2009). However, the province is not able to facilitate and direct the transition alone, it needs the input, resources and contact of the municipalities, but also the resources of the national government are important (Province of Groningen, 2015). The path chosen in the past caused a massive decline of the financial resources of both the municipality and the province, which is sometimes forgotten by the higher levels of government, as explained by Max, working for the municipality of Eemsdelta,

‘Quite some municipalities within the Netherlands often do not have the resources to initiate larger projects for and by citizens, we need the help of the province. They often stipulate that the municipality must be a co-funder, but that is often not possible for Eemsdelta in large projects. So, our, financial, resources are often used to boost projects and to get money from other funds.’

Where the need for regional cooperation was acknowledged, it is currently needed more than ever. This interdependency also shows the link between EGT and citizen participation, the two pillars of the transition. The municipality is sometimes struggling with the collaboration of higher governmental levels, at the expense of citizen participation. The policy documents and qualitative data showed that there is quite some chaos after the different municipalities are united into Eemsdelta. The current regional strategy should be improved, it must make distinctions between roles and responsibilities of all governmental layers. The resources of the national government, the contacts of the municipality to create place-based projects and the bird view of the province are all needed to stimulate smart shrinkage. The conceptual model explains this link between the dependencies of EGT and the local context. Even though EGT provides an overview of decisions made in the past, it is the local context surrounding the theories that define the direction to go for Eemsdelta. The box surrounding the conceptual framework in figure 7 visualizes this interaction between the abstract theories and the local, place-based, context. Out of this interdependency within government follows the third guideline,

<u>Guideline 3: Smart shrinkage can be stimulated by revived cooperation between the different governmental levels.</u>

Between government & citizens

To address shrinkage and declining levels of liveability, the province developed in cooperation with the municipality, the city of Groningen and social organisations an agenda in which a clear strategy is stated (Province of Groningen, 2015). They developed the agenda based on challenges that are most heavily felt and the agenda thus clearly addresses the interdependency between the government and its citizens, or as Lynn, working in the educational sector on behalf of the municipality, explained

'Citizens must be included; it is questionable in what way and how often, but they must be included. The municipality must reach out for its citizens instead of determining on behalf of its citizens. That happening too often. The municipality thinks to know what the citizens need, they conduct research, look at the result and based on that they make decisions.'

Citizens of Eemsdelta will be confronted with changes in their daily lives and the liveability of the villages (Municipality of Eemsdelta, 2020). The province of Groningen (2015) adds that to anticipate shrinkage, a joint approach with citizens, municipalities, social organisations, and the national government is needed. The municipality states in its agenda that it has a stronger focus on the social problems within the area, for example, social cohesion, poverty, and citizen participation. My data shows that all factors influence liveability, which, according to the quantitative data, did not increase in the last 5 years according to 86% of the citizens. Most of the citizens agree that change is needed, citizens want to participate, they feel responsible for the area, as explained by Max who works for the municipality of Eemsdelta,

'Citizens feel responsible, they want to be able to do and organize things themselves and the municipality must facilitate that too. On the other hand, you also see, that the government is not able to act alone, they needed society. So, there is some kind of pressure from the government towards residents to do more themselves'

Guideline 4: Smart shrinkage requires a joint approach in which citizen participation is essential

Whereas the desire for an inclusive society in which all citizens participate is acknowledged by the municipality, it has shown its difficulties. The data shows that only 25% of the respondents agree when asked if the municipality is including them sufficiently. For a long time, the municipality has chosen a path in which citizens were not, fully, included. Decisions were made *on behalf of* the citizens and not *in collaboration with* the citizens. Research conducted in 2016 by the SPG (2016) showed that only 4% of the participants feel that the municipality is stimulating citizen initiatives and 13% notices that municipalities and organisations are collaborating with its citizens. Quantitative data of this thesis shows as noted before, that 25% of the people think that the municipality is sufficiently including its citizens. While the province and the municipality acknowledge the need for citizen participation, citizens do not feel included. This while the municipality and the province state that citizens must be included as they are 'the capital' of the area (Province of Groningen, 2020)

This had negative consequences for one of the most important factors of interdependencies, trust. In 2015 reports of the province of Groningen (2020) stated that the factor trust needs more attention. In Parkstad-Limburg, the second top shrinking region in the Netherlands, research showed that leadership and trust are the most important factors to activate citizens. When trust and leadership are present and citizens are given the possibility to participate, then citizens will take the responsibility for their future (Kerngroep Structuurvisie Parkstad Limburg, 2003).

In Eemsdelta it is questionable to what extent citizens are given space to undertake initiatives and to participate within projects. The province stated that Groningen is full of citizen initiatives focusing on liveability (Province of Groningen, 2015). However, the province also explained that it is difficult for initiatives to start up. Research of the SPG (2016) showed that citizens are convinced that the municipality is responsible for involving citizens and should financially support initiatives and collaborate within the initiatives. The SPG continues by explaining that the municipality, on the other hand, wants to give more responsibility to the citizens, while only 47% feel responsible for liveability in the area. The need for citizen participation to reach smart shrinkage is acknowledged, but there is uncertainty and unclarity about the role of both citizens and the municipality.

My data confirms the results of the SPG. The path chosen in the past has led to declining levels of trust in both the municipality as well as the province. Data showed only 25% agrees with the statement 'do you trust your municipality'. The province is scoring even worse with only 22% of the citizens trusting them. Without trust in the 'leaders' of the area, people are not feeling responsible, are not motivated to participate and this led to declining levels of citizen participation. Data shows that at the moment only 15% of the respondents are involved in citizen initiatives. Those initiatives and citizen participation are essential within the transition. Levels of trust are low as research showed. During the interviews, it became clear that this counts for both adults as well as youth, as Simon (social organisation) and Max (municipality) explain

'Youth has lost trust in the municipality. I have given multiple examples in which the municipality does not listen to the youth of the area. The younger generation really lost its trust.' (Simon)

'The municipality started working on the relationship between government and society to stimulate trust in the government. 10 years the trust in the municipality was really low. Now, we work more with consultation and collaboration of citizens and stimulate citizens more to start their own initiatives. In this way trust of citizens in their municipality has to grow.' (Max)

The acknowledgement of the importance of trust between municipality and citizen shows the role of trust within the transition towards smart shrinkage. Data shows that because citizens do not trust the governmental levels, they are feeling less responsible and this missing leadership among citizens is at the expense of citizen participation. This led to the fifth guideline,

Guideline 5: Trust of citizens in their municipality is an essential cornerstone of citizen participation

Role's citizens and municipality

Guidelines 4 and 5 show that cooperation and trust are important, while the interdependencies show that cooperation and trust between citizens and the municipality are not clear cut. The research question of this thesis explores the importance of citizen participation. Citizen participation is essential in achieving smart shrinkage, as visualized in the conceptual model, and the previous guidelines show the importance of cooperation and a joint approach. For that reason, it is important to look at how citizen participation can be stimulated. When looking at the citizen participation ladder of Arnstein (1969) and the ambitions of the municipality it is clear that the preferred role for citizens ranges from the informing role onwards. The municipality clearly explains that they want to take responsibility together with its citizens (municipality of Eemsdelta, 2020). The agenda of the province of Groningen (2015) states that anticipating shrinkage requires a collaborative approach between the province, municipality, and its citizens. From a government point of view, it is expected that the municipality will approach every single project with the same amount of resources, energy, and enthusiasm. This means customization and place-based projects and initiatives to achieve smart shrinkage. However, based on research of the SPD (2016) and my data, it can be stated that this is currently not happening as also explained by Tim who works for the municipality of Eemsdelta,

'Both municipality as well as its citizens are responsible for their living environment. But there is tension between them, to what extent does a municipality want to intervene. The focus of the municipality is on people in need, while the people who do not *need help in the first place are the ones that take initiative. The municipality is paying less attention to these leaders, the ones that determine liveability. So that is actually crazy.'*

From a citizen's point of view, it is thus important that citizens develop leadership, and that the municipality pays attention to those people. The municipality explains that leadership and effort from citizen results in many advantages (Municipality of Eemsdelta, 2020). Those local initiatives improve liveability and stimulate smart shrinkage, the creativity and responsibility of people are important. Still, it is unsure what role citizens must play. Should they have full responsibility? Can they make local decisions? When looking at the questionnaires and interviews it is doubtful. The questionnaires show that only 15% is involved within local initiatives, 85% of the respondent's state that liveability has not improved in the last 5 years. This is in contrast with what Max said,

'Citizens want to participate and sometimes they demand involvement. The municipality learned lessons from the past, as things have gone totally wrong. This was the moment that citizens stepped in. So, on the one hand, we see that citizens really want to participate and on the other hand, we see that they also claim this position.'

Citizen initiatives are thus important, and the municipality must offer resources, room for ideas and must approach every project individually to create place-based projects. Citizens, on the other side, are expected to show enthusiasm, leadership, and responsibility (Municipality of Eemsdelta, 2020), but citizens should not get full responsibility, as my data shows that 75% of the respondents feel that the municipality must keep the responsibility and it looks like the municipality does not want to give full responsibility to its citizens (SPG, 2016).

Guideline 6: An active attitude of citizens, and thus degrees of citizen power on the Arnstein ladder, are essential within citizen participation.

Besides the different roles for citizens, it is also important to look at the role the municipality has to play. The ROB explains that it is important to assume as a municipality that what is needed arises within society itself. After that, it is the society that must approach the municipality with their need for support (ROB, 2012). This is in contrast with my data where less than 2% thinks that citizens have the first step to take, it is the municipality that has to involve them. Still, the ROB makes a clear distinction in the role of the government, relating to public value. In the past public value was explained as 'what the public values', which means what people want and what they find important. The ROB explains that this definition should be changed to 'what adds value to the public sphere', this definition focuses on the wider

public interests instead of the individual one and comes with different roles to play for the municipality (ROB,2012; Province of Groningen, 2015). Research of the SPG (2016) shows that citizens of Eemsdelta the SPG strengthen their argument by stating that the municipality must work together with citizens, must supplement, and stimulate them. This requires different roles within different domains. The province of Groningen (2015) agrees with the results of the SPG and explains that there is not one role to play for the municipality, this depends on situation and subject and is also dependent on leadership and responsibility of the citizens. This is in accordance with my data, as more than 75% of the respondents agree with the fact that the municipality is responsible for involving citizens. Max, from the municipality of Eemsdelta, explains how the municipality should do that

'The municipality must facilitate citizen initiatives, or as I rather call it an 'inviting municipality'. We have to tempt citizens to participate and when they will participate, we have to be a sparring partner. This means that we have to adjust our service and possibilities towards society, every time we have to ask ourselves the questions what does society want? What can they do themselves? And how can we as a municipality help?'

The municipality makes decisions based on knowledge and needs from society, which they have to connect with the wishes of society (Municipality of Eemsdelta, 2020). According to the ROB (2012), local knowledge is essential here, only in this way a municipality can understand what society needs. So, while the most appropriate role for a municipality is to facilitate citizen participation, it becomes more difficult as the ways citizens participated in the past are changing (Province of Groningen, 2015). More often partnerships and cooperation's between citizens, municipality and market parties are developed. It is a social process with responsibility for citizens and organisations. Adding to that is the municipality faced with massive cuts from the province and national government, which makes that facilitating is sometimes not possible, as explained by Max,

'We are faced with a massive austerity operation which makes it uncertain how the future will present itself. The municipality has to announce which sectors will receive less money, but, surely, the budget for citizen participation and initiatives will be reduced. So, in the end, we will probably have fewer resources to facilitate citizen initiatives.'

So, while the municipality has multiple roles to play, it often picks the facilitating role, where it acknowledges the importance of the initiatives and the citizen participation and helps with achieving results by providing ideas, knowledge and often money (ROB, 2012). However, due to the austerity operation and the changing forms of initiatives and participation from society, the best option for a municipality is to find the balance between facilitating and stimulating. This facilitating and stimulating role is sometimes difficult to execute because of declined, financial, resources over the last years. The role the municipality wants to play has to do with information sharing, helping with the institutionalization of projects and stimulating people, whereas citizens expect the municipality to step in financially. These different expectations form a barrier within the collaboration between citizens and the municipality. When the municipality of Eemsdelta climbs the ladder and stimulates citizen participation then it acknowledges the need for a certain project and is it helping to get the project off the ground, but not in a financial way (ROB, 2012). This raises opposition from the citizens, while the municipality does not have many options, as explained by Max who works with the municipality of Eemsdelta explains,

'The best situation would be if we could facilitate citizen initiatives from our own resources, but many municipalities are struggling to that because of a lack of resources, also Eemsdelta. The municipality is often forced to approach the province and charities, but they only cooperate if the municipality is also financially participating. For that reason, the money and resources that a municipality has, are used as 'boost money' to stimulate other parties like businesses, provinces, and charities to invest in the initiatives'

Guideline 7: The municipality must climb the government ladder and find balance between a facilitating role and a stimulating role.

9.2.3. Goal dependency

Goal dependencies relate to the influence of shared visions for the future that help explain why certain actions and decisions must be made (Beunen et al., 2020). Politics becomes more than coordination within areas facing shrinkage, vison of the future must be translated into current policies and plans (van Assche et al., 2014). Within Eemsdelta two clear goal dependencies can be found, the focus from growth towards accepting shrinkage and the interaction between short-term and long-term.

Eemsdelta did for a long time not acknowledge shrinkage and tried to stimulate growth by development. Now it has accepted shrinkage and focuses on limiting the effects of growth (Province of Groningen, 2020), but this had influenced the strategies and the way of planning. Shrinkage requires an adaptive way of regulating and planning in which decisions made in the present can give distorted results (Zuidema, 2013). Facilitating shrinkage through coordinated strategies and redevelopments became the new goal that was widely shared by many of the involved parties, making it possible to work together towards a new future (Beunen et al., 2020). And this shared ambition of the region is clear for both citizens and municipality, collaboration, transparency, courage, and positivism (Municipality of Eemsdelta, 2020).

Still, there is discussion about how to achieve this goal, the municipality explains that shrinkage delivers big challenges for the future, while Zuidema explains that shrinkage areas do not need different planning methods, only another way of using them. It needs a stronger focus on a longer time horizon to show the direction of development and a short-term action horizon with a short development cycle (Zuidema, 2013). What stood out from the policy analysis, is that this long-term vision is not mentioned in the coalition agreement of Eemsdelta (Municipality of Eemsdelta, 2020). The main themes remain focusing on hardware and not on software (Province of Groningen, 2020). For the long-term hardware is important, but my qualitative and quantitative data stresses that in the short-term improvements in the mindware and software, like social cohesion, binding of young highly educated and image of the area are more important. And since Eemsdelta was formed out of the other municipalities there is more attention for mindware and software. Still, many steps have to be made, Max for instance, noted that,

'The money available for social programs [software] is of course not in proportion to what is invested in housing and facilities etc. [hardware]. But there is now much more attention for the social component. Eemsdelta also wants to distinguish itself in this. What it really means is still difficult to say because it has yet to start. But the basis is there to do something with it.'

Citizens show in the questionnaire that social components (mindware) are important for the social structures, safety, and liveability levels. Quantitative data showed that social cohesion is found important by 83% of the respondents and social safety by 93% of the respondents. The municipality focuses on hardware and tries to improve social cohesion by including citizens in the planning process in the form of governance arrangements (Municipality of Eemsdelta, 2020). However, the plans needed must be adaptive and should, as the municipality defines it, 'breath with the speed of development in the larger area' (Zuidema, 2013, p.34). This is not in accordance with the opinion of the citizens who want actions in the short-term to improve the social components of liveability. The municipality is convinced that plans should be adaptive, many ideas about the future of the area are not embedded in plans, norms, and vision, except the ideas about the hardware as this is inescapable. This makes that the ambitions of the municipality are adaptable and can easily change when new insights emerge (Beunen et al., 2020). Some clear goal dependencies have been formed in the past but by uniting different municipalities into the municipality Eemsdelta a new start has been made. Ambitions are formed and with the switch from fighting shrinkage to allowing shrinkage and trying to deal with it in the best way possible, Eemsdelta made a positive switch. It is the start of the paradigm shift mentioned before in the theoretical framework. This paradigm shift resulted from a different perspective in which short- and long-term are better connected and in which plans are more adaptive. Out of this theory, confirmed by my data, follows the following guideline,

Guideline 8: Ambitions among stakeholders are essential, but plans must be adaptive

10. Wheel of Smart Shrinkage

While shrinkage is not a new phenomenon within Eemsdelta, it seems difficult to find a proper strategy for dealing with it. According to the province of Groningen (2015) does Eemsdelta wants to be a showcase example for other municipalities, but my quantitative and qualitative show that this goal has definitely not been reached yet. Upfront, it must be said that the municipality has made a fresh start in 2021, by combining Appingedam, Delfzijl and Loppersum into one municipality, but this also brought a lot of organisation with it, as all three municipalities had their specific problems and focus points. Now a new municipality with new municipal administrators has to come up with one strategy which requires cooperation, interaction, and communication, sometimes at the expense of citizens. The results show, firstly, the importance of citizen participation and the difficulties experienced. Secondly, it delivered guidelines for the municipality to hold on during the transition towards smart shrinkage. These guidelines are mentioned below to provide an overview.

Guideline 1: Smart shrinkage requires a multi-actor, multi-level, and multi-dimensional governance approach

Guideline 2: In order to achieve smart shrinkage, hardware as well as mindware must be on the agenda, to reduce the negative effects on the software, the socio-cultural composition of the population.

Guideline 3: Smart shrinkage can be stimulated by revived cooperation between the different governmental levels.

Guideline 4: Smart shrinkage requires a joint approach in which citizen participation is essential

Guideline 5: Trust of citizens in their municipality is an essential cornerstone of citizen participation

Guideline 6: An active attitude of citizens, and thus degrees of citizen power on the Arnstein ladder, are essential within citizen participation.

Guideline 7: The municipality must climb the government ladder and find balance between a facilitating role and a stimulating role.

Guideline 8: Ambitions among stakeholders are essential, but plans must be adaptive

These guidelines have been captured in the so-called ‘Wheel of smart shrinkage’. Within the centre we find the goal of the strategy, achieving smart shrinkage, the goal to anticipate shrinkage while keeping high levels of liveability (Hospers, 2010). It requires a paradigm shift in the way the municipality responds to shrinkage (Peters et al., 2018), while the municipality will use the same planning methods, they have to use them differently by acknowledging the importance of citizen participation, as there is a positive relationship between citizen participation and the experience of the local living environment (Gieling & Haartsen, 2016).

The wheel functions from inside outwards. The results section started by explaining that dealing with shrinkage is a wicked problem. If Eemsdelta wants to reach smart shrinkage, then it needs a paradigm shift and thus a transition. The transition theory is built around three important, but abstract, concepts namely, multi-actor, multi-scale and multi-dimensional. These are the three most important concepts around the centre of the wheel. The wheel moves from abstract to concrete parameters focusing on the most important domains to focus on for both municipality as well as citizens. The centre of the wheel, smart shrinkage, requires a transition. This is explained by the ring surrounding smart shrinkage, which shows the multi-actor, multi-scale, and multi-dimensional characteristics of the transition. While all characteristics are important, this thesis specifically focuses on the multi-actor approach, especially the citizen participation part. Results show that steps have to be made regarding trust, leadership, communication, and cooperation.

The outer ring consists of specific parameters for Eemsdelta. Within the multi-dimensional perspective, the focus is on hardware, software and mindware in which the latter two are most crucial. For hardware, it is important that housing and facility plans are combined with liveability plans, which is currently more often happening in Eemsdelta. Mindware focuses on the composition of the population (Hospers, 2010), and the biggest cause for shrinkage is the migration of youth and highly educated. Within the transition to smart shrinkage, the municipality must focus on binding those groups to the area by providing good education, sufficient working opportunities and an attractive work climate. On the other side of the population, a lot of the elderly are and remain in the region. The municipality should strive to provide facilities and housing for those groups, facilities and housing that suits the wishes of those groups. How can the municipality keep involving this large group of citizens as long as possible and thus achieve healthy ageing for all its elderly? Mindware focuses on the social component of shrinkage which was missing for a long time. The municipality must focus on improving social structures, social cohesion, safety and in the end improving liveability in the whole area. This will also have effects on the degree to which citizens are willing to participate.

When looking at the multi-actor approach the municipality must focus on the facilitating and regulating roles that it has. The data and results prove that those are most suitable to stimulate, help and deal with citizen participation. This does not necessarily mean to be financially accountable, but also by bringing ideas to the table, administrative and bureaucratic assistance and supporting people. Citizens have to focus, stimulated by the municipality, on active citizenship. This means being responsible, participating in citizen initiatives and cooperating with the municipality and other citizens. In this way, citizens can climb the ladder and show high degrees of citizen participation as explained by Arnstein (1969). The wheel of smart shrinkage, figure 9, provides direction within the transition.

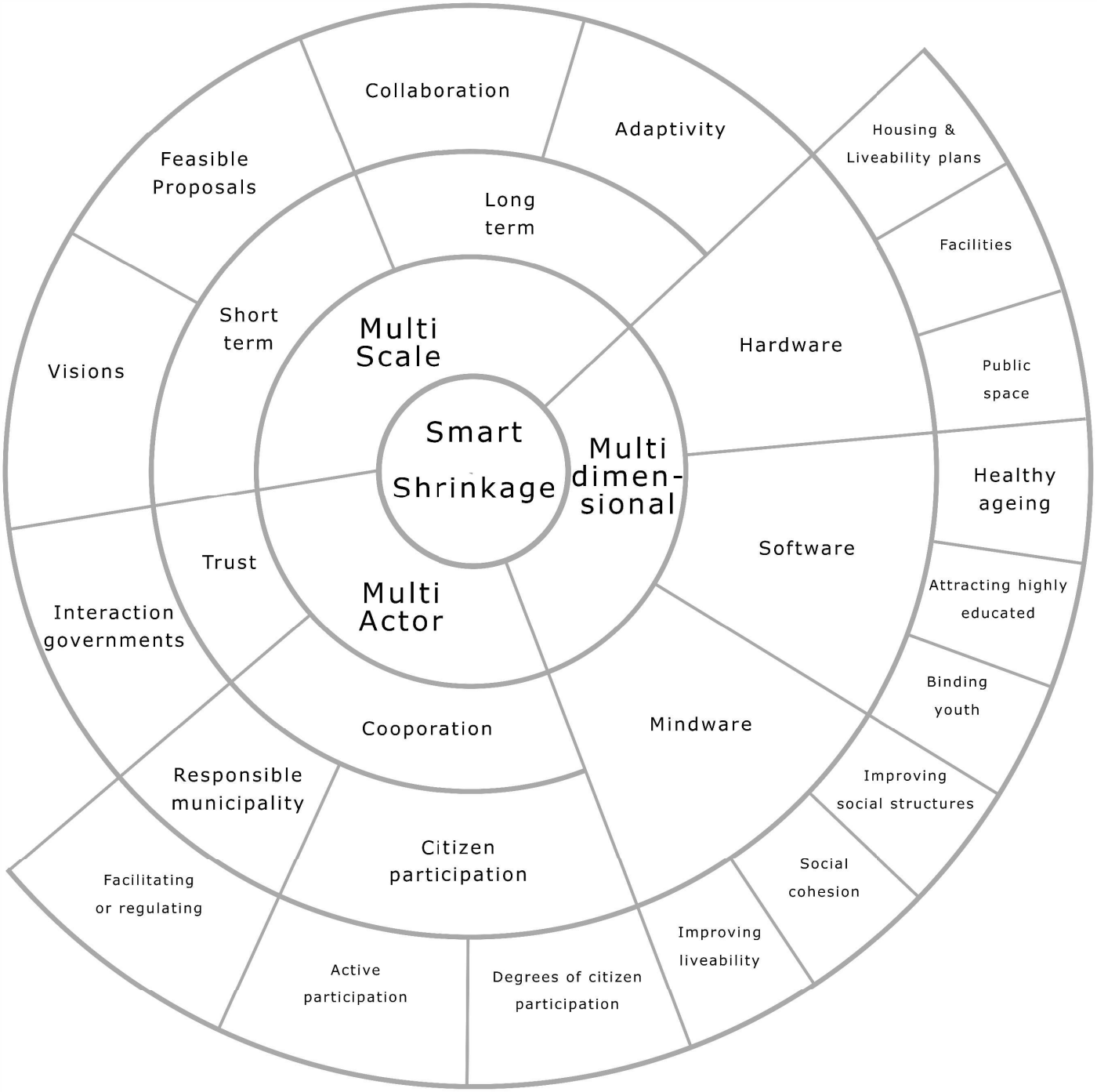

Figure 9: The Wheel of Smart Shrinkage (own made)

As noted in the theoretical framework did Hollander & Németh (2011) came up with four rules in order to find theoretically grounded guidance for smart shrinkage. Combining those theoretical-grounded rules with the practical local guidelines from my research in Eemsdelta delivers the background information for the wheel of shrinkage.

(1) Smart shrinkage planning processes must include and recognize multiple voices, the central goal is to include all stakeholders and remove the barriers that effectively quiet the public (Hollander & Németh, 2011). These rules explain the multi-actor component of the transition. Citizens have higher values of the area if they are included and have the local knowledge of the area to explain what the real problems are. Citizen participation requires active leadership from citizens and transparency and enthusiasm of the municipality in which the municipality is in the service of its citizens and seeks to 'what adds value to the public sphere'.

(2) Smart shrinkage planning processes should be political and deliberative in nature, Hollander & Németh (2011) call for a bottom-up deliberative style including differentiated social groups (Hollander & Németh, 2011). This rule focuses more on the trust of the citizens in government, I argue that this also means a focus on a multi-dimensional approach. Where mindware is also important and not subject to hardware. It is the social structures and trust that stimulate citizen participation and thus a bottom-up political process. Improving the social structures and including all social groups, thus also including youth and people suffering from social problems, increases trust and creates bottom-up processes which in the end makes it easier to create visions and plans.

(3) Planners should be cognizant and transparent and should provide information that enables citizens to recognize power imbalances. This rule is more concerned with the multi-scale component of the transition. The importance of information sharing, collaboration and transparency in the long term requires adaptive plans and collaboration between citizens, companies, governmental levels, and social organizations. This is the joint approach that is required for achieving smart shrinkage. To create this in the long-term, actions and bonds of trust must be formed as soon as possible and thus leaving the paths chosen in the past behind us and focusing on creating a shared goal and ambition.

(4) Smart shrinkage planning processes should be regional in scope, but local in control and implementation (Hollander & Németh, 2011). This rule all comes down to the interaction between the different governmental bodies. Eemsdelta wants to become a showcase example in dealing with shrinkage and the province of Groningen plays an important role in that. Still, the municipality must not become an executive body of the province and must have its own responsibility. A regional scope is of massive importance, but it comes down to place-based projects in which citizens and the municipality work together.

These rules and guidelines are all visualized within the wheel of smart shrinkage and give direction to the municipality of Eemsdelta but can also be used by the province. It is important to notice that the farther outwards one goes within the wheel, the more local and tangible the parameters become. By using this wheel, a new shared goal comes alive.

11. Conclusion & Discussion

Shrinkage is not something bad, it is a trend and municipalities, provinces, countries, and even whole continents need to find ways to deal with this trend. Shrinkage has, as explained in the theoretical framework, effects on many domains and sectors which places pressure on the liveability within communities (Ubels et al., 2019; Martinez-Fernandez et al., 2012; Peters et al., 2018), all these effects create a vicious circle that increases the chances of people moving out, a circle that is difficult to breakthrough. Haase et al. (2012) show that shrinkage happens because of an interplay between different macro-processes, the complexity of shrinkage is explained by its multi-dimensional and multi-scale character (Bontje & Musterd, 2012). The results show that a transition is needed from shrinkage towards smart shrinkage, and this requires a paradigm shift. A shift in the way the municipality is acting, a shift in thinking about the region and a shift in citizens participation. The transition to smart shrinkage seems the way to go, as regions want to keep high levels of liveability while facing shrinkage. Creating a nice, safe, sustainable, and inviting living environment creates social cohesion, social structures and in this way improves the quality of life. As my conceptual framework and Peters et al. (2020) explain should smart shrinkage accommodate and acknowledge diverse voices within the area, processes should allow for democratic public participation and effective negotiation to reach consensus. There is a positive relationship between public participation and a positive evaluation of the environment (Gieling & Haartsen, 2016).

Shrinking areas, experiencing smart shrinkage, have often diverse social linkages and stronger participation ambitions (Peters, 2017). At the heart of these social linkages lie social capital, social inclusion, and social cohesion (Lloyd, 2016). Social capital is based on trust, safety, participation and above all social cohesion. For this social component, ambition, power, and leadership among the citizens are of crucial importance. The cornerstones of this transition are thus citizen participation, trust within government but also within its citizens and of course the shared ambition. Looking at the problem from a planner's perspective it can be seen that steps are made; it is all about making places better together.

This thesis started with questioning the importance of citizen participation within governance arrangements. Based on policy analysis and my data, I can conclude that citizen participation is of great importance. The positive relationship between public participation and the evaluation of the environment shows the importance of citizen participation

and mindware within the transition. This positive link between public participation and these social linkages works in both directions as it can create more sense of place (Leby & Hashim, 2010). Shrinkage can trigger citizens within the area to participate. There is no one-size fit all solution for shrinkage, nor for the decline of the quality of life for people living in rural shrinking areas (Haase et al., 2013), so capacity-building and reaching consensus among all stakeholders, including citizens strengthens the possible strategy. Governance creates and solves problems, it finds solutions by using different tools, (Beunen et al., 2015). Van Assche et al. (2019) explains that institutional capacity-building is an important factor that influences the way transitions are dealt with. Other factors that contribute to this are the role of government, the governance systems, actors involved and the extent to which societies are able and willing to imagine alternative futures. Municipalities cannot make the transition alone, both financially, politically but also socially. Active citizens are needed to create place-based projects, projects that address the real issues faced in Eemsdelta. Citizens live in the area 24/7 and know what going on, they are the key to a successful transition within Eemsdelta. Concluding, citizen participation is according to the data and many other authors mentioned before of massive importance. It requires a paradigm shift, and it requires those who have 'power' to devolve it to those who do not have this power. Participation without this redistribution of power is a frustrating process for the powerless (Arnstein, 2019). It helps to build strong local democracy by developing high forms of social capital which in its turn lays the foundation for collaborative actions for the common good of the community or even broader the whole society (Cuthill & Fien, 2005). Cuthill & Fien continue their argument by stating that the ultimate goal of citizen participation is to reach institutional capacity building

Exploring and acknowledging the importance of citizen participation resulted in the wheel of smart shrinkage that shows a possible strategy based on institutional capacity-building among all stakeholders. Whereas the guidelines provided in this thesis focus specifically on Eemsdelta, they, together with the wheel of smart shrinkage, are generalisable. Eemsdelta wants to become a showcase example of how shrinkage can be transformed into smart shrinkage, and these guidelines provide the direction to go for other places. Eemsdelta experienced a rather slow start, which is not surprising as the municipality is created at the start of this year (2021). Now, the first phase of 'chaos' is over it is time to take a future outlook and become this showcase example. This thesis started by explaining that everywhere in Europe, cities, towns, and villages, from old industrial areas and peripheral places to new towns and capitals, will lose or are losing inhabitants (Haase et al., 2012). In the Netherlands, one-third of the municipalities will experience shrinkage. Still, at the moment the overall population of the Netherlands is growing. Just like Eemsdelta, many areas are stimulating growth through development, but shrinkage requires an adaptive way of planning and regulating in which decisions for the future must be made now. So, while the Netherlands, or even Europe, is not fully planning for the 'shrinking future' they need to start acting upon it, to smoothen the transition and maintain liveability levels in the future. While the wheel of shrinkage focuses on Eemsdelta, the inner rings are rather abstract and form the starting point for a planning strategy towards smart shrinkage according to the ideals of transition management. Other countries can have other parameters in the outer ring as those are area specific. Still, the inner rings are the same for every country using the transition management approach as explained by Loorbach (2010; 2015). For planning practice, this means that the same planning methods must be used but in a different way. It requires adaptivity and a focus on a longer time scale. The long-term visions must be translated into short- and medium-term actions. Where shrinkage requires a paradigm shift within the way of thinking among both citizens and municipality, it also requires a paradigm shift in the way of thinking of a planner. But it is not an impossible paradigm shift, not at all. Parkstad Limburg showed that it is possible to make the transition. Eemsdelta is at a T-junction. Either go left and continue the path chosen in the past and see how the effects of shrinkage can be minimalized or chose the new path with a new vision in which collaboration, ambition and trust become the essential cornerstones. It is up to the region to make the decision.

12. Reflection

Looking back at the writing of this thesis, I can say that it had its ups and down as explained in the preface. The collaboration with my supervisor and the others of the research team of the larger project went very well. There was clear communication and a clear role division. This resulted in a nice time working together. The second thing that went quite well is the literature and especially the report analysis. Looking at my thesis and my reference list, this thesis did a good job in combining academic literature, with place-based reports and empirical data resulting from the qualitative and quantitative research methods. This makes the results of this thesis more reliable and in this end resulted in a thesis that, in my opinion, contributes to the academic debate regarding shrinkage.

As the data collection of this thesis was part of larger research within Eemsdelta it was difficult to create customized questionnaires and interview guides. I have added questions that were necessary for my data collection, but this was not in comparison with the overall questionnaires and interview guides. The data collection itself was also a process that did not go well very smoothly. The questionnaires were distributed by some experts within Eemsdelta, but it took a long time before they had time and put the effort in distributing the questionnaires. Besides, they did not distribute in the way it was agreed upon, which resulted in a much lower number of participants. This costs a lot of effort, mail contact and irritation from my side. If I look back, I would have separated my thesis from the larger research, so I am the only one responsible for the data collection. I would have tried to distribute the questionnaires via the municipality and not via experts from the educational sector.

Overall, I think the results of this thesis are convincing and show an in-depth insight into the municipality of Eemsdelta. The balance between place-based information and generalisable abstract lesson for other regions is more than sufficient. Providing guidelines and visualizing this in the wheel of shrinkage makes the information more tangible. The makes that the strategy provided in this thesis can easier be adopted by municipalities, especially the municipality of Eemsdelta. In this way, I felt during the writing process that this thesis does not only provide theoretical underpinnings for the transition towards smart shrinkage, but it also gives small insights into the practical side of the challenge. To conclude, mistakes have been made in the process, but the overall result is in my opinion more than convincing. It is contributing to the academic debate and shows its relevance for planning practice.

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14. Appendix A Code tree

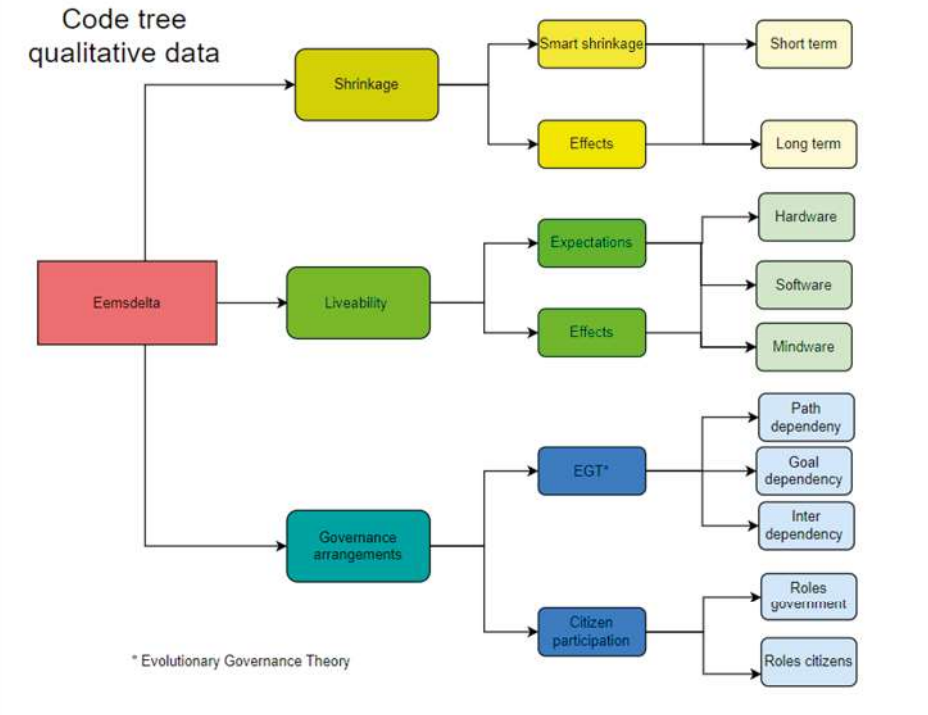

Figure 10: Code Tree

15. Appendix B Interview Guide

Interview guide – ouders/verzorgers SVOE

Beste meneer/mevrouw,

Allereerst willen wij u bedanken dat u mee wilt werken aan dit interview, als onderdeel van het onderzoek "Eemsdelta: campusontwikkeling, leefbaarheid, onderwijs". Het is voor ons waardevol om u te interviewen, aangezien één of meerdere van uw kinderen van het voortgezet onderwijs in de gemeente gebruik maakt.

U hebt een tijdje geleden een enquête ingevuld voor het onderzoek en hierin aangegeven dat u openstaat voor een verdiepend interview. Door middel van de enquêtes krijgen we een goed algemeen beeld. Het doel van de interviews is om met een aantal ouders en leerlingen dieper op een drietal thema's in te gaan. Het doel van dit interview is om uw mening over, en ervaringen met, de leefbaarheid in de gemeente, het huidige onderwijs, en de nieuwe campus te bespreken. Er zijn dan ook geen goede of foute antwoorden, het gaat om uw eigen mening en ervaringen.

U kunt er op elk moment voor kiezen om met dit interview te stoppen (zonder een reden hiervoor te hoeven geven), of tijdelijk te pauzeren wanneer u behoefte heeft aan een pauze. Als een vraag onduidelijk is kunt u degene die het interview afneemt vragen voor uitleg.

Bij het doen van wetenschappelijk onderzoek is het gebruikelijk dat de onderzoeker en deelnemer(s) een toestemmingsformulier ondertekenen. In het toestemmingsformulier kunt u allereerst aangegeven of u instemt met deelname aan het interview. Vervolgens kunt u toestemming geven voor het opnemen van het interview. We willen het interview graag opnemen zodat we ons tijdens het interview volledig kunnen richten op het gesprek en de opname na afloop kunnen gebruiken om het interview schriftelijk uit te werken (transcriberen).

We zullen vertrouwelijk met uw gegevens en antwoorden omgaan. Opnames en transcripten (uitgewerkte interviews) zullen binnen het onderzoeksteam blijven en niet met derden gedeeld worden. In het toestemmingsformulier vragen we u ook toestemming voor het gebruik van de interviewgegevens voor het onderzoek. De output van het onderzoek bestaat uit een rapport en presentatie, en wetenschappelijke publicaties en presentaties. In deze output zal gebruik worden gemaakt van pseudoniemen en geen persoonlijke informatie die tot u herleidbaar is worden gebruikt. Indien gewenst kunt u in het toestemmingsformulier een suggestie voor een pseudoniem geven.

U kunt in het toestemmingsformulier aangeven of u na afloop van het interview een uitgewerkte versie van het interview wilt ontvangen (dit kan enkele weken duren), zodat u eventueel kunt aangeven dat bepaalde uitspraken niet (letterlijk) gebruikt mogen worden.

Inleidende vragen

1. Kunt u uzelf kort voorstellen? [gezinssamenstelling, wat doet u in het dagelijks leven]

Leefbaarheid

2. In de vragenlijst heeft u aangegeven dat u al @@ jaar in de gemeente Eemsdelta woont. Hoe zou u de gemeente als plaats omschrijven? [i.e.: hoe zou u de leefomgeving omschrijven?].

3. Kunt u een doorsnee doordeweekse dag van uzelf beschrijven? Hoe ziet uw dag eruit en op welke plekken komt u, van welke voorzieningen maakt u gebruik? Komt u ook buiten de gemeente, en waarvoor? [note: check of COVID-19 hier van invloed is geweest]

a. En een doorsnee weekenddag?

4. In de enquête gaf u aan het @@ te zijn met de stelling: Ik ben tevreden met de leefbaarheid van de gemeente. Hoe prettig vindt u het om hier te wonen?

a. Wat maakt dat dit zo is? [i.e.: waarom?]

Kunt u hier een concreet voorbeeld of ervaring bij noemen?

b. Zijn er ook minder prettige aspecten aan het wonen in de gemeente?

Wat maakt dat dit zo is? [i.e.: waarom?]

Kunt u hier een concreet voorbeeld of ervaring bij noemen?

c. Als u 1 ding aan de gemeente kon veranderen, ongeacht de kosten of hoe realistisch dit is, wat zou dit dan zijn? Waarom dit?

d. Zijn er nog andere verbeterpunten die zouden bijdragen aan de leefbaarheid in de gemeente?

5. Als we het hebben over het verbeteren van de leefbaarheid in de gemeente, wie vindt u dan dat zich hiervoor moet inzetten? [Check hierbij:]

- Wat ziet u hierbij als de rol van de gemeente?

- En van de inwoners?

6. In de enquête gaf u aan het @@ te zijn met de stelling dat het de taak is van de gemeente om inwoners te betrekken bij projecten omtrent leefbaarheid. Kunt u uw mening toelichten? [i.e. waarom vindt u dit?]

a. Hoe vindt u dat de gemeente op dit gebied presteert?

[wat gebeurd er zoal? >> vraag naar concrete voorbeelden!]

b. Wat gaat volgens u goed, wat gaat minder goed?

7. Hoe is dit voor uzelf: zou u zelf graag betrokken willen worden bij (buurt)projecten rondom leefbaarheid in Eemsdelta? Waarom hebt u hier wel/geen behoefte aan?

a. Indien wel: Hoe zou u graag betrokken willen worden?

[note: denk aan: informatie voorziening, meedenken, meebeslissen]

[check: of deelnemer een concreet voorbeeld kan noemen]

8. In de enquête gaf u aan het @@ te zijn met de stelling dat de gemeente goed voorbereid is op de toekomst. Waarom denkt u dit? [afhankelijk van antwoord: check of deelnemer hier een concrete ervaring of voorbeeld bij kan vertellen]

a. Wat kan er volgens u verbeterd worden in dit opzicht?

9. Als u denkt aan de komende 10 jaar: wat ziet u als de grootste uitdagingen voor de gemeente? [note: dit kan iets specifiek voor de gemeente zijn, maar ook bredere uitdagingen die ook elders spelen, zoals bv. klimaatverandering]

10. Een vaak gehoord beeld is dat de jongeren uit deze regio wegtrekken naar de stad Groningen of andere plekken. Is dit inderdaad zo volgens u?

a. Indien ja: wat denkt u dat hier de redenen voor zijn?

b. Wat ziet u als uitdagingen voor jongeren die opgroeien in deze gemeente?

c. En ziet u ook bepaalde kansen in de gemeente voor deze doelgroep?

Huidig onderwijs

11. U heeft @@ kind(eren), kunt u iets vertellen over hun leeftijd(en), onderwijs dat gevolgd wordt? [welk niveau & jaar/klas]

12. Praat u met uw kind over zijn/haar school?

a. Hoe vaak?

b. Waar heeft u het dan over? [wat zijn onderwerpen waar het vaak over gaat?]

13. Heeft uw kind het naar zijn/haar zin op school volgens u?

a. Weet u waarom wel/niet?

14. In de enquête heeft u aangegeven dat u @@ tevreden bent met de school van uw kind. Kunt u dit toelichten waarom dit zo is? [hierbij vragen naar concrete voorbeelden]

a. Kunt u 3 goede punten van de school noemen?

b. En ook 3 minder goede punten?

15. In de enquête heeft u aangegeven dat u @@ betrokken bent bij de school. Kunt u hier iets meer over vertellen? [hierbij vragen naar concrete voorbeelden. Bespreek:]

a. Wat voor contacten heeft u als ouder met de school?

b. Waarover?

c. Met wie?

d. Hoe vaak?

e. Bent u tevreden met hoe deze interacties verlopen? [positief, negatief] Waarom?

Huidig onderwijs - Schoolkeuze

16. In de enquête hebben we u vragen gesteld over de schoolkeuze van uw kind. U gaf aan dat @@ de grootste stem hier in had. Kunt u vertellen hoe de keuze voor de school is gemaakt? [Hierbij doorvragen naar:]

a. Welk advies had uw kind van de basisschool gekregen?

Waar was dat op gebaseerd (citotoets, leerkrachten + wat was doorslaggevend)?

Had u het idee dat het schooladvies paste bij uw kind? (i.e. was het kloppend?)

Hoe belangrijk was het schooladvies in de schoolkeuze?

[Indien kind nu ander niveau volgt: waarom?]

b. Wat waren andere belangrijke redenen voor het kiezen van de huidige school? Waarom?

c. Was het voor de schoolkeuze van belang dat de school in de gemeente Eemsdelta staat? Waarom wel/niet?

d. Wie waren er allemaal betrokken bij de schoolkeuze van uw kind? [check: overlegde u bijvoorbeeld ook met ouders van andere kinderen uit groep 8? Zo ja, heeft dit uw keuze beinvloedt?]

Wie heeft/hebben uiteindelijk de keuze gemaakt?

Heeft u uw kind laten meebeslissen?

17. Hoe heeft u de huidige school van uw kind leren kennen? [voorlichtingsavond, verhalen van bekenden, via basisschool, etc.]

a. Wat was uw eerste indruk van de school?

b. Had u bepaalde verwachtingen van de school toen voor deze school gekozen werd?

18. Heeft u/uw kind andere scholen overwogen, en zo ja welke?

a. Waarom wel/niet?

b. Indien wel: waarom is de keuze uiteindelijk op @@ gevallen?

19. Uw kind zit nu in klas @@. Bent u achteraf tevreden met de schoolkeuze?

a. Met welke aspecten wel?

b. Met welke aspecten minder/niet?

c. Zou u zeggen dat de verwachtingen die u van de school had [zie 17b] zijn waargemaakt? Kunt u dit uitleggen? [vraag naar voorbeelden!]

Campus

20. In de enquête hebben we een aantal vragen gesteld over de campus die op dit moment gebouwd wordt. U gaf aan hier @@ van op de hoogte te zijn. Wat weet u ervan af & hoe bent u dit te weten gekomen? [bv: info vanuit school gekregen, vanuit de gemeente, website, krant, social media, gesprekken in omgeving, etc.]

a. Vindt u dat u voldoende geïnformeerd bent, of had u dit graag anders gezien? Zo ja: hoe? [vanuit wie & en op welke manier te horen gekregen?]

21. In de enquête gaf u aan het @@ te zijn met de stelling dat het goed is dat er een nieuwe campus komt. Waarom vindt u dat? [check: goed voor wie precies?]

22. In de enquête gaf u aan dat u het @@ verwacht dat de nieuwe campus positief gaat bijdragen aan de ontwikkeling van kinderen in Eemsdelta. Waarom verwacht u dat wel/niet?

a. [WEL:]

[Check hierbij:] Op welk vlak verwacht u dit? [binnen de lessen (onderwijskwaliteit) EN/OF buiten de lessen (betere kantine, veiligere omgeving etc.)]

b. [NIET:]

Wat zou er voor nodig zijn om hier wel aan bij te dragen volgens u?

23. We hebben het eerder over de leefbaarheid in gemeente gehad. In hoeverre verwacht u dat de campus hierin een rol gaat spelen? [i.e. waarom wel/niet?] Kunt u dit uitleggen? [i.e. hoe?]

a. Wat zou er voor nodig zijn om hier (wel) zo goed mogelijk aan bij te dragen volgens u?

24. In hoeverre u er nu zicht op heeft: verwacht u zelf gebruik te zullen maken van de nieuwe campus?

a. Zo ja, op wat voor manieren?

b. Op wat voor manieren zou u van de campus gebruik willen maken? [in ideale situatie]

25. In de enquête gaf u aan het @@ te zijn met de stelling dat u graag betrokken wordt bij de ontwerpfase en besluitvorming van dit soort projecten binnen de gemeente in de toekomst. Waarom wel/niet?

a. Zou u ook betrokken willen worden bij de ontwikkeling van de campus?

b. Zo ja: Op wat voor manier?

Afsluitende vragen

26. Hoe ziet u de toekomst van uw kind? [doorleren, aan het werk, andere stappen?]

a. Verwacht u dat hij/zij in de gemeente blijft wonen? Waarom wel/niet?

Dit waren al onze vragen. Zijn er nog dingen die u wilt vertellen of toevoegen?

Heeft u zelf nog vragen aan ons omtrent dit onderzoek?

Als u op een later moment nog vragen of opmerkingen heeft kunt u altijd contact met ons opnemen via e-mailadres interviewer of g.van.der.vaart@rug.nl

We willen u hartelijk bedanken voor uw deelname aan het interview en u een VVV-waardebon (ter waarde van 30 euro) aanbieden. Deze zullen we naar uw emailadres sturen.

[NOTE TO SELF: na het afronden van het interview en het stoppen van de opname kunnen deelnemers alsnog dingen vertellen die eventueel interessant zijn voor het onderzoek. Handig om pen & papier in de aanslag te houden dus. Na afloop kan nagevraagd worden aan de deelnemers of dit ook nog meegenomen kan worden in het onderzoek.]

16. Appendix C Deelnemersovereenkomst

Toestemmingsformulier – Onderzoek onderwijs & leefbaarheid gemeente Eemsdelta.

Het doel van het onderzoek en interview is voldoende uitgelegd. De onderzoeker heeft de vertrouwelijkheid en anonimiteit in het onderzoek toegelicht. Ik had voldoende tijd om te besluiten om mee te doen aan het onderzoek. Mijn deelname is geheel vrijwillig. Ik kan me op elk moment terugtrekken uit het onderzoek, zonder opgave van reden. Ook kan ik mijn reeds gegeven antwoorden terugtrekken. Ik kon vragen stellen en mijn vragen werden naar tevredenheid beantwoord.

Graag uw keuze omcirkelen (papieren versie) of dikgedrukt maken (digitale versie)

Ik ga ermee akkoord om deel te nemen aan dit interview	JA	NEE
Ik geef toestemming voor het opnemen van het interview	JA	NEE
Ik geef toestemming voor het gebruik van de interviewgegevens voor het onderzoek (incl. wetenschappelijke publicaties en presentaties) naar het onderwijs en de leefbaarheid in de gemeente Eemsdelta, uitgevoerd door het onderzoeksteam onder leiding van dr. Elen-Maarja Trell en dr. Gwenda van der Vaart.	JA	NEE
In de output van het onderzoek zal gebruik worden gemaakt van pseudoniemen. Hieronder kunt u indien gewenst een suggestie voor een pseudoniem geven*: ……..		
* Als u liever wilt dat uw *eigen* naam gebruikt wordt in publicaties en presentaties over het onderzoek kunt u dat bespreken met de onderzoeker, en hier aangeven. Gebruik eigen naam is:	WEL akkoord	NIET akkoord
Ik wil graag een uitgewerkte versie van mijn interview ontvangen om eventueel aan te geven dat bepaalde uitspraken niet (letterlijk) gebruikt mogen worden	JA	NEE
Wilt u op de hoogte worden gehouden van de uitkomsten van het onderzoek? Noteer dan hier uw e-mailadres:……		

Naam + handtekening van onderzoeksdeelnemer Datum:

Ik verklaar dat ik de onderzoeksdeelnemer heb geïnformeerd over het onderzoek. Ik zal de deelnemer informeren over zaken die zijn / haar deelname aan het onderzoek kunnen beïnvloeden.

Naam en handtekening van onderzoeker Datum: