The Distinctive Beauty in between Bureaucracy

Discovering Managerial Practices for Constructing and Communicating Municipal Reputation in the City of Kerava

Riku Heino
University of Helsinki
Faculty of Social Sciences
Media and Global Communication
Master’s Thesis
August 2015
Contents

1. Introduction ........................................................................................................................................ 1
   1.1 Aim and Relevance of study ........................................................................................................... 3
   1.2 Methods of data collection and analysis ......................................................................................... 5
   1.3 Main Concepts of the Study ............................................................................................................ 6
   1.4 The Progression of Study ............................................................................................................... 7

2. Municipal Reputation as an Object of Study ....................................................................................... 8
   2.1 The Constitution of Municipal Reputation .................................................................................... 9
      2.1.1 Images and Brands ................................................................................................................. 10
      2.1.2 Identity as a Part of Reputation .............................................................................................. 13
      2.1.3 Municipal reputation and reality ............................................................................................ 14
      2.1.4 Stories as Reputational Ingredients ....................................................................................... 17
   2.2 Discovering the Appeal of a Municipality .................................................................................... 18
      2.2.1 Economic preconditions ........................................................................................................ 19
      2.2.2 Obstacles and Opportunities for Municipal Appeal .............................................................. 21
      2.2.3 Global and local appeal ......................................................................................................... 25

3. Managing the Reputation of a Municipality .......................................................................................... 26
   3.1 Managerial Practices ................................................................................................................... 28
      3.1.1 Communication as reputation management ............................................................................ 30
      3.1.2 Marketing a municipality ....................................................................................................... 32
      3.1.3 Managing publicities ............................................................................................................ 33
      3.1.4 Generating dialogue ............................................................................................................. 36
      3.1.5 Competition and Cooperation ............................................................................................... 37
   3.2 Encountering the stakeholders ...................................................................................................... 39
      3.2.1 Building Networks ................................................................................................................ 40
      3.2.2 Keeping Everybody Happy ................................................................................................... 41
      3.2.3 Planning Approaches ........................................................................................................... 43
      3.2.4 Different Levels of Encounters ............................................................................................. 45

4. Research Methods ............................................................................................................................... 48
   4.1 Research Setting ........................................................................................................................... 48
   4.2 Description of Data ....................................................................................................................... 50
      4.2.1 Data Collection ..................................................................................................................... 51
   4.3 Research Methods for the Analysis of the Interview Data ............................................................ 52
   4.4 Validity and Reliability ............................................................................................................... 54
   4.5 Ethicality ...................................................................................................................................... 55
### 5. Results of the Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subsection</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Discovering Kerava’s Reputation</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.1 Elements of Kerava’s Reputation</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.2 The Municipal Appeal of Kerava</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.3 Arenas of Reputation Formation</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.4 Current and Historical Elements</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.5 The Public Sector as a Factor</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.6 The Depicted Reality-basis of Kerava’s Reputation</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Management of Kerava’s Reputation</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1 The Preconditions for Managing Kerava’s Reputation</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.2 Goals That Steer Reputation Management</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.3 Most Important Stakeholder Groups</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.4 Service Production and the Role of Personnel</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.5 Communication as Reputation Management</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.6 Cooperation and Competition</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.7 The Roles of Reputation Management</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.8 Coherence in Operation</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.9 Values and Social Responsibility</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.10 Managing Publicity</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Conclusions and Discussion</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1 Conceptualization of Municipal Reputation</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2 Municipal Organization as a Constructor of Reputation</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3 The Relevance of This Study and Possible Areas of Further Exploration</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Bibliography**

100

**Appendix 1:** All Established Categories From All Interviews

**Appendix 2:** The Question Structure
This study explores how the municipal reputation of Kerava is formed and managed. Organizational reputation has emerged as a remarkable subject of study in recent years but most approaches emphasize economic profit as the ultimate gain of a good reputation. This case study on Kerava will provide a micro-level approach on reputation construction in municipal sector. What is often left for little attention in those reputational studies that do regard municipalities is the way in which a municipality itself constructs its reputation. This study explores how the municipality of Kerava communicates, manages and constructs its own reputation.

The significance of reputation and image has increased in public organizations during recent decades. The preconditions for reputation construction have concurrently changed. Municipalities face new demands for expressing efficiency and legitimacy. The political nature of all public organizations makes reputational endeavours especially difficult. Municipalities have to match partly conflicting demands for transparency, consistency, legibility, credibility and reality-basis.

Public organizations have their own preconditions regarding interest group expectations. Pleasing the customers is not always the central purpose of operation in municipalities and the encounters with stakeholders are loaded with expectations regarding recognized roles and policy-determined conduct. These special characteristics regarding stakeholder relationships inevitably influence municipalities’ reputational efforts.

The method of data collection in this study is semi-structured interview. Kerava is represented by current and previous members of the executive board of the municipality and members of the city parliament. The interview data is interpreted using thematic content analysis. As a result of this analysis, I develop coherent themes that can be further explored in the conclusive chapter of this study.

The results of this study illustrate that there is a foundation of determining preconditions to be found that sets limits for reputation construction in municipalities. The complexity of municipal organization appears as an all-encompassing theme in the exploration of Kerava’s reputation. The instability of cooperation and competition inside Kerava and with the state and other municipalities only deepens organizational complexity.

The relation between daily operation and reputation becomes apparent as acts of promotional efforts are perceived as fragile. The perceived benefits of a good municipal reputation manage to highlight a central difference to the private sector. While tax-income and vitality as goals resemble the ideals of profit-making, happiness is also established as an important goal that is entwined with all other reputational goals.

Avainsanat – Nyckelord
Reputation, image, municipality, public sector, encounter
1. Introduction

The Finnish municipality of Kerava often tends to be the target of ironic remarks regarding its inhabitants. The small municipality near the metropolitan area of Helsinki has often been represented in the popular media as a place of intellectual regression and cultural backwardness. The ironic remarks are distributed in everyday social interactions but also in the mainstream media. Kerava has been the subject or the background setting for ironic Finnish comedy shows since the 1970s, and these representations have started to somewhat renew themselves. Well-known examples of such representations regarding Kerava have been the characters of Jarna Kuiva and Rane who appeared in the popular comedy shows called *Hei hulinaa* and *Vintiöt* in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s. The latest extensively distributed example of an equivalent representation was in 2013 when a popular Finnish TV show *Putous* featured a character from Kerava. While these depictions are often ironic and transparent in their comedy, they still seem to influence the way in which the media tends to frame news about Kerava. A good example can be found from a recent article of Helsingin Sanomat. The framing and the content in the article (http://www.hs.fi/kaupunki/a1390432516014) speaks volumes about how Kerava is perceived by the reporter. The writer begins by saying that “Kerava is about more than just grey concrete buildings and downtown rally”. He goes on to explain that in the 1990s Kerava had such a bad reputation that the name of the city was almost a curse word. Neither of the references are properly elaborated. The article approaches Kerava as a city that can offer many positive things that “many does not know about”.

The above-mentioned writing reflects the area of interest in this research well – although not necessarily through the segments that were just presented. This research is based on an interest towards the social realities of municipalities and the ways in which their reputation is formed and managed in the operation of municipal organizations. It would be too straightforward to declare Kerava’s reputation as bad based on the media representations mentioned above. Nevertheless, the undesirable state of reputation is even documented in the communication strategy of Kerava. Why, then, is Kerava’s reputation bad? When evaluated based on the efficiency of service production, tax income of the inhabitants or other measurable factors, Kerava has ranked high in
municipal comparisons conducted in recent years (Kuntaveroverailu 2015; kunnat.net/fi/tietopankit/tilastot). Thus, it seems that the variables that indicate municipalities’ functionality fail to explain the outcome of municipal reputation. Therefore, there have been alternative approaches that have attempted to explain those factors. Heinonen (2006, 31), for instance, suggests that reputation emerges from corporate culture and management, success, ability to develop and adjust, public image, societal responsibility and products and services. Fombrun and Van Riel (2003, 53), on the other hand, believe that reputation emerges from emotional appeal, economic performance, work environment, vision and management, societal responsibility and products and services. Both presentations inarguably have truth to them but such listings produce very little knowledge about the reality of one specific municipality and its preconditions for reputation management. This study aspires to reveal the positions of Kerava’s central public officials regarding where Kerava’s reputation strives from.

The media form an important stakeholder group for municipalities and media representations surely reproduce meaning as suggested above (Karvonen 1999, 78–89). In research, various informative networks are well regarded in evaluating how reputations are formed (Fombrun 1996, 142–144). What is often left for little attention is the way in which a municipality itself communicates. It can be argued that a municipality’s deliberate influence on images regarding itself means that the municipality is trying to influence its own reputation (Aula, Vehkalahti & Äikäs 2007, 17–18). This study tries to explore how the municipality of Kerava communicates its own reputation. Such case study will provide a rare micro-level approach on reputation formation in municipal sector. As Kavaratzis & Ashworth (2005, 507) suggest, “there is a recognizable gap in the literature with regard to the branding process of cities in general and real case studies in particular”.

The subject of this study is strongly inspired by the fact that I work as a communication planner for the municipality of Kerava. My daily work routine includes elements of reputation construction and communication planning for the municipality. My own role as a researcher is, therefore, influenced by my occupational role. It has made approaching my research somewhat comfortable, since I have had free access to the essential information and important interviewees regarding the subject at hand. Accordingly, I have had strong background knowledge about my subject prior to
studying it academically. Hopefully, this fact has not caused me to take shortcuts in elaborating the reality of Kerava’s reputation as I proceed to explore the characteristics of it.

1.1 Aim and Relevance of study

One essential ambition of this study is to produce new knowledge regarding reputation construction in the public sector and municipal sector in particular. In recent decades, the concept of reputation has been uplifted into a remarkable subject of study because it is often emphasized as a new standard for success in organizations. The popularization of the concept, however, seems to be related to a particular way of thinking. The focus in research has been quite firmly on private sector since reputation is usually discussed in terms of business management (Picci 2011, 2; Wæraas & Byrkjeflot 2012, 189). The business aspect of reputation is explicitly portrayed in the range of concepts used to describe the virtues of successful reputation management in many different studies: concepts such as return on investment, rate of return, brand value and reputational capital, to mention a few, are all used in research regarding reputation and they all include an undertone of business management (Greenberg 2010, 136). Furthermore, when referring to reputation management, studies constantly speak of companies instead of organizations – regardless of context (cf. Fombrun 1996; Aula & Heinonen 2002). This kind of application regarding the concept of reputation draws the picture on how the concept is very commonly approached in research: as a tool for making a profit. (cf. Aula & Heinonen 2011, 175.)

While economic approach to reputation has been emphasized, municipalities have not been wholly forgotten from the discussion. There has been a rise of academic interest towards the reputation of public organizations in recent decades as many studies and papers have focused on the subject (Rainisto 2004; Luoma-aho 2007; Cassel 2008; Hankinson 2001). The changes in preconditions regarding municipal reputation construction have been established in research and focus has been set in how municipalities respond to the new expectations set for them. There are, however, some insufficiencies in these approaches regarding the formation of reputation in municipalities. The first issue is that even in the context of municipalities, many studies still tends to link reputation only to potential economic success; the reputations and
images of municipalities are depicted as factors in decision making in the competition over inhabitants, businesses, employees and tourists (cf. Karvonen 2001, 56; Aula, Vehkalahti & Äikäs 2007, 15–16). On the other hand, it is also acknowledged that the advancement of well-being and sustainable development are documented in Finnish law as the basis for municipal existence; a municipality's primary reason for existence is to provide as good of a life as possible to its inhabitants (Karvonen 2001, 52; Gnevko 2012, 351–353; Vahermo 2004; 49). Thus, municipal development goals and municipal reputation goals seem somewhat intertwined and blurred and, additionally, the roles of economic vitality and competitive advantage in this mixture are quite vague (cf. Luoma-aho 2008, 447; Luoma-aho 2014, 39–52; Wæraas & Byrkjeflot 2012, 186–188).

It can be concluded that a common problem with former approaches to municipal reputation is that they do not produce much information about the social reality and the existing stakeholder relationships in municipalities. Thus, former studies have often ruled out the communication that strives from the municipal organization and is targeted to the existing tax payers and other important stakeholders of the municipality. In doing so they disregard different contexts of reputation formation in different municipalities. This is the gap in research that this study aims to patch by providing a highly context-dependent account of the reputation formation in the city of Kerava.

The relation between a municipality and its stakeholders could be explored from a variety of angles. In this study the focus is on the ways that Kerava tries to communicate, construct and manage its own reputation. The essential goal is to provide an overlook to how the work towards a better municipal reputation is conducted in a certain contextual setting. The reputation management of a municipality in this study is regarded as the communication and other conduct striving from the governing parties of the municipal organization. From this basis, I will approach my subject with the following research questions:

1. Where does Kerava’s reputation and municipal reputation strive from?
2. How does the municipal organization of Kerava communicate, manage and construct Kerava’s reputation?
3. What are the potential advantages of reputation-based management and communication in Kerava and in the municipal sector as a whole?
1.2 Methods of data collection and analysis

In order to provide answers to my research questions, I will collect and analyze interview data. The interviews are conducted with the public officials that can be held responsible for the reputation management of this study. Distinguishing the interviewees is based partly in the bureaucratic order of Kerava’s municipal organization and partly in theoretical approaches to reputation management in research. The selection of interviewees also includes an element of continuity, which is based on the aspiration of connecting this study to a more pervasive historical and cultural setting. That is why some of the interviewees have held a significant role in Kerava’s reputation before but no longer hold any position in the municipal organization. The interviewed public officials from Kerava’s municipal organization are the current and the previous mayor, the current and previous chief of communication, the current and the previous chief of development and two long-lasting members of city parliament who have been involved in creating Kerava’s communication strategy.

The method of data collection in this study is a semi-structured interview. Based on the interviewees’ expertise and some predetermined presumptions of this study, I aim to explore the subjective positions and experiences of the interviewees regarding the discussed issues. The predetermined presumptions of this study are based on the themes that are covered during each interview. The discussion will follow certain structure that is established based on the theoretical approaches to reputation management in research. (Hirsijärvi & Hurme 2009, 47; Alasuutari 1999, 144.)

In this study, interviewees are seen as a resource of information – not as a topic. I will analyze the content of the interviewed public officials’ speech, and from that I will create categories and themes that form the basis for the conclusions of this study. My method of analysis used in the interpretation of the interview data is thematic content analysis. The approach to the analysis of interviews is inductive since I have not established what I am looking for in terms of themes and categories of data. After conducting the interviews, I deconstruct them into analyzable data by transcribing them using open coding. (Seale 2012, 105, 215, 370–371; Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2009, 136.)
1.3 Main Concepts of the Study

This study is entwined around the concepts of reputation and encounters. Both of these concepts are elaborated as parts of my exploration of background literature regarding my subject but it is reasonable to clarify the preconditions for my use of these concepts. Reputation is a vague concept often consisting of many other concepts such as image and conception (Karvonen 1999, 17). It should be defined that in this study reputation is regarded, adapting to the perception of Fombrun (1996, 34, 72, 111), as the overall estimation in which Kerava is held by its central stakeholders. My approach also includes a conception that reputation is something that is accessible with communication and, thus, can be influenced (Aula & Heinonen 2011, 94–95, 108–110).

My use of the concept of reputation in this study is related to how it works as a perspective to management and the people whose perceptions are regarded are the interviewed public officials and politicians of Kerava. The substance of the concept in research is explored with more precision in later chapters. Reputation is related to a set of other concepts such as image, identity, narrative and brand which are all regarded as aspects to exploring the reputation management of Kerava. Reputation is chosen as the common nominator of all these concepts in defining the perspective of this study because it is most often regarded as the totality of all concepts that are related to the way in which an organization is perceived (cf. Karvonen 1999, 17; Fombrun 1996, 36–37).

The essentiality of the concept of encounter in this study is connected to the concept of reputation. It is also connected to the concept of publicity. This study commits to the basic assumption that reputation is ultimately formed when an organization and its stakeholders encounter with each other in various scenarios. Accordingly, reputational publicity consists of all the arenas on which the organization and its stakeholders encounter with each other (Aula & Heinonen 2011, 80). On these reputational arenas, I suggest, stakeholders construct their interpretations of Kerava which ultimately results in the formation of Kerava’s reputation (Aula & Heinonen 2002, 17, 90–91; Aula, Vehkalahti & Äikäs 2007, 20).
1.4 The Progression of Study

In order to produce useful knowledge about my subject, I will begin by exploring the preceding academic research on municipal reputation and reputation management as a part of public governance. My literature review will be divided into two sections. The first section will focus on municipal reputation as a focus of study. I will bring forward the characteristics and preconditions of municipal reputation and explore how the appeal of a municipality is perceived. In the second section, I focus on the management of municipal reputation. I will explore how reputation has been perceived as a part of public governance and what kind of purposeful work is done for advancing reputation in municipalities. The central concepts of this study are elaborated during the exploration of their substance in the literature review.

After establishing the theoretical background for the focus of my study, I will proceed into representing my methods of data collection and analysis. In short, this study is a qualitative outlook into the characteristics of one specific municipal reputation in a certain context setting. Used data will be collected from semi-structured interviews that are conducted with the parties responsible for the reputation management of Kerava. My conclusions are based on thematic content analysis of the data collected from the interviews and coded into analyzable units using open coding. The preconditions and justifications for these selections will be discussed with more detail in chapter 4, as I bring forward the role of this study as a part of academic research on reputation and public governance.

In the interview analysis stage, I will produce specific knowledge about the case at hand: the reputation management of Kerava. My aim is to analyze the collected interview data in order to establish answers to my research questions. In chapter 5, I will elaborate how the deconstruction of the interview data produces certain reoccurring subjects. The chapter will proceed to represent how the established subjects can then be constructed into coherent themes. According to this process of theme-establishment, I will discuss the results of this study in the final chapter, as I present my conclusions.
2. Municipal Reputation as an Object of Study

The preconditions for reputation construction in municipalities have changed globally in recent decades (Kostiainen 2001, 9–10; Aronczyk 2013, 2–4, 15–16). The significance of reputation and image has increased in municipalities as it has increased in other public organizations as well (Aula, Vehkalahti & Äikäs 2007, 13, 17–18). People have become more demanding of their living environment and they easily develop opinions towards municipalities even though they have never visited them (Jackson 2004, 110; Fombrun 1996, 5). In addition to developing competitive allure, it is essential for municipalities to keep their important stakeholder groups aware of the offered services and possibilities (Vahermo 2004, 43). Thus, reputation construction and communication have become important factors when people are making their decision of moving into a municipality.

In addition to the new requirements for reputation construction in municipalities, the new image based social reality has also changed the ways that municipalities need to express themselves (Greenberg 2010, 132–136). The increased importance of reputation construction in municipalities can also be connected to the ways that municipalities express their legitimacy (Luoma-aho 2007; 124–125). Deephouse and Carter (2005, 329–360) suggest that the concepts of reputation and legitimacy are related to each other since they both result from stakeholders’ evaluation of an organization. The definitions of the two concepts are often overlapping in research because there are many similarities to be found. Nevertheless, a useful distinction can be made. Definitions of legitimacy usually focus on the social acceptance that results from successful application of norms and regulations in one’s operation; definitions of reputation, in turn, usually focus on comparisons regarding organizations’ attributes (ibid).

Bureaucracy and officious nature as characteristics of municipal governance have been regarded as common issues in municipal reputation construction (Wæraas & Byrkjeflot 2012, 186–206; Karvonen 1999, 32). This notion can be connected to the new atmosphere of public governance which pressures all public organizations to express their efficiency in new ways (Andreassen 1994, 16–20). Municipal administrations are expected to be faster and more flexible towards their publicity work and image management in order to succeed (ibid; Rainisto 2004, 9–10; Aula, Vehkalahti & Äikäs
2007, 17). These issues apply to municipalities on a global scale and, thus, the change in the preconditions of municipal reputation management seems to be profound (Aronczyk & Powers 2012, 6). The pressure of competition has led municipalities to adopt their governance to such neoliberal models of operation that have traditionally been characteristic to the private sector (ibid). In the process, economic standards for evaluating operation have been emphasized (ibid; Aronczyk 2013, 59–61).

In municipal sector, the distinctiveness in reputation management can be connected to the political nature of all public organizations: a public organization exists for a non-profit reason and it holds a political mandate which poses specific stakeholder expectations (Wæraas & Byrkjeflot 2012, 186–206; Luoma-aho 2008, 448; Rainisto 2004, 9–10). These elements affect the possibilities for reputation construction (ibid; cf. Coombs & Holladay 2007, 39). It is, however, reasonable to include the general approaches to reputation in this study – capitalist as they may be. They unveil central concepts and produce understanding of the current significance of reputation in research. They also help make visible the features of municipal reputation through comparison.

2.1 The Constitution of Municipal Reputation

Regardless of many parallel views regarding reputation in research, producing a commonly shared conceptualization is not a simple task. When the exploration of the concept of reputation is taken to a more pervasive level, the concept can be defined in many different ways (Aula & Heinonen 2002, 34–35; Karvonen 1999, 17). Perhaps the most common definition for reputation in academic research is the way Fombrun (1996, 37) describes it in his study called Reputation: “...the overall estimation in which a company is held by its constituents”. Fombrun’s definition is, indeed, quite a representative sum-up of all the ways in which the concept reputation has been approached. He suggests that reputation in general is based on the appeal of an organization. He also emphasizes strong identity as an essential element of a successful organization. Fombrun sums up the constitution of reputation with a rather sophisticated definition: “A corporate reputation is a perceptual representation of a company’s past actions and future prospects that describes the firm’s overall appeal to all of its key
constituents when compared with other competing rivals”. (Fombrun 1996, 37, 72, 111.)

The Fombrun’s abovementioned definition of reputation is valuable because it makes an important distinction between the general definition and the constitution of reputation. As suggested, reputation can be perceived as the overall estimation or the totality of all stories regarding an organization by its stakeholders. However, the constitution of reputation is different depending on the organization at hand: the traits, the identity, the structure – all of these factors influence the way in which a single reputation is constituted (Aronczyk 2013, 3–4; Kavaratzis & Ashworth 2005, 506–513). It terms of general constitution of reputation, it can be concluded that reputation consists of perceptions – of how others see you. It is hard to manipulate, measure or control and it derives from many things (Lury & Moor 2010, 36–37; Aula & Heinonen 2011, 12–15).

2.1.1 Images and Brands

The interesting feature in many studies exploring the reputation of municipalities is that they consistently use concepts of image and brand rather than reputation (cf. Aronczyk & Powers 2010; Virtanen 1999, 7–9). Conceptually, it can be interpreted that these approaches resemble common exploration of marketing or public relations: cities are evaluated in terms of what they try to promote in their operation rather than what they actually do (Aula & Mantere 2008, 26–27; Aula & Heinonen 2002, 48–52). There is, indeed, a close connection to be found between the concepts of image, brand and reputation. Image and brand – as well as identity, which is discussed in the next chapter – are usually perceived to be constituents of reputation (Karvonen 1999, 17; Fombrun 1996, 36–37). This means that reputation as a concept is commonly perceived as something holistic, consisting of the elements of image, brand and identity. Reputation can also be seen as a more long-term evaluation of the organization consisting of all of its past and present attributes (Jackson 2004, 41–43). There are, however, differences of emphasis in different approaches to these concepts. As Brown et al. (2006, 100) suggest, all of these concepts have been used extensively in many interdisciplinary studies but a unified understanding of what is meant by them is difficult to find. (cf. Fombrun & Van Riel 2003, 4.)
Municipal organizations are studied as active constructors of the imagery that is connected to them (Aula, Vehkalahti & Äikäs 2007, 17–18; Cassel 2008, 102–114). They often emphasize certain elements such as travel, local culture and recognizability as the cornerstones of the images they are trying to convey (ibid). When image constructors intentionally aim to connect certain connotations to a municipality, they contribute to the process of branding that municipality (Aula & Heinonen 2002, 48–52; Karvonen 1999, 21). The advocated connotations do not need to be rational or tangible: one essential aim of city branding is that the sound of the city’s name alone has positive connotations (Aula, Vehkalahti & Äikäs 2007, 17). Thus, on a level of association, a city can possess a strong brand based on the assets (services and products) it provides. The relation between asset strength and brand strength, however, is rarely even and, according to Lury and Moor (2010, 36–38), that is essentially what city branding is about: it is about creating value through identifying and utilizing the potential brand assets. However, it can be suggested that if the municipal organization is not expected to fulfil its stakeholders’ expectations regardless of the strong brand, the organization has a week reputation. Accordingly, Fombrun and Van Riel (2003, 4) suggest that expectations are the distinctive factor separating the concepts of reputation and brand.

The differences in alternative approaches to the concept of image can be explored from a basis of how pessimistically it is discussed. Image construction, marketing or public relations as organizational activities carry connotations themselves and the core of this discussion seems to be the question of whether artificiality is bad by nature (Coombs & Holladay 2007, 5–7; Karvonen 1999, 17, 21). The more pervasive views tend to have an optimistic side to them. Karvonen (1999, 17), for instance, implicates that while there is an artificial element to images, the construction of images work as a precondition for a good reputation. He suggests that in addition to a material reality, there is also an ideal reality which has an effect on how the understanding of the world is formed. Thus, before any organization or product can exist materially, it first has to be created on a level of imagination (ibid; Aronczyk 2013, 15). Coombs and Holladay (2007, 24–26), in turn, suggest that public relations can be perceived as an attempt to maintain harmony in a network of conflicting stakeholder interests. In all, the pessimistic tone in many approaches to image construction means that intentional image construction itself tends to be exposed to certain kind of publicity. This is a thing that organizations have to consider in their operations. An organization can bring forward the sides of its
operations that it wants to emphasize but it cannot determine everything that ends up showing in the media (Aula & Heinonen 2002, 48–52). The media tend to dislike artificial image constructions and actively pursue to expose their flaws. Therefore, false conceptions do not carry reputation far (ibid; Jackson 2004, 35).

The concept of the brand has been supplied with political and cultural meanings as public organizations have started to brand themselves (Aronczyk & Powers 2012, 8). Because of the social character of any spatial formations, place brands include personal and emotional characteristics to which people can identify themselves (ibid; Greenberg 2010, 116–117). Thus, the phenomenon of brand lies in the intersection of culture, politics and economy, as Aronczyk (2013, 17) suggests. The difficulty in aligning all of these dimensions for the benefit of the organization lies in notion that the politics of culture intersect with the culture of capital. In other words, the logic of making a profit through place branding is hardly compatible with the rhetoric that a municipal organization stands for providing a good life for its inhabitants. However, if branding is discussed as something which has transformed beyond its prior role in promotion of commercial goods, this dilemma be re-evaluated. Municipal brand can be described as a phenomenon that has the ability to encapsulate social qualities and turn them into profitable appeal. (Aronczyk 2013, 8, 17, 31, 40, 59–61.)

The concept of *cityscape* (kaupunkikuva) contributes to the discussion of municipal imagery and branding. The concept is used by Virtanen (1999, 10–11) to separate mental imagery from concrete visual elements. A cityscape differs from image in a sense that it describes the visual character of the city. Image is based on mental conceptions but cityscape is based on visible features. (ibid.) The line between mental and concrete constructions, however, can occasionally be thin (Aula & Heinonen 2002, 22; Lury & Moor 2010, 36–37). Marketing and city branding, for instance, are often based on the existing conceptions regarding the municipality. Nevertheless, they are as often based on concrete elements that form the uniqueness of the municipality (Virtanen 1999, 10–11). Collective images such as university cities or rural cities are used to profile municipalities in a certain way (ibid). The difficulty in providing a distinctive definition of municipal marketing and branding can be connected to the special nature of the municipal product. If the common approaches to product branding are simply extended to municipalities, some distinctive features of the municipal product, such as
spatial scale and nature of consumption, are easily neglected (Kavaratzis & Ashworth 2005, 506–513; Aronczyk 2013, 3–4). The municipal product has multiple dimensions of value and the distinctiveness of these dimensions is what essentially differentiates municipal branding from the branding of other organizations (ibid).

2.1.2 Identity as a Part of Reputation

Organizational identity is often emphasized as an essential factor of reputation. Identity consists of the values and principles that employees and managers associate with their own organization and it derives from all of the successes and failures since the foundation of the organization (Fombrun 1996, 9–11). Identity steers the self-presentations of employees and managers and, therefore, it affects the daily interactions between the organization and its stakeholders (ibid). When an organization is able to reflect its unique identity through its actions, it creates opportunities for itself through reputation construction (Virtanen 1999, 7–8).

As images, organization’s identity is also formed partly of the reflections of the organization’s operation and partly of the connotations that the organization is trying to put forward. People easily connect a certain kind of identity to a municipality based on the tangible elements that the municipality is known for (Virtanen 1999, 7–9). The identity can be concrete (based on architecture or a sight or a natural phenomenon) or abstract (based on immaterial features such as education or culture). On the other hand, identity can be thought to be based on the image that the municipal organization is proactively keeping up in its efforts to achieve a good reputation. The contents of this image can be tangible or abstract as well. The important ambiguity, here, is that identity as a concept is related to the concept of image but they mean different things. (ibid.)

The central difference to alternative approaches is the way in which image and identity are constructed. For instance, while Virtanen (1999, 9) suggests that images are formed outside of the municipal organization in the minds of people, Fombrun (1996, 36–37) sees images as the part of reputation that is intentionally constructed by the city administration. A similar variance is to be found in the definitions of identity as well. Virtanen (1999, 7) even divides municipal identity into internal identity and external identity based on where the elements of a municipality’s identity strive from. Internal identity refers to people’s tendency to identify themselves with a place. External
identity, in turn, is based on the common conception that people have regarding a municipality. Aronczyk (2013, 78–79) ties all these conceptions together by suggesting that the constitution of place identity is ultimately based on both internal and external recognitions of that place. Thus, the different approaches to identity formation should not be considered as contradicting but as dialectic and parallel.

Essentiality of internal identity to a municipality’s reputation means that identity is related to the way that the organization should be managed. A positive internal identity can enhance the allure of the municipality through the perceptions of its own inhabitants and staff (Virtanen 1999, 7–8; Whelan et al. 2008, 1164–1171). This can help attract tourism and new inhabitants through the word of mouth (ibid). The preservation of distinctiveness and uniqueness is, therefore, an important task of the municipal administration. Rainisto (2004, 16–17) suggests that reputation development of municipalities should be based on brand theory in which the central concepts are identity and image. The construction of identity, in turn, is related to the concept of place product (paikkatuote): developing the substance of place product means developing a stronger identity. Image construction, in this context, is not about short-term artificial campaigns but it is defined as most authors define reputation: as a consistent and accumulative work for building operational models that support the desired outcome in terms of how others perceive an organization. (ibid.)

2.1.3 Municipal reputation and reality

Many studies suggest that municipal images cannot really be separated from the true actions of municipal administrations (Aula & Heinonen 2002, 36–37, 207, 215; Karvonen 1999, 51–52). This is why all efforts of reputation construction should be based on factual communication (ibid, Kuss 2009, 267). The notion of the required reality-basis brings up an issue of whether reputations and images are formed outside the operation of their subject or as a result of intentional operation of their subject (cf. Aronczyk 2013, 56–61). It is a common understanding in research concerning reputation that an organization does not possess the images regarding itself; images are formed in the minds of the stakeholders that interact with the organization (Picci 2011, 67; Luoma-aho 2007, 126; Virtanen 1999, 9).
The tension between an organization’s reputation and reality can be illustrated with a triangle that consists of 1) the organization’s message, 2) the expectations of stakeholders and 3) the reality. This triangle is used by Gaultier-Gaillard et al. (2009, 118–120) to illustrate the difficulty in meeting the expectations of all stakeholders: while an organization must communicate with all of its stakeholder groups and meet their heterogeneous expectations in order to build trust, the organization’s messages must be coherent (cf. Andreassen 1994, 16–23). The difficulty lies in the notion that if there are inconsistencies in communication, the image construction may appear false. In other words, a reputation that tries to meet the needs of everybody crumbles when it encounters reality. Therefore, it can be argued that making uncovered promises is more harmful than keeping messages coherent with the risk of displeasing some stakeholder groups (ibid; Wæraas & Byrkjeflot 2012, 191–192, 197–198). Gaultier-Gaillard et al. are not discussing municipalities or public organizations specifically but their triangle is easily applicable to public organizations. In fact, it can be argued that the represented difficulty is even emphasized when the political mandate is added to the picture. Municipalities’ limited opportunities to focus on certain stakeholders or avoid unpopular decision-making influences image construction (Kuss 2009, 267–270; Wæraas & Byrkjeflot 2012, 195–196). It can be concluded that because the reputation of an organization is always the reality for the stakeholder doing the evaluation, reputation as an entity would mean that it consists of multiple realities. That is why ‘reputation’ can actually be conceived as a plural (Gaultier-Gaillard et al. 2009, 120).

Based on what have been presented, the central problem in the relation between reputation and reality is when perceptions of a municipality promise something that reality cannot reclaim (Karvonen, 1999, 90). It can be the other way around too: dull and negative perceptions can be false and the reality good (ibid). Whatever may the nature of the misconception be, the essential thing is to realize the dichotomous nature of reputation. On one hand, reputation is based on conceptions; on the other hand, it is based on real actions and experiences (Aula & Heinonen 2002, 36–37).

Reality, of course, is a problematic concept itself. Karvonen (1999, 53–61, 89–91) reminds that, according to social constructivism, pure reality does not exist. Instead there are only subjective impressions, interpretations and perceptions of reality, which are compared to other impressions of reality. Because of this, there is no access to the
nominal world itself, but the world appears to people as phenomenal: reality can be seen as a linguistic construction, where nature as a continuum is divided into convenient units using language. Karvonen himself promotes a semiotic view on communication and a relational view on reality. He explores the concepts of image, brand and reputation in the context of a semiotic or a cognitive view on communication. Cognitive approach applies more to individual conceptions; according to it, images and conceptions can be understood as cognitive constructions of information. The concept of schema can be used to describe the constructions and models that are formed in a human mind as a result of experiences, interpretations and observations. All new information is compared to schemas, and schemas determine what we expect of things. (ibid.) When this approach on reality is linked to the discussion of municipal reputation formation, it can be concluded that reputation is formed in interaction between the real actions of the organization, the experiences regarding these actions and the conceptions of the organization – in the dialogue of reputation (Aula & Heinonen 2002, 36–37; cf. Andreassen 1994, 20–21).

The claim that reputation resides in the minds of observers essentially suggests that reputation is socially constructed (Ahern 2001, 109–137). Social constructionism, in turn, emphasizes the role of language as a constructive force and a precondition for thought. Because language and culture are so tightly related, their influence on social constructions – such as reputation – cannot be studied separately. This discussion provides at least two perspectives to the reality debate. First, reputation is very tied to its cultural setting. As reputations are relative to their culture, they only hold certain significance locally. Second, if language and culture determine reputation, a relative view to the world is emphasized: a reputation does not refer to a real world outside of its own discourse. Thus, one absolute truth cannot be found; only differently constructed versions of it. (Burr 2003, 3–4, 7–8; 81–84.)

Building on the idea of cultural relativeness, reality can also be considered in relation to how the conceptual foundation for municipal branding comes to existence. In discussing national identities, Aronczyk (2013, 9, 28–30, 59–61) refers to the debate regarding the origins of spatial divisions. Some authors think of nationalities as natural and primordial entities. Others regard them as social formations which are based on active and constant construction and re-creation. Regardless of position, this discussion illustrates how
territories are not only divided by their borders; they are also divided by social factors. On international scale this discussion has perhaps more relevance but it can be extended to municipal identity construction, as well. It can be argued that municipalities have a similar dimension of social belonging to their identities. Thus, local identities can be described as relational structures within a complex and extensive framework of differing and accommodating identities. These identities influence the reputation construction of public organizations to some extent. This is because a place as a product has a social aspect to it as it contains certain identities and loyalties. While the feeling of local cohesion is not based on imagery provided by marketers, branding as a conduct has extended expressions of locality into new directions as ingredients for people’s identification with a place has been supplemented with new resources. (ibid.)

2.1.4 Stories as Reputational Ingredients

Creating and managing narratives is an important part of reputation management. A good organizational story is based on truth and it is about a positive change towards the better. A good story also produces knowledge on the causes and consequences behind the development of the organization so that there is a coherent narrative to be found. (Aula and Heinonen 2002, 32, 198–204.) In short, through a story an organization can emphasize its core messages and express its values. It has even been suggested that stories can exceed actual products and services of an organization in importance because stories can appeal to the emotions, senses and images of people. (Jackson 2004, 19–20; Aronczyk & Powers 2010, 5; Aula and Heinonen 2002, 24.) In the context of municipalities, however, services are especially important reputational ingredients since people primarily encounter the organization as its constituents (inhabitants, investors, entrepreneurs etc.), not consumers (Kavaratzis & Ashworth 2005, 506–513; Aronczyk 2013, 3–4). The external imagery of a municipality, however, has significance. Reputation can influence the decision of moving to a municipality, for instance (Fombrun 1996, 5).

Stories are much related to the above discussed relationship between reputation and reality. As presented above, if perceptions promise something that reality cannot reclaim, the result can back-fire (Gaultier-Gaillard, Louisot & Rayner 2009, 118–120; Karvonen 1999, 90). It should also be noted that reputational stories are mostly
discussed as *corporate stories* in research (cf. Fombrun 1996; Aula & Heinonen 2002; Jackson 2004, 19–20, 77–84). Thus, there is a strong implication of profit-oriented image construction in the background. For communal administrative organizations, such as municipalities, the possibilities for inventing a ‘corporate story’ would seem quite limited because those organizations have such distinctive societal role (cf. Aula & Mantere 2008, 38; Burr 2003, 81–84). In any case, stories must eventually face reality and earn the trust of customers (Aula & Heinonen 2002, 22–24, 32). What can be concluded of this is that products and services of an organization can only be secondary to organizational stories if promises are reclaimed. Stories should not be about constructing a beautiful external image but about communicating the reality.

The concept of identity can be connected to the organizational story, as well. Kuss (2009, 264–265) refers to the self-constructed image-based identity of an organization with the concept of *expressive reputation*. He suggests that a well conducted expressive reputation can work wonders even when the social and functional levels of operation remain unchanged. Building an expressive identity is, as Kuss describes it, people’s business. It is important to note, however, that even the words from the most established personalities must always be followed with consistent actions; otherwise, their reputation will be damaged (ibid).

Stories do not necessarily originate in the organization itself. While the organization’s own perspective is a significant one, it is important to understand that there are probably other significant stories available as well. A view advocating continuity in successful reputation management insists that an organizational story must stay consistent throughout all organizational levels in order to be effective. The construction of a corporate story, thus, is most efficient when it is conducted in cooperation with all the stakeholders of the organization. (Aula & Heinonen 2002, 33, 168–169.)

### 2.2 Discovering the Appeal of a Municipality

In order to make the exploration of municipal reputation more understandable, the conceptual approach can be taken into a bit more worldly direction. Essentially related to all concepts discussed above is *trust* which can be perceived as a key element of a good reputation (Eisenegger 2009, 11—12; Jackson 2004, 8, 83). The established
credibility and trust between an organization and its stakeholders is ultimately based on
the fulfillment of the stakeholders’ expectations which are, in turn, based on perceptions
regarding images, identities and reality (ibid; Andreassen 1994, 20–21; Picci 2011, 26–
28). Such fulfillment, according to Klewes and Wreschniok (2009, 3), requires that the
established trust includes elements of economic reputation and social reputation. The
same requirements regarding the formation of trust can be described as an aggregate of
functional reputation (competence), social reputation (adherence to social and moral
demands) and expressive identity (ibid; Kuss 2009, 264–265). These are provided as the
elements that reputation is built upon in today’s media society.

Public organizations have their own preconditions regarding trust and interest group
expectations. In private sector, an organization benefits from establishing customer
relations based on trust and, therefore, continuity. In public sector, however, an
organization’s conduct is not ultimately determined by the fear of losing customers and
the organization is not likely to be damaged if a single customer decides to end his/her
relationship with that organization. (Picci 2011, 26–32.) Thus, pleasing the customers is
not always the central purpose of operation (Borchorst et al. 2012, 556–558; Luoma-aho
2007, 126–127). Additionally, encounters between the municipality and its stakeholders
are loaded with expectations regarding recognized roles and policy-determined conduct
(Bartels 2013, 470–472). Picci (2011, 26–32, 47) argues that trust felt towards an
organization has to be abstract in the sense that an organization cannot encapsulate
interests of human actors. Thus, there cannot be a coherent aggregate of the interests of
an organization. Therefore, trust, in this context, would mean expectations of future
behavior. According to Picci (ibid), if trust towards an organization was based merely
on its past behavior, it would be a matter of expectations rather than trust. On the other
hand, if predictions about the future behavior of an organization would be grounded on
a theory which establishes the encapsulated interests of the counter-party, it would be a

2.2.1 Economic preconditions

Although a municipal organization must stay in budget, its success in reputation
management is also determined by how it carries out its social responsibilities and
political mandate (Wæraas & Byrkjeflot 2012, 186–189; Rainisto 2004, 9–10). Thus, its
success cannot be fully measured by economic indicators. Instead, a municipality has to build a legitimate basis for its operation as an administrative organization and to manage the responsibilities that are assigned to it (Luoma-aho 2008, 448). It is a different thing to do things efficiently and therefore perform well than to be respected by the own community based on good nature and virtuousness (Aula & Mantere 2008, 136). While the existence of municipalities is not based on profit, there are some elements of justification even in municipalities that are, in fact, based on profitable operation. A municipality must legitimate itself in a variety of ways and economic success is undoubtedly one of them. Reputation management can be steered towards an appeal for funding, and a good reputation and image can, therefore, be literally profitable assets to a public organization. Reputation can also prevent budget cut-backs. That is why almost all municipalities try to influence their reputations based on economic ambitions (Karvonen 1999, 21; Aula, Vehkalahti & Äikäs 2007, 13.) The ultimate goal in terms of economic perspective is to create a profile that generates investments (Aula, Vehkalahti & Äikäs 2007, 13; Fombrun 1996, 146).

In recent decades the pressure for efficiency has increased in municipalities and, as a result, the management of municipal organizations has shifted towards profit-oriented strategies (Andreassen 1994, 16–20; Aronczyk & Powers 2010, 6). Municipal organizations have to express efficiency somehow or otherwise their operation as public service organizations can easily be questioned (Andreassen 1994, 16–20). Thus, organizations must perform at least in a manner that prevents challenges to their legitimacy (Deephouse & Carter 2005, 329–360). In this context, however, the distinction between reputation and legitimacy should be kept in mind. Sufficient performance might sustain legitimacy but it does not necessarily enhance reputation (ibid). Accordingly, the criticism towards municipalities’ ineffectiveness can be perceived to be related to the fact that expressing efficiency is a complex issue for municipal organizations. While striving for profit has been questioned in recent years, one trend in municipal management is to emphasize strategic management and quality control (Vahermo 2004, 51). This logic is about establishing operational goals and evaluating their attainment. As a result, operational power has been delegated to specific crafts and units and, thus, professional management has been emphasized on the expense of political management (ibid).
Investment analysts form an interesting stakeholder group in the context of municipal organizations. They have a remarkable role in shaping reputations because they are an authority in determining what value investments produce. Funding of public organizations is usually not based on an expectation of a profit which raises a question of the prospects of investments in public organizations. (Fombrun 1996, 146.) It can be argued that public funding is based on the perceived legitimacy of the organization. The expression of legitimacy towards investors means that the operation of the municipality must seem worth investing in without an expectation of profit. This logic has led to quantitative evaluations of organizational brands; the value that reputation construction produces should be measurable so that the organization can utilize that information in its operation (Lury & Moor 2010, 29–32). This is difficult, however, because all organizations must build their reputations on some other values than money if they want to be perceived well by all stakeholder groups (ibid; Aronczyk 2013, 24–27; Fombrun 1996, 58). It can be concluded that a good reputation is always an economic asset but reputation construction cannot be based on direct profit orientation. That is why all efforts towards reputation enhancement can be interpreted as strategies for long-term profit making; the success of a public organization is most likely evaluated based on economic factors regardless of the operational goals of that organization. This basically means that even conduct based on the most ethical values can be evaluated in terms of economic success: goodness has a market value (Aula & Mantere 2008, 3–9).

2.2.2 Obstacles and Opportunities for Municipal Appeal

While preconditions for municipal reputation construction have been under transformation in recent years, reputational issues in municipalities are not a new phenomenon. Public organizations have been perceived as stiff, officious, outdated and incomprehensible for at least a few decades (Karvonen 1999, 32). As long have communities tried to tackle these negative conceptions and differentiate themselves from each other by asserting their individuality (Luoma-aho 2008, 450). There are still similar negative conceptions today concerning public organizations and public officials (ibid; Kavaratzis & Ashworth 2005, 506).

Public organizations are often perceived as too big and complex for effective operation or intentionally mysterious in their policy making. Public officials, on the other hand,
are often claimed as ill-willed, selfish and over-regulatory or optionally lazy, ignorant and indifferent. Because of the pessimistic attitudes towards public governance, bureaucracy has become a demeaning concept. This makes easy the generalization of public governance as something negative because bureaucracy is an essential feature of any public administration. Therefore, the image of public administration has become a common concern in many public organizations. (Wæraas & Byrkjeflot 2012, 186–187, 196–197.)

Based on the issues regarding organizational complexity, it has been presented that administrations should always be easily understandable and accessible for the people that are being administrated. Active citizenship is ultimately dependent on the accessibility and transparency of the administrative organizations (Coleman & Ross 2010, 24). The legibility of an administration, however, is not necessarily a desire of the administration itself. Picci (2011, 62–65) suggests that it is easier for the policy conductors to operate in a setting that is not transparent or easily understandable and therefore makes monitoring of policy-making more difficult. Thus, administrations should be evaluated in terms of how demanding their operation is to follow from the perspective of people affected by the conducted policies (ibid; Aula & Mantere 2008, 66–67). While transparency of operation is presented as a precondition for reputation-based governance, it still has its challenges: transparency comes with a risk of simplification and misunderstanding (ibid; Picci 2011, 64–65). Thus, the complexity of municipal organizations makes it difficult to articulate the policies and beneficiaries behind every action. Reputation construction, however, is essentially based on a negotiation regarding conceptions, and by being completely transparent in communicating its own conceptions a municipality can best avoid misunderstandings (Aula & Mantere 2008, 66–67). (cf. Sauri 64–66.)

It seems that much of the blame for reputational issues in the public sector is bestowed upon the organizational models that are actually required in order for the organizations to legitimize their existence (Wæraas & Byrkjeflot 2012, 186–206). Since political mandate is perceived as a limitation for reputation construction, it is reasonable to ask whether a good reputation is even a realistic or a desirable goal for public organizations. Luoma-aho (2007, 126–128) suggests that one distinctive characteristic of municipal reputation is that the uniqueness-principle does not apply to it. Thus, there is no gain for
municipalities to differentiate themselves too much. Instead, a good reputation in municipal sector is more related to isomorphism; organizations are expected to be similar enough and express neutral trustworthiness in their operations (ibid; Aronczyk 2013, 14). Wæraas and Byrkjeflot (2012, 191–192, 197–198) assert, in the same spirit, that public organizations must meet expectations of similarity and consistency regarding their operation which makes standing out that much harder and undesirable. These depictions illustrate the underlying uncertainty that characterizes municipal branding: a good reputation might be a burden for a municipality because it is hard to maintain (ibid). This notion is based on the alleged expectations regarding consistency which determine that, from time to time, municipal organizations have to make unpopular choices regardless of their effect on reputation (ibid). Based on similar arguments, Kuss (2009, 267, 270) concludes that municipal reputation is so complex and multi-faceted that it is, in fact, uncontrollable. He even suggests that this uncontrollability is the most essential character of municipal reputation (ibid). All in all, constructing a good reputation appears difficult for municipalities since it is essentially about establishing common denominators on which consistency of operation can be based on. (cf. Hankinson 2001, 127–142.)

Not all approaches declare such fundamental impossibility for municipal reputation and uniqueness. While the common conceptions regarding reputation construction in public governance seem to be pessimistic, the situation has started to change in recent decades as municipalities have started to realize the potential advantages of good reputation management (Luoma-aho 2007, 124–125; Cassel 2008, 102–114; Hankinson 2001, 127–128). As many municipalities have started to invest in their reputation, marketing as a conduct has started to appear as not so unnatural for some public organizations (Aronczyk 2013 52–55, 76). Rather than restrictions for brand construction, similarity and consistency can be seen as building blocks for brands, as well (ibid). Rainisto (2004, 9–10), for instance, finds that the dilemma of this discussion lies in municipalities’ ability to follow their time and develop their marketing onto the level of the new image-based era of competition. He suggests that some Finnish municipalities have been able to do much more in the field of marketing than others with practically the same set of limited resources. Nevertheless, both Cassel (2008, 103) and Hankinson (2001, 140–141), who have studied municipal branding as case studies in Sweden and Great Britain, suggests that there is a lack of evidence regarding how reputational
campaigns in municipalities have succeeded. Luoma-aho (2014, 39–52) complies in saying that public organizations lack both the skills and the resources to monitor the stakeholder encounters from which their reputations emerge. Thus, the alleged backwardness of municipal marketing is often connected to the lack of monitoring success. (cf. Fombrun 1996, 21, 24–27.)

One central area of importance in constructing reputation is constituted by the principles that reputation is built on. Because of the fundamental differences between private and public domains, the altering foundations for reputation steer operation into different directions. For instance, public organizations do not have similar needs for advertising or marketing of their products and services as the organizations on the private sector. Private companies, in turn, use relatively much more resources in advertising and marketing than in media relations. (Aula & Heinonen 2011, 48, 175; Rainisto 2004, 9–10, 55–56.) One distinctive difference in reputation construction between private and public sectors is that reputation construction in the private sector is characterized as competitive in a sense that one’s success is others’ loss (Karvonen 1999, 24). In the public sector, however, a good reputation means strengthened legitimacy, which is a non-limited resource (Wæraas & Byrkjeflot 2012, 198–201). Concerning this notion, Eisenegger (2009, 15–16) suggests that one function of reputation in the public sector is to legitimize the use of power. According to him, using administrative or other kind of power is regarded as legitimate only if the usage of power is recognized by the people that are being affected. Thus, when power is not legitimized by oppression or violence, it must be legitimized by maintaining a good reputation. Connected to the issue of legitimacy is the issue of social control. With good reputation comes freedom to act unmonitored. A good reputation, therefore, is an asset that enables an organization to operate without being under constant monitoring (ibid.)

The issue of legitimacy can also be approached through the social responsibility that organization expresses in its operation. When discussing corporate citizenship or corporate social responsibility in research, the basis is that an organization can be perceived as a member of its community and, therefore, it has to be operate responsibly (Coombs & Holladay 2007, 38–39; Jackson 2004, 28, 141). It can be argued that the pressure for expressing social responsibility has increased for all organizations in the recent decades (Jackson 2004, 28, 141). The focus in this discussion is mainly on
private corporations but some applicable ideas regarding municipal organization are represented, as well. A strong reputation on this domain means that the organization is seen as ethically dedicated. Ethicality, in this context, means recognizing that the organization has responsibilities towards all of its stakeholders. According to Fombrun (1996, 127–137), this sort of profile can be achieved by conducting certain traits (e.g. being eco-friendly and serving the community). It should be noted, however, that many of these traits are mandatory for public organizations and, thus, their direct effect on reputation can be questioned (Vahermo 2004, 47). While a good reputation relies on good deeds, it has significance whether those good deeds are motivated solely by an aim of a successful reputation. As Aula and Mantere (2008, 136–137, 144, 162) suggest, a responsible strategy must not show that its only purpose is to benefit the organization.

2.2.3 Global and local appeal

Reputational positioning is an important task in any organization that needs to regulate its actions on a spatial scale (Aula, Vehkalahti & Äikäs 2007, 15–16; Kuss 2009, 265). Municipalities are such organizations because their allure is partly based on local policies and regulations, taxes and economic resources, for instance (Rainisto 2004, 30–31; Jackson 2004, 153). However, due to the development in recent decades, municipalities need to think of their own development policies and allure in a new ‘post-industrial’ light: globalization and the emergence of an information-based society has changed the preconditions for place promotion and generated the need for local areas to promote themselves in new ways (ibid; Scott & Walsham 2005, 309–310). As a result, talent and capital are internationally competed of and their possessors are internationally oriented (Kuss 2009, 265). Accordingly, reputational factors of regions and communities have been emphasized. In a global world, there are new opportunities for municipalities but also new threats (Rainisto 2004, 9–10).

The spatial conditionality of reputation illustrates a change in the cultural preconditions for reputation construction (Aronczyk 2013, 3). In terms of recognition and awareness, the word of mouth or the local news aren’t the only relevant channels of communication for municipalities anymore (ibid; Coombs & Holladay 2007, 104). The global competition between places refers to a situation where national borders are no more limits for capital investors looking for regions that would render the best profit for
investments (Rainisto 2004, 30–31). This means that in Europe there are over 100,000 municipalities competing for jobs, inhabitants and investments (ibid). Based on this, Rainisto (ibid, 9–10) asserts that marketing is becoming the key for municipalities’ success if it is not the key already. Thus, mere physical development of the city space is not enough anymore.

On the other hand, national borders – and even regional borders – can still matter: because legislations, culture, taxes and other such factors within regional borders are significant (Rainisto 2004, 30–31; Jackson 2004, 153), it can be argued that alongside globalization prospers localization. This approach emphasizes locality and culture over international appeal in reputation construction (ibid). Aula and Heinonen (2011, 78) support this view in suggesting that success in reputation management comes through strong local investments rather than global allure. Globalization and localization, however, are not necessarily contrary developments. Instead, as Vahermo (2004, 45–46) suggests, there is talk of glocalisation, which basically means that two opposite phenomenon are correlating with each other.

3. Managing the Reputation of a Municipality

The role of the manager comes up often when reputation and municipal operation are generally discussed. Accordingly, the role of leadership can be regarded as one of the most important elements in a municipality’s success (Rainisto 2004, 50–51; Aula & Heinonen 2002, 169). However, managerial role can – and according to many studies, should – be bestowed upon more than one person or commission. A general conception in research is that reputation management should be initiated and steered by top-level management but it is ultimately a collective effort (Aula & Heinonen 2011, 162, 191; Jackson 2004, 105–107, 113). Thus, all the key constituents of management must work consistently for building a coherent image (Fombrun 1996, 60). In organizations with complex structures and operation in numerous fields, high level management can be perceived as the only level where the many aspects of reputation come together under one authority (Aula & Heinonen 2002, 169). In municipalities, this authority is the mayor and, thus, his/her role is emphasized (Vahermo 2004, 51). The reputation of the manager is a separate thing from the reputation of an organization. Accordingly,
branding efforts in municipalities are related to both personal and collective reputation construction (Kuss 2009, 263; Greenberg 2010, 118–119). Nevertheless, the personal brand of the mayor and the city brand correlate to some extent. According to Davies and Chun (2009, 312–313, 315–320), the personal reputation of the manager determines approximately half of the reputation of the organization. Thus, the manager is a significant symbol for the organization. His/her personality affects the performance of the staff and therefore the perceptions of other stakeholder groups as well. The manager is also an important public figure and a source of information for the media. (ibid.)

The collectiveness of reputation management can be connected to the ideal of consistency: since reputation management is a shared responsibility, all constituents of the management must work consistently towards the same goals (Fombrun 1996, 60–67; Aula, Vehkalahti & Äikäs 2007, 17–19). The same ideal can also be called integrity, as Jackson (2004, 77–79) does. Integrity in this context means ‘wholeness’ – a moral alignment within an organization that constructs the organization’s character by bringing the multiple ethical selves of the organization together. This level of collectiveness, of course, requires a healthy organization culture in which consistent communication penetrates all levels of operation (cf. Aula & Heinonen 2002, 25; Aula & Heinonen 2011, 191).

In order to act collectively towards common goals, all actors in the organization must be aware of what the strategy is (Vahermo 2004, 54–55). In municipal organizations, the idea of strategic management has traditionally emphasized the goals of the city parliament, city government and top level bureaucratic management (ibid). While it can be argued that strategies can quite easily be planned and documented, the implementation of them is a complex issue. The traditional “from top down” strategic approach to municipal management needs to be re-evaluated as municipalities have become actors among others in local networks (ibid; Hankinson 2001, 127–142). There are, however, many other local actors that are central in terms of efficient municipal strategy, such as the inhabitants (Aronczyk & Powers 2010, 11). A municipality cannot bestow a reputational strategy upon inhabitants because it has no such control over them (ibid). Thus, the success in place branding ultimately lies with the people within the society. If the inhabitants do not “live the brand” and carry it forward on their part, the efforts of the management parties go to waste (Aronczyk 2013, 76–77). Brand
management is essentially about engaging people and that is why network strategies have become more essential for municipalities (ibid).

The previously discussed virtue of consistency in management can be contested with an approach that emphasizes the virtues of fastness and flexibility (Rainisto 2004, 9–10; Aula, Vehkalahti & Äikäs 2007, 17–18). Flexibility as an ideal for publicity work, however, has its own challenges. It can contradict with expressing legitimacy in operation, which poses challenges especially for municipalities in terms of their reputation management (Wæraas & Byrkjeflot 2012, 191–192; 199–201; Kuss 2009, 267). It can be concluded that municipal reputation is a hybrid of conservative values and representations of its ability to change quickly. On one hand, it should be stable and demonstrate persistence; on the other hand, it should be dramatic in its aspirations for constant development (Vahermo 2004, 44).

Purposeful management of reputation ultimately means that organizations are making choices regarding their existence – they cannot be everything at once (Karvonen 1999, 32, 52, 64). Thus, every form of existence means that all other forms are screened out. As municipalities and other public organizations have started to invest in their reputation, they have started to make purposeful choices regarding what they want to be (ibid). In this chapter, I will take a look at how these choices are carried out as I explore the characteristics of municipal reputation management.

3.1 Managerial Practices

Managing the reputation of a municipality requires that the managerial practices which aim for a better reputation are adapted into public governance. Since every goal in public administration cannot be equal in importance or relevance, goals must be identified and evaluated according to democratic criterion. In order to establish what a good reputation in public governance means, the definition of good public governance has to be established first. Because of the wide range on expectations aimed towards public administrations, good governance can be perceived as a vague concept. (Picci 2011, 46–47.) According to Picci (ibid), good governance can be best evaluated according to the resources that are needed to reach given goals – whatever those goals may be. The goals, of course, have criterion as well. The apparent problem in trying to
adapt to the aggregate will of the people is that there is no such thing as an aggregate
will of people (ibid; Coombs & Holladay 2007, 39–40, 45). Thus, equal standards of
ethical conduct are difficult to establish in a network of conflicting interests. In this
setting, one provided criterion for good reputational governance is the way in which a
municipality advocates active participation of the people (Picci 2011, 46–47). When
municipality’s affairs are well communicated, the possibility is given for inhabitants to
influence the decisions regarding their own living environment (Vahermo 2004, 80).

Managerial practices that form reputations do not need to be anything special. Instead,
they can be based on very simple value-based everyday actions. Managing reputation is,
according to this approach, related to identity and uniqueness. Uniqueness of an
organization does not necessarily have to be about innovation; it can also be about, for
example, good customer service or some other simple guideline that the whole
organization works by. The key is to demonstrate credibility and earn trust through
doing certain things. Actions of the organization need to project the image and identity
of the organization and promote credibility and trust, but there does not need to be any
Accordingly, reputation management can be described as expectation management: if
the expectations of the municipality’s stakeholders towards the municipal organization
are fulfilled, the situation results into trust between the two parties (Picci 2011, 26–32).
And trust, as has been established in previous chapters, is an essential factor of
municipal reputation (ibid; Eisenegger 2009, 11–12; Jackson 2004, 8, 83).

Even if reputation management does not need to be anything special, and even if
reputation management is usually entwined with normal managerial practices of
everyday operation, municipal reputation management is still something worth
studying. Kuss (2009, 369–270), for instance, suggests that community reputation
management is one of the most difficult and interesting forms of communication. The
reputation manager of municipal organization must meet the partly conflicting
expectations of many different stakeholder groups, while still basing every claim of
virtue or reputation campaign on hard facts. This is why, according to Kuss, a
municipality cannot avoid the negatives of any given reputation strategy, and it should
not even try to hide them in its communication. The choice of any brand has its
downsides, and these downsides must be discussed openly and purposefully. (ibid.)
Picci (2011, 47–48), on the other hand, focuses on the positive sides of reputation management by pointing out that there are things to be gained also. He suggests that reputational incentives can be conducive to the quality of public administration in terms of two dimensions: efficiency and democracy (ibid).

3.1.1 Communication as reputation management

The central role of communication in reputation management is based on the principle that the attributes of an organization must be communicated to its stakeholders, or otherwise the operational strategy might not have the desired effect (Aula & Heinonen 2002, 168–169). Thus, while reputations are constructed by people evaluating what they see, an organization can still actively take part in providing the ingredients of which their reputation is constructed. Communicating is an area of expertise and, accordingly, reputation management is often conceived as a job for the organization’s communication personnel (ibid). Communication can be connected to all efforts of constructing and maintaining a reputation. Equivalently, all managerial operations in terms of reputation are somehow connected to communication (Aula & Heinonen 2011, 12, 145).

Organization’s public relations are an example of organized communication that aims to construct a good reputation. PR has an important role as a disseminator of all kinds of ideas and people can be perceived to have the right to hear these of ideas – even if they reject the majority of them (Coombs & Holladay 2007, 27). As has been established in previous chapters, PR can backlash, if it is not based on reality (Fombrun 1996, 60, 165). Accordingly, public relations as a concept tends to have negative connotations related to the previously discussed issue of artificiality. It is often connected to unethical activities of corporations that are related to communication (Coombs & Holladay 2007, 5–7). Thus, the concept is used to refer to a diversity of activities that aim to give a falsely positive impression of something. PR can, nevertheless, be a useful tool for an organization. Fombrun (ibid) describes the work of publicists as promotion of the attributes of their organization or as generating interest towards their organization. Coombs and Holladay (2007, 18–19), in turn, connect PR to a more pervasive way of marketing in comparison to advertising. Thus, the more positive outlooks perceive PR as long-term strategy and brand-building. (cf. Aula & Heinonen 2002, 168.)
PR efforts are often connected to media relations and media relations, in turn, are often perceived as an area of difficulty (Aula & Heinonen 2002, 250; Aula & Heinonen 2011, 48–50). Public communication includes a strong element of power and that is why ethics are much discussed when speaking of PR (Coombs & Holladay 2007, 28–35). The ethical aspect includes evaluations of fairness, truthfulness and the role of the communicator in relation to the organization he/she represents (ibid). As has been established, this ethical balance is hard to maintain in a public organization since branding efforts can easily conflict with social responsibilities on rhetoric level (Greenberg 2010, 116–117; Aronczyk 2013, 17, 31, 59–61). Another reason for the difficulty of media relations lies in the notion that publicists have a two-dimensional goal: they have to serve both the public and the journalists (Karvonen 1999, 78–89). Because of this fundamental difficulty in cooperation with the media, different parties often form symbiotic relationships with each other (e.g. politics reporters and public administrations), which makes the cooperation easier (ibid). Thus, mutually beneficial relationships are an essential aspect to PR (ibid; Coombs & Holladay 2007, 24–26).

All communication in organizations is not purposeful. In fact, every action in an organization can be seen as an act of communication because reputation is tightly connected to organizational culture (Aula & Heinonen 2011, 145). Therefore, an organization communicates even when it is not trying to communicate and by operating in a certain way it is communicating its own purpose (ibid). Reputation managers should realize that values are communicated through operation regardless of the intentions of the organization and, thus, reputations are formed even without purposeful communication (Karvonen 1999, 52; Rainisto 2004, 62; Kuss 2009, 268). Communicating purposefully, in turn, means making choices regarding the organization’s existence (ibid). One basic rule of communication is that where there is choice, there is significance (Karvonen 1999, 63). Thus, by communicating its purpose well, an organization can legitimize its existence.

All in all, communication has to be understood as a sophisticated tool for reputation management that can be used in many ways. The interpretation process of stakeholders cannot be controlled by simplifying things or merely providing more information. Because the images regarding an organization are in the minds of the observers it would
be easy to set blame on them for inaccurate conceptions or interpretations. However, a better way of reputational management is to provide tools for acknowledgment. (Aula & Heinonen 2002, 207, 215.)

3.1.2 Marketing a municipality

While this study has underlined the distinctive characteristics of municipal reputation construction, it can also be argued that the common elements of marketing in municipalities are ultimately quite similar to those of private companies (Kostiainen 2001, 10). These elements include careful planning, organizational development and finding the right segments and channels. Additionally, customer satisfaction and trust as goals are not tied to specific crafts (ibid). Segmentation, however, is more difficult for public organizations because of many conflicting interests that make strategic planning difficult (Rainisto 2004, 57; Whelan et al. 2008, 1165; Wæraas & Byrkjeflot 2012, 196). Also, the policies of decision making and the presence of a political responsibility make reacting slower and harder in municipalities (ibid; Picci 2011, 47). Thus, preconditions for marketing seem quite different between municipalities and private companies after all. The ‘market’ of public sector is harder to analyze and success on it harder to measure. As Kostiainen (2001, 10–11) puts it, consumers cannot buy or own a municipality and producers cannot pull a municipality out of production.

A certain pattern of repetition and consistency seems to be an essential form of using language in terms of creating connotations. Rainisto (2004, 19) acknowledges that municipalities have increasingly started to use slogans in their communication. Using slogans can be perceived as straight-forward brand construction because municipalities who use slogans have decided what they want to communicate as their central attraction features. These efforts illustrate the promoted identity of the organization and, thus, identity – in this context – refers to the desire and determination of the organization. If there is a large void between the identity of the company and the images that people hold towards the company, the municipality should not conduct marketing campaigns until the void is evened. Otherwise, there is a risk of a losing a sense of plausibility and legitimacy. Thus, choosing a slogan should be based on careful evaluation of what is the desired outcome from the municipality’s perspective. Central to the selection is to think which segments are being addresses and what possible connotations the slogan arouses.
In addition to self-made slogans, there often exists characterizing remarks concerning certain places. These remarks are often based on tradition and they are widely known within a nation. Although, most of the remarks are negative by tone, some municipalities have been able to benefit from them in their own marketing. (ibid, 19, 28, 62–63.)

Using slogans and symbols in steering connotations has been addressed in varying tones in different studies. As stated, using slogans can be perceived as a natural part of brand construction (ibid). This view underlines the relation between the concept of brand and the concept of marketing. Branding is depicted by Rainisto (2004, 54) as a fresh approach to the development of a municipality; through branding, a municipality must consider all aspects and strategies of its operation. A brand explicates the desired state of the municipality and steers development into a desired direction. An alternative approach to slogans is provided by Cassel (2008, 102–114) and Hankinson (2001, 127–142). Referring to their case studies on municipal branding, they both suggests that branding based on slogans and symbols neglects the broader context of localized development that reputation management is essentially a part of.

3.1.3 Managing publicities

Publicity is one of the general principles of municipal governance in Finland (Vahermo 2004, 79–80). It means that everyone has the right to receive information about the actions of the administrative parties. Thus, the obligation for openness and transparency in Finnish public administration is based on law which makes the media publicity difficult to control. Accordingly, Luoma-aho (2007, 126) asserts that the principle of transparency leaves limited possibilities for reputation management in the public sector. In the current media environment all organizations must accept the fact that any part of their operation can become public (ibid; Aula & Heinonen 2011, 80). Aula and Heinonen (ibid, 36) define different levels of reputational publicity based on the source of the information being represented. Reputations, according to them, are formed in these different spheres which include media publicity, social media, authoritative publicity, peer-to-peer publicity and internal publicity. In research, the most essential role in terms of reputation construction is often bestowed upon internal publicity, which comprises of the direct communication between a municipality and its most central local
constituencies. Inhabitants and local companies can be perceived as valuable advocates of the municipality if they have a positive stance towards their municipality and if they are active in local development projects (ibid; Aronczyk 2013, 76–77; Aronczyk & Powers 2010, 11; Virtanen 1999, 7–9).

The levels of publicity defined above indicate that reputation is always constructed in the public sphere. The concept of public sphere in itself is open for interpretation but, in the spirit of Habermas, it can be defined as an arena in which citizens discussed issues of common interest in a rational and constructive way (Knight 2010, 175–178). Building on this, it can be argued that the public sphere has undergone a significant structural and substantive changes in the course of recent decades as people have gained a freer access to political discussions and new means of public participation (ibid; Coleman & Ross 2010, 38–44). Additionally, the emergence of many-to-many communication has shifted the power in policy making and, as a result, publicity has become so complex that achieving consensus is an unrealistic goal (Knight 2010, 175–178; Coleman & Ross 2010, 38–44). Instead, public arenas are characterized by social and political activism and private promotional aspirations (cf. Aula & Heinonen 2002, 19–20).

A difference can be distinguished between publicity and media publicity: the media form a macro-publicity as personal encounters form a micro-publicity. Their differences have become emphasized since communication on public arenas are increasingly mediatized. This bestows power on the media in terms of framing information. Nevertheless, both levels of publicity have theoretically the same potential power. (Aula & Heinonen 2011, 80.) The line between these publicities, however, can sometimes be difficult to draw. Picci (2011, 26) acknowledges this in suggesting that internet, for instance, could be describes as digitalized word-of-mouth, while this would be an understatement of its role in reputation formation. A reputational publicity consists of all the arenas on which the organization and its stakeholders encounter with each other (Aula & Mantere 2008, 62; Knight 2010, 178). These arenas are the birthplaces of reputation; they can be predetermined or irregular and new arenas can be formed instantly (Aula & Mantere 2008, 62). Every arena has its own logic of reputational formation but they are all connected by the limited time affecting the parties involved;
there is only a limited set of communication and interpretation that one arena can deliver (ibid).

Managing publicities is not entirely about controlling the levels of publicity. While the different channels of reputational communication have to be acknowledged, it is as important to focus on how a public image is conveyed through those channels. Reputation is an important factor for an organization investing in its public relations because reputation determines how publics come to interact with the organization. (Aula & Mantere 2008, 64.) When speaking of public relations in the municipal sector, the political element in operation becomes relevant once again. Coombs and Holladay (2007, 50, 107) suggest that the use of public relations to support political efforts usually means advocating status quo in political power relations of organizations. When applied to the operation of municipal organization, this would mean that public relations are used to legitimize the use of administrative power (ibid). Focusing on the conduct in reputational arenas does not only mean sending and receiving information and messages. An organization’s representations convey meaning on a verbal, tonal and visual level, as well (Aula & Mantere 2008, 64). On any arena, organizations are interpreted based on their expression as well as the content of their messages (ibid).

Adam Smith’s notion from 1766 is regarded as the corner stone of reputation management. In reference to trade of goods, Smith noted: “Fraud does not pay, because if it becomes public, a single instance of fraud does more harm in the mid and long term than it generates profit in the short term” (Lochbihler 2009, 103). Smith’s notion mirrors the nature of public affairs well because it suggests that public affairs have to be based on trustworthiness, reliability and responsibility (ibid). These elements, as has been established, can be described as cornerstones of reputation on the public sphere. Smith’s notion also refers to the fragile nature of reputation; a good reputation can be diminished in an instant (Gaultier-Gaillard, Louisot & Rayner 2009, 162). Thus, while reputations have to be built with long-term operation, controversially they can be destroyed by a moment of poor judgment.
3.1.4 Generating dialogue

Successful reputation construction is connected to readiness for open dialogue and proactivity in bringing up issues. Proactivity helps organizations to focus public discussion on issues that support their own goals. Thus, in a world of images and conceptions, communication is an important tool. This is why participation in the public debate can be perceived as compulsory for organizations. Openness and transparency should not, however, be conducted only by communicating about the organization’s operations; openness and transparency should be natural parts of operation. Open dialogue and proactive open communication are related to a good organizational culture, which in turn helps the construction of a good reputation. (Aula & Heinonen 2011, 48, 73–76, 135.)

In recent years, open dialogue has been emphasized even more when the social media have become a traditional tool of communication in Finnish municipalities (Sauri 2015). The communication roles have shifted since governing parties cannot address inhabitants as a mere audience anymore (ibid; Coleman & Ross 2010, 38–44). Social media can bring up faults, encapsulate the irritation of the masses and steer the focus to where the neglect of the organization lies (Aula & Heinonen 2011, 102). These points raise a question of how municipalities should respond to public discussion regarding their operation. According to Aula and Heinonen (ibid), the worst move for an organization is to ignore the social media altogether. In fact, the social media are an essential part of how Aula and Heinonen see reputation: the legitimacy of the existence of the organization lies partly on how it communicates with its stakeholders on the arenas of the social media (ibid). Accordingly, constant monitoring of the feelings of stakeholders is a necessity for organizations. The management of relations in the current world is based on generating constant dialogue with all the stakeholders and constituents. Secrecy and withholding of information are not parts of a communication strategy that can lead to a good reputation. (ibid, 173–178.)

When a municipality brings up public issues proactively, it should consider who it is speaking for. Politicians as a representatives of municipalities base their rhetoric on an understanding regarding what the public wants. Politicians, thus, speak for the public. However, when local people from outside the municipal organization address the same
issue, they speak as the public. Due to the new media environment, inhabitants are able to discuss their community publicly themselves which has decreased their dependence on authoritative parties to do so. When they discuss local policies or distribute knowledge regarding their community, they are reshaping the public view in a democratic discussion and, thus, partaking in the construction of the municipal reputation. Speaking as or for the public is a complex matter because it always involves some form of antithesis between them and us. (Coleman & Ross 2010, 2–3, 94–96.) The distribution of Finnish municipalities into administratively quite independent branches does not help the situation. Some crafts can be more active in reputation construction than others (cf. Sauri 2015, 59–61). Additionally, different crafts have their own historical and cultural preconditions for reputation and, therefore, different crafts within the same public organization can have multiple reputations in the minds of stakeholders (Luoma-aho 2008, 450–451). For the same reason, addressing the public as one entity is generally tentative for the governing parties because the needs of all the people addressed are unfamiliar; inhabitants are customers of different municipal branches depending on the situation (ibid).

3.1.5 Competition and Cooperation

This study has regularly touched upon the issue of competition as a part of the new era of reputation formation that municipalities have to adjust themselves into. This indeed seems to be the reality of the situation according to many studies (cf. Karvonen 2001, 56; Aula, Vehkalahti & Åikäs 2007, 13, 17–18; Wæraas & Byrkjeflot, 2012, 186–206). There is, however, another approach to the same situation that underlines the importance of cooperation between municipalities instead (Rainisto 2004, 42–44; Aula & Mantere 2008, 120–124).

Competition on municipal sector basically means competing over inhabitants, employees, companies, tourists and investors. In brief, economic competition in municipalities is over tax-payers and investments (Aula, Vehkalahti & Åikäs 2007, 13, 17–18; Fombrun 1996, 146; Rainisto 2004, 9–10). Nevertheless, municipal sector is distinctive in terms of reputational competition because it also aims for legitimacy of operation. Competing over legitimacy, in turn, means that many municipalities can excel without it inflicting negatively on others (Wæraas & Byrkjeflot, 2012, 198–201).
The preconditions for this competition have changed in recent decades as geographical and informational boundaries for place promotion have faded. Rainisto (2004, 9–10), for instance, speaks of the new image-based era of competition when mental imagery is emphasized. People easily get information and develop opinions regarding places regardless of actual experiences of those places (ibid).

Municipalities also cooperate in order to achieve desirable results. Networking has increased between municipalities in recent decades and regional development has begun to emerge (Vahermo 2004, 46; Aula & Mantere 2008, 120–124). Regional cooperation, however, can be challenging for municipalities because every actor in a federation of municipalities should benefit from the arrangement or otherwise political unity cannot be achieved (Rainisto 2004, 42–44). Thus, even in regional cooperation, municipalities should be active in working for their own individual goals; their operation should be characterized by “relative apartness”, as Gnevko (2012, 104–105, 352) suggests. Nevertheless, city districts – like Helsinki Region, of which Kerava is often conceived to be a part of – are an important factor in city branding. Promoting districts means that the completion of places is not necessarily determined by administrative borders (Rainisto 2004, 44). In terms of marketing a small municipality, promoting a district can be about borrowing a better known brand of some central area in the same district (ibid). While borrowing a good reputation of another municipality can benefit others, shared reputations can also have a contrary effect; when associated with other actors in the same field of operation or in the same geographic area, a municipality’s reputation can be smeared by the actions of other organizations (Aula & Mantere 2008, 120–121).

Private companies can be seen as important partners of municipalities, as well, since local companies can provide legitimacy for their home municipality. According to Rainisto (2004, 47–48), nine out of ten companies feel that their home region benefits from their success in terms of reputation. Regions have theoretically the same potential for advocating the reputation of local companies. Still, local businesses often tend to think of city branding as a responsibility of the municipal organization. Rainisto suggests that cooperation between a municipality and companies in its area is beneficial for both parties and marketing the municipality should, therefore, be a conjoined effort. Nevertheless, the municipal organization should always take main responsibility of
funding and implementing city marketing since private interest towards it is essentially based on micro-level economic success. (ibid.)

3.2 Encountering the stakeholders

All previous exploration implies that reputation is formed when an organization and its stakeholders encounter with each other in various service scenarios. Public encounters are often perceived as an inherently problematic area of research. This notion is related to the bureaucratic and complex nature of public organizations (cf. Aula, Vehkalahti & Äikäs 2007, 20–21; Picci 2011, 26–28). Borchorst et al. (2012, 556–558) suggest that the professional aim of public officials for serving the public interest comes with responsibilities and regulations regarding their interaction with their stakeholders. Thus, their discretion in service scenarios is partly determined by requirements for professionalism that do not necessarily appeal to the stakeholders. The stakeholders of a municipality also position themselves towards the service situations with a presumption of bureaucracy and imposed protocol (ibid). They construct their identities in the service situation according to how they believe they are expected to act. In doing so, the inhabitant or employee may experience as being forced to adapt to the bureaucratic system (ibid). It can be concluded that the actions of both parties are steered by the very social structures that those actions then serve to reinforce. This approach, according to Bartels (2013), has been contested in recent decades as stakeholders have been increasingly regarded as constituents of service delivery and policy-making. In any case, in can be suggested that in encounters with the municipal governance the stakeholders construct their interpretations of the municipality’s operation and values. These interpretations build images and stories which, in turn, constitute a reputation (Aula & Heinonen 2002, 17, 90–91; Aula & Heinonen 2011, 80; Aula, Vehkalahti & Äikäs 2007, 20). (cf. Ahern 2001, 109-137.)

As a basis for exploring reputational encounters, it can be accepted that there are always at least two parties involved: a party of which the image is constructed and a party constructing the image (Karvonen 1999, 51–52). These parties must be in such interaction with each other that one party is able to gain information about the other. As the result, the recipient of information forms an opinion about the other party and that opinion affects the procession of all later gained information regarding the same party.
(ibid). This reasoning means that reputation management of municipalities is ultimately based on relationships (Fombrun 1996, 57). Reputation of an organization is formed and built by information that is spread through informal networks of personal contacts (ibid, 153). Thus, reputation is essentially not only about what you know, but also about who you know. As was already established in the previous chapter, companionships are important ingredients for a good reputation. In the next section I will focus on the ways a municipality encounters with its stakeholder groups. I will also explore how important certain stakeholder groups can be in comparison to others. (cf. Aula & Heinonen 2011, 173–178.)

3.2.1 Building Networks

While different authors use different concepts when referring to stakeholders (e.g. constituents, interest groups), all words essentially refer to the body of actors that includes all the people that are associated in constructing the success – and therefore also the reputation – of a municipality: its inhabitants, employees, customers, investors and communities (cf. Fombrun 1996, 57, 139). The concept of stakeholder, thus, refers to all individuals and groups that affect or are affected by the conduct of an organization (ibid; Jackson 2004, 57; Luoma-aho 2007, 126). Constructing a reputation means constructing a network of reciprocal dependencies with these different stakeholder groups (Aula & Heinonen 2011, 19–21).

Managing networks can be perceived as equally important to reputation management as effective communication and reputation-based operation (Aula & Mantere 2008, 131–132). Building networks for advancing reputation has to do with what can be called the mechanisms of reputation. The first mechanism is the appreciation effect: organizations with good reputations are appreciated partners. Appreciation has a dimension of legitimacy to it which, in turn, is an important asset for municipalities (cf. Wæraas & Byrkjeflot, 2012, 198–201). A municipality can also reflect its own values through selections of cooperation. The second mechanism is the protective effect: Organizations with good reputations can endure better in a crisis (cf. Aula & Mantere 2008, 134; Greenberg 2010, 119–120). Protective effect has an essential role in the formation of conceptions. When new information collides with existing conceptions, a good
reputation can affect the processing of new information in a positive way. (Aula & Heinonen 2011, 21.)

Different stakeholders look for different things in an organization. Fombrun (1996, 139) defines the general traits that different stakeholders tend to favor in an organization: for employees, organizations must promote trust, they must empower employees and they must inspire pride. Customers, on the other hand, value organizations who champion quality and put the customer first. Investors emphasize value for their money and communities expect responsibility in actions. Overall, there seems to be a wide range of expectations that organizations need to live up to in order to be successful. Fombrun sums up the core things that the most important stakeholders look for in an organization in suggesting that customers expect reliability, employees expect trustworthiness and communities expect responsibility. (ibid, 67, 111–112, 125, 139.)

3.2.2 Keeping Everybody Happy

There are altering views regarding how inclusive an organization’s focus towards stakeholders should be. Some views suggest that good reputation demands a healthy relationship with every one of them. Altering views emphasize strategic segmentation. Fombrun (1996, 57, 139) represents the first perspective in suggesting that acquiring a good reputation means that managers need to invest heavily in the relationships with all of the organization’s stakeholders. It should be considered, however, whether there are differences in importance between stakeholder groups depending on the organization and its craft. Aula and Heinonen (2002, 208) comply with Fombrun in stating that managers must consider all stakeholder groups when constructing reputation. Nevertheless, they imply that some stakeholders can be emphasized as more important. While all stakeholder groups are regarded as important in research, it is often suggested that reputation management should be, above all, focused on internal communication (ibid; Aula & Heinonen 2011, 61, 65; Aula & Mantere 2008, 144; Aronczyk 2013. 76–77; Aronczyk & Powers 2010, 11).

The general conception in approaches emphasizing strategic segmentation is that it is vital for any organization to establish its most important stakeholder groups and the expectations those stakeholder groups hold towards the organization (Jackson 2004, 35,
A good reputation, thus, is based on the knowledge of how an organization’s most important stakeholders perceive it. The perceptions regarding what the most important stakeholder group is are not very unified since the nature of the organization at hand influences strongly to the way that stakeholder strategy is perceived. Thus, the contextual factors are important in determining approaches. Kostiainen (2001, 23–24, 56) suggests that not only do the stakeholder groups have to be divided into categories but the most important stakeholder groups must be defined within those categories, as well. According to this logic, if inhabitants, for instance, would be defined as the most important stakeholder category, the most important stakeholder group could be families with children. Kuss (2009, 270–272) adds to the discussion by stating what stakeholder groups are not the most essential in terms of constructing municipal appeal. Inhabitants, according to Kuss, are never the most important stakeholder group of the municipality in terms of reputation because inhabitants already live and/or work in the municipality and pay taxes to it. This view is based on the notion that inhabitants’ perceptions of their municipality is extremely different form the tourists, investors, employers and other interest groups. This is why branding efforts should, according to Kuss, be aimed outside of the community. The perception that inhabitants form a secondary stakeholder group for municipalities is a very exceptional one. Most studies regarding municipal reputation construction imply the essentiality of a positive relationship with specifically the inhabitants and other local actors (cf. Aula and Heinonen 2002, 208; Aula & Heinonen 2011, 61, 65; Aula & Mantere 2008, 144; Aronczyk 2013. 76–77; Aronczyk & Powers 2010, 11). However, this contradiction illustrates well the two objectives of successful marketing that are, according to Cassel (2008, 108–109, 112), difficult to combine in practice: A municipality should be able to address both the insiders and the outsiders with the same set of efforts. Because this is difficult, municipalities often focus on external audience, as Cassel and Kuss suggest.

It can be concluded that focusing communication to different stakeholders in municipalities has its fundamental challenges. In addition to the issues discussed above, another challenge for municipalities is that, according to the principle of transparency, public organizations have no privacy (Aula & Heinonen 2002, 18–20). Organizations should provide as much information about them to the public as possible and explicate their models of operation without unjustifiable limitations (ibid; Picci 2011, 62–65).
This principle can be challenging for the parties responsible for reputation management and communication in organizations: the whole public recognition of an organization cannot be managed by keeping just a few parties happy (Aula & Heinonen 2002, 18–20). Keeping everybody happy simultaneously, on the other hand, is impossible (ibid).

3.2.3 Planning Approaches

Regardless of the alleged impossibility of success, municipalities do plan their approaches depending on the stakeholder group at hand (cf. Luoma-aho 2014, 39–43; Scott & Walsham 2005, 308–310). Thus, a municipality’s encounters with its stakeholders do not always happen randomly or by the initiative of the stakeholder. Instead, municipalities can be active in steering the encounters into a set of desired scenarios depending on what is happening around them (Aula & Heinonen 2011, 48, 73–76, 135). It should be noted, however, that people are not static in their opinions and motivations (Jackson 2004, 9–10; Aula & Mantere 2008, 66). That is why publicity should constantly be analyzed from the perspective of reputation in order to understand how trends are currently changing; when features of objects or subjects change, relations change (Aula & Heinonen 2002, 176; Karvonen 1999, 97, 100; Vahermo 2004, 44). As a result of change, positive images and reputations are re-evaluated all the time (Karvonen 1999, 97, 100). This means that keeping up a gained reputation requires constant renewal of the encounters that generated that reputation in the first place. It can be concluded that municipalities can support their reputational agenda by constantly observing what is happening in their surrounding informative and communicative networks.

Regardless of the relational nature of reputation, management of a municipality does not necessarily have to be concerned with the daily political or economic issues; a reputation strategy can be independent of the special interests that emerge along with topics of the day. According to Kuss (2009, 270–272, 287), trying to adapt to the expectations of all different stakeholder groups can mean that the organization distances itself from its own identity. Good communication, thus, supports the long-term reputation strategy in such way that the communication agenda is determined according to the interests of the municipal organization. (ibid.)
The previous chapter implies the importance of the relationship between a municipal organization and the inhabitants when discussing municipal reputation. The concept of city relation, used by Aula, Vehkalahti & Äikäs (2007, 20–21), opens many opportunities for the exploration of this relationship, which has traditionally been more in the interest of urban studies. City relation is constructed of personal experiences, media transmitted images and the so called narrative encounters. A municipality is encountered in various situations of interaction, and every representative of the municipal organization reconstructs the reputation of his/her employee. Aula et al. define three levels of city relation. First, the city is a place of residence and an experimental reality for the inhabitants. This level of interaction concerns especially those who live in the municipality and use the services it provides. Secondly, the city is a political actor and an administrative organization. Thirdly, the city implements and promotes future oriented projects. The third level of interaction is much more abstract and, therefore, rhetorical meanings are emphasized. (ibid.)

Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2005, 507) adapt to the previous thinking in suggesting that consumer orientation is central in promoting a municipality. Consumers, in this context, are the inhabitants ‘using’ their municipality. Consumer orientation is about how inhabitants encounter their home municipality on symbolic and physical levels of evaluation and how this evaluation results in their assessment of that municipality. (ibid.) Whelan et al. (2008, 1164–1171) build on similar arguments in suggesting that municipal success is much related to customer orientation. Their perspective emphasizes the importance of the responsiveness to inhabitants’ and employees’ needs on a daily basis. A municipality’s reputation is based on how its inhabitants experience the municipality and customer-facing staff are the ambassadors of that reputation (ibid; Andreassen 1994, 20–21). A strong municipal brand construction is, thus, about providing positive experiences to both employees and inhabitants.

An unknown organization does not start off from a natural situation in terms of reputation construction; people tend to be suspicious towards new or little known organizations. Reputations and images, in turn, have a substantial effect on the reception of new products or concepts. Good reputation, thus, works as a filter which advocates positive reactions regardless of the actual quality of the offered product/service. Even if an uncharted status is a challenge for an organization, previous encounters with
stakeholders do not always work for the benefit of a municipality. A bad reputation has a similar filtering effect as does a good reputation. If the customer service of an organization, for example, has a bad reputation, encounters are negatively signified to begin with. It can be concluded that it is beneficial for organizations to find out what the most common motivations for people encountering them are and, based on this, raise awareness about themselves with consistent communication. (Karvonen 1999, 18–20, 98.)

Silberstein-Loeb (2009, 25–30) supports the previously discussed perspective in suggesting that the pivotal role of reputation in determining how stakeholders act is based on uneven distribution of information. If everyone were able to explore all relevant information when making decisions – regardless of the nature of the decision being made – reputation would not be a factor. This claim stems from the view that other forms of information override reputation as long as they are available. However, different actors hold different amounts of information, and therefore reputation can supplement the views of stakeholders regarding an organization. (ibid.)

As suggested previously, consistency is often emphasized as a central factor in reputation construction (Aula & Heinonen 2011, 61, 191; Fombrun 1996, 60). However, Picci (2011, 48–50) points out that the personal motivation of bureaucrats in the public sector is difficult to define, since their success in their occupation is rarely rewarded materially. It can be argued that same applies to the municipal sector of Finland. It is, therefore, difficult to define whether the employees of a municipality operate according to their personal motivations – which, according to Picci, are usually based on career advancement – or the common reputational incentives of the administration (ibid).

3.2.4 Different Levels of Encounters

Because of its limited geographical scope, it can be presumed that a municipality is encountered directly and repeatedly only by its own inhabitants and people working in the municipality (Aula, Vehkalahti & Äikäs 2007, 20–21; cf. Adreassen 1994, 20–21). Thus, it can be argued that most of the conceptions made of municipalities are media related and therefore remote (Karvonen 1999, 78–89). The notion that municipal organizations have a tendency to be valuable news sources for the local media supports
this claim (ibid). Thus, it is reasonable to ask how municipalities’ reputations are formed without actual experiences of them. As Eisenegger (2009, 12) suggests, only rarely can trust felt towards an organization be based on personal experiences. And when there are no personal experiences, trust towards an organization is based on the expectations explicated by others (ibid).

Aula and Heinonen (2002, 90–91) distinguish three levels of encounters between an organization and its stakeholders: the first level is based on personal interaction with the organization. These sort of encounters include face-to-face customer service situations for instance. On the second level, the organization is present only indirectly. The personal evaluation on this level of encounters is based on an experience of an organization in a situation where there are no representatives of the organization present. The third level is a remote encounter where the organization does not represent itself. These encounter are usually media related. (ibid.)

The media form an interesting level of encounter because related to it is an element of remoteness. This unique potential of reach affects both the production and reception of reputational ingredients. Karvonen (1999, 78–89) suggests that widespread recognition is possible to achieve only through the media and, therefore, the media are the most efficient image constructors. A wide audience is able to form interpretations of an organization only after the media has interpreted it first. In addition, these interpretations are channeled forward in social interactions and interactive media. The constant presence of the media means that an organization communicates constantly, whether it wants to or not. A way for organizations to affect the interpretations of the public regarding itself is to select what is public and what is secret. (ibid.)

A central issue in media channeled encounters is the framing of information. As has been established, the media easily take a critical position towards their subject and especially towards PR efforts (Karvonen 1999 21–22; Aula & Heinonen 2002, 48–52; Jackson 2004, 35; Coombs & Holladay 2007, 5–7). This, of course, poses challenges for municipalities whose actions are a constant topic for the local media. As has been established, building an illusion is always a reputation risk (Aula & Mantere 2008, 70–71). A lighter level of dishonesty is intentionally providing a one-sided perspective on the discussed issue that makes an organization look good on the outside (ibid). It should
be noted, however, that the media are not passive in transmitting images and interpretations either. They have their own agenda, which is related to news-worthiness, drama and economic value (Karvonen 1999, 78–89). The media have their own rhetoric which adds to the rhetoric of the news source (ibid). Journalists also have a role in selecting what is public and the media can, therefore, affect the public agenda – what people are generally talking about (ibid).
4. Research Methods

The focus in this study is in the ways that Kerava tries to communicate, construct and manage its own reputation. I also explore how the reputation of Kerava is produced in different forms of encounters between the municipal organization and its stakeholders. I pursue these goals by interviewing those public officials of Kerava who are responsible for the reputation management of the municipality. Through these interviews, I aim to unveil where Kerava’s reputation and municipal reputation strive from and how Kerava’s municipal organization tries to manage Kerava’s reputation. Through this exploration I will also establish the potential advantages that the interviewees consider for municipal reputation construction.

4.1 Research Setting

This research will be implemented as a case study on the municipality of Kerava. It will bring forward the ways in which the municipality tries to represent itself and explain its existence to its stakeholders through communication. These aspirations will be explored in relation to the theory on reputation management, organizational communication and public governance. Collected data will consist of the views of public officials of Kerava, and it will be gathered using semi-structured interviews.

While the economic goals of reputation management are often emphasized in research, this study supports the notion that reputations of municipalities do not exist only for luring in tax payers (Picci 2011, 2; Wæraas & Brykjeflot 2012, 189). Reputations of municipalities cannot be determined by the municipalities themselves either; instead, reputations are determined by the context-bound nature of the everyday interaction between the municipal organization and all its stakeholders (Karvonen 1999, 52; Rainisto 2004, 62; Kuss 2009, 268). Therefore, reputation of a municipality is multidimensional, contextual and based on relationships (Fombrun 1996, 57–59, 139; Aula and Heinonen 2002, 36–37, 208). My aim is to explore how the municipal organization of Kerava depicts this situation and how it responds to it.

The approach to the exploration on the reputation of Kerava in this study is essentially about discovering the conceptions of the key public officials and politicians
communicating, constructing and managing Kerava’s reputation. Thus, the data in this study will explore the characteristics and the underlying structures of Kerava’s reputation through a management perspective. I focus on how the thinking of the interviewees illustrates the substance and goals of their work in terms of Kerava’s reputation. According to the interview data, I will present my conclusions of what Kerava’s reputation is and should be in the minds of its constructors. I will, therefore, not as much try to establish objective characteristics of Kerava’s reputation but I will rather discover what the city administration of Kerava think Kerava’s reputation is. In doing so, I will be producing knowledge that is more relevant in the context of idealistic or sample-based perspective to the data (Ruusuvuori & Tiittula 2005, 10–11).

The focus during the interviews is on the strategic goals of reputation construction rather than the practical implementations of these strategies. The practical aspect to the reputation formation is also valued, but all data regarding it is based on the perceptions of the people operating on the strategic level. In terms of reputational encounters, this means that the actual implementations of everyday service production are left for lesser notice as the strategic goals and preconditions for these encounters are emphasized instead.

The method of data collection in my study will be a semi-structured interview. According to Hirsijärvi and Hurme (2000, 47), the selection of semi-structured interview as a method includes some preconditions regarding the approach to the subject. First, the researcher must presume that the interviewees have relevant experience from the discussed issue. Second, the researcher usually has established presumptions regarding the most essential features, processes and structures of the discussed issue. Based on these essentialities, the researcher then aims to explore the subjective experiences and positions of the interviewees regarding the issue. It should also be noted that according to interaction aspect, there are no objective positions towards producing knowledge in an interview (Alasuutari 1999, 144; Ruusujärvi & Tiittula 2005, 29). Thus, every statement or position is biased, and they only represent the speaker in question.
4.2 Description of Data

City administration of Kerava is represented in this study by current and previous members of the executive board of the municipality and members of the city parliament. More specifically, the interviewed public officials were the current and the previous mayors, the current and the previous chief of communication, the current and the previous chief of development (of which the previous one is a current member of the city parliament) and two members of the city parliament which have contributed to the construction of the communication strategy of Kerava. All interviewees are now or have been before responsible for constructing and updating the current reputation and communication strategy of Kerava in their work. The selection of interviewees is an exclusion which means that the views of many other representatives of the municipality are not heard. This exclusion is based on the perception that the management is the most important party in reputation construction regardless of organization (Aula & Heinonen 2002, 169). My approach is justified by the notion that I am not trying to generate generalizable results and, thus, discretionary specimen is more fitting than a random sample (Hirsijärvi & Hurme 2000, 58–59). Therefore my selection of interviewees is focused on those who currently manage or have previously managed the reputation of Kerava in their work. At the starting-point, my interviewee selection did not include all the interviewees that ended up interviewed. Instead, I used a method of snowball sampling in determining which interviewees to pick (Hirsijärvi & Hurme 2000, 59–60). I started with the inclusion of mayors and chiefs of communication whom which I defined as natural key-members of Kerava’s reputation management. Those interviewees guided me to the chiefs of development and the members of parliament as valuable sources of information.

All data used in the analysis of this study was collected from the interviews conducted with the key public officials and politicians of the municipality. The goal of the data collection was to establish what the conceptions of the reputation management of Kerava are regarding Kerava’s reputation. In addition to academic literature, I used written materials of Kerava’s strategy as a background for designing relevant questions. These Kerava’s self-produced materials, however, only have significance in this study as background data for the formation of interview questions. They are, therefore, not
analyzed as a part of my establishment of answers to the research questions of this study.

4.2.1 Data Collection

According to Hirsijärvi & Hurme (2009, 34, 47), interview as a method of data collection enables the researcher to steer the discussion towards relevant subjects and themes. It also helps discover the underlying motives behind the statements that are analyzed. A typical semi-structured interview, according to Hirsijärvi and Hurme (ibid), has established some aspects to the discussed issue, but the questions can be modified to fit the natural passage of the discussion. Semi-structured interviews are used because this study aims to establish the interviewees’ attitudes and values towards Kerava’s reputation. The reason for this conduct is that a fully structured interview or other structured form of data collection would probably miss some of the strategic aspects to the approaches that key public officials use to rationalize their conduct in terms of reputation management (Seale 2012, 208). In addition to exploring how the municipality is communicating its existence, this study also aims to find out why.

My interview questions were based on academic literature on municipal reputation management, public governance and public encounters. The questions were also steered by the written materials regarding Kerava’s communication strategy, management strategy and reputation strategy. Thus, there were some predetermined consistencies on which the presented questions were based on. The conduct of the interviews was semi-structured in a sense that there were predetermined themes that steered the discussion. These themes were established on grounds of the entity of interview questions, and their function was to divide the discussion into convenient passages. (Aaltola & Valli 2001, 34–35.)

The questions in my interviews were designed to distinguish what the reputation of Kerava is in the minds of the interviewees and how they reproduce(d) or construct(ed) it in their work. The questions also aimed to unveil the interviewees’ opinions on how Kerava’s reputation should be managed and constructed. The structure of the interviews covered my predetermined themes which all include a predetermined structure of questions. The themes that were discussed in occasional order, were the following:
- The characteristics of Kerava’s reputation and municipal reputation in general
- Visions and estimations regarding the development of Kerava’s reputation
- Reputation formation in encounters with stakeholders
- The communicative relationship between the municipal organization and its stakeholders
- Reputation management
- Reputation and everyday-conduct of the municipality

All presented themes include multiple questions, which are presented in Appendix 2. The interviews were allowed to follow their natural transition depending on what each interviewee felt was the most fertile subject. The scope of questions with every interviewee was the same but I gave the interviewees the possibility to respond in their own words and lead the conversation into a direction of their willing as long as the discussion remained relevant. All six predetermined themes were always covered in order to produce comparable discussions. However, the order of the questions or the discussed themes was not predetermined. The list of questions was altered and modified according to the flow of each interview. Specifying questions were added if needed and some questions were left out if the interviewee already produced a sufficient response to it while discussing another question. Since leading questions should always be avoided in terms of objectivity and reliability of the study, I presented the questions as neutrally as possible. Thus, the formation of the questions aimed for such clarity and wording that there was no risk of misleading or confusing the interviewee. Regardless of the free flow of conversation, my own role in the interview was purposefully passive. My role and the progression of the interview were explained to each interviewee before the beginning of each interview. (Seale 2012, 92; Aaltola & Valli 2001, 26—27, 100.)

4.3 Research Methods for the Analysis of the Interview Data

In this study, interviewees are seen as a resource of information – not as a topic. In other words, I am analyzing what the interviewed public officials say, not how they say it. I am not testing a hypothesis but rather creating one based on the conducted interviews. The method of analysis used in the interpretation of the interview data is thematic content analysis. (Seale 2012, 215; Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2009, 136.)
In the thematic content analysis of the interviews my data interpretation is descriptive rather than conclusive. My interview questions aim to reveal the essential themes in reputation management and construction in Kerava so that these themes can be further explored in relation to theoretical literature used in this study. Since the results of this study are based on how Kerava’s city administration communicates, manages and constructs Kerava’s reputation, conclusions about Kerava’s reputation are based on a subjective account illustrating only the other side of the interactive relationship from which reputations are formed (cf. Karvonen 1999, 51–52). This approach, however, is one of the few efforts to acknowledge the context-bound importance of communal social reality in municipal reputation formation (cf. Aula, Vehkalahti & Äikäs 2007, 14; Hankinson 2001, 127–128).

My approach to the analysis of interviews is inductive since I did not establish what I am looking for in terms of themes and categories of data. After conducting the interviews I deconstructed them into analyzable data by transcribing them using open coding. The transcription was conducted by transforming all the collected information from the interviews into literary form. Tones and sounds and other indirect means of producing meaning were not taken into account unless they remarkably influenced the significance or meaning of the data. First, texts were broken down into units. A unit was formed when a similar aspect, opinion or view regarding one of the discussed issues emerged in at least three interviews. If one claim emerged many times in different instances of the same interview, I only documented one occurrence. Equally significant were opposing perspectives; if there were subjects that clearly divided the interviewees into two groups with quite opposite opinions I regarded those subjects as significant inconsistencies. The questions or the introduced subjects in interviews, therefore, did not essentially determine the units or the categories, but the answers did. The established units (Appendix 1) are related to various aspects to the reputation construction of Kerava. Units were set under categories which were, in turn, divided under two broader themes: 1) Elements, characteristics and developments that form Kerava’s reputation and 2) Management of Kerava’s reputation. These themes are discussed more closely in their own sub-headings in the next chapter. (Seale 2012, 105, 370–371.)
In the first stage of my analysis, I create categories out of the interview data based on consistencies in the established units. I will also regard categories that contain remarkable variance in approaches or positions towards discussed issues. As a result of the first stage of analysis, the categories are developed into coherent themes that can be further explored in the conclusive chapter of this study. The drawn conclusions are based on the knowledge produced from the analysis of the interviews which is complemented with the theoretical literature on reputation management and public governance. In the concluding chapter of this study, I will also analyze the more general and abstract approaches to Kerava’s reputation; it can be regarded as a pervasive outlook to what municipal reputation construction is essentially about in the minds of the interviewees. All the subjects discussed in the concluding chapter are overlapping with the categories discussed under the other two themes below.

The progress of my analysis follows similar structure as the thematic division of the interviews; I begin constructing the discussed subjects into themes using my interview themes as points of reference. This means that I first explore the reoccurring elements in the context of the themes that were discussed during their emergence in the interviews. Nevertheless, my analysis is fully data-originated, and therefore the structure of the interviews will not determine my analysis. The foundation of the thematic content analysis will be on themes that stand out from the collected data itself.

4.4 Validity and Reliability

The results of this study are based on the specific case at hand and they are, therefore, not directly applicable to other municipalities. This study is essentially about exploring the data from interviews with certain public officials of a certain municipality. The drawn conclusions, in turn, are tied to this context-bound data. Generalizations, applications or adaptations based on this study would, therefore, need to consider the special preconditions and factors for the exploration of any other organization.

A more relevant question regarding validity and reliability in this study is about how representative the samples are. The selection of interviewees is also a choice of conduct which could be altered depending on the person doing research. My sample is based on the presumption that the selected interviewees include the best experts and the most
influential conductors of the reputation of Kerava. The inclusion of some interviewees was influenced by recommendations from other interviewees. The selected politicians, for instance, were selected because I was informed by other interviewees that they have contributed to the formation of the communication strategy and that they have a professional background in the field of communication. The inclusion of Chiefs of Development to my interviewee list was based on the fact that other interviewees underlined their importance in managing Kerava’s communication on a strategic level.

Since management in any organization includes an element of continuity, my selection of interviewees was meant to be secularly balanced. This means that I picked the current public official of a certain position and his/her previous predecessor. This way the management chain of public officials in this research is continuous and therefore draws a more consistent picture on how Kerava’s reputation has been managed during recent years. In the name of this conduct, I had to rule out one potentially interesting interviewee in the Chief of Communication that held the position during the formation of the first communication strategy of Kerava in 2002. (cf. Karvonen 1999, 97, 100.)

The native language of all the interviewees is Finnish. Since my own native language is Finnish as well, I found it most fruitful in terms of data to implement my interviews in Finnish and translate them into English later on. My translation of the interview data into English was as loyal to the original thoughts and points of the interviewees as possible. Nevertheless, the process of translation has to be regarded as a potential factor for the validity of the collected data in this study.

4.5 Ethicality

All the interviewees in this study were informed of what the interview data is used for. Therefore, there are not intentional ethical misconducts regarding the collection of data (Hirsijärvi & Hurme 2000, 20). One thing that calls for ethical consideration is that the people interviewed for this study are easily recognizable from the analysis. In my analysis, I supplement the quotations of the interviewees with referring to the occupational position of the interviewee in question since in most instances it carries some significance in relation the subject being discussed. The name of the interviewee is, therefore, easily investigated. None of the interviewees, however, have requested to
stay anonymous. I base my conduct on a belief that the results of this study are more useful as testimonies of the interviewees’ professionalism and expertise (Ruusujärvi & Tiittula 2005, 18).

My occupational status and professional relationship with some of the interviewees in the current administration of Kerava poses an ethical dilemma since it will be difficult to keep an objective eye to the explored subject. The outcome of the interviewees can also be influenced by the fact that I have a professional relationship with some of the interviewees, and some I have never met. (Ruusujärvi & Tiittula 2005, 17.)

4.6 Summary of Methodical Approach

This study approaches the communicative relationship between a municipal organization and its stakeholders through discovering public officials’ and politicians’ conceptions regarding municipal reputation management. The exploration of the chosen subject is framed with theory focusing on municipal reputation, reputation management and encounters. This theory, in turn, is applied to the case of Kerava in particular. These restrictions have more to do with the chosen methods of data collection and analysis rather than scope. Municipal reputations are usually studied on a very general level and conclusions are drawn from comparisons between different municipalities or organizations (Kavaratzis & Ashworth 2005, 507). This study, in turn, applies a rare micro-level take on the popular subject of reputation. (Hirsijärvi & Hurme 2000, 58–59.)

My qualitative analysis of the interview data is based on a perception that complex concepts such as reputation and communicative relationship are best understood through a take that aims to understand rather than conclude. This is both a restriction and an advantage of this study. While the presented results are descriptive and context-dependent, they go deep to the dynamics of a certain setting of reputation construction. My own expectations regarding the results of this study are based on revealing how big of a factor reputation management can be in shaping and steering the governance and the daily service production of a municipality. Through this notion, I will also discuss the consistency in the conceptions regarding municipal reputation management. I will not seek straightforward causal relations but the cornerstones and key questions to
which the reputation construction and formation are based on. (Hirsijärvi & Hurme 2000, 22.)

I believe my results will provide a basis from which reputation management of municipalities could be studied more generally. If the approach of my study would be applied to other municipalities as well and then complemented with reputational studies about good and bad municipal reputations, I believe that justified causal interpretations about municipal reputation management could very well be made.
5. Results of the Study

The division of sub-headings in this chapter is based on two independent outlooks onto the categories that the whole interview data is deconstructed into. My outlooks to Kerava’s reputation here are based on a distinction similar to the thematic division in chapters 2 and 3 of this study. I will first look into how the interviewees perceive the characteristics, elements, factors and preconditions that form Kerava’s reputation and steer its development. Then I will focus on how Kerava’s reputation is managed and which factors affect reputational endeavors.

5.1 Discovering Kerava’s Reputation

All interviewees were asked to present their own depiction of Kerava and the public sector in terms of reputation. In doing so, they also provided their own perspectives towards what municipal appeal is essentially about and how it has developed. In this chapter, I will focus on the characteristics of Kerava’s reputation and municipal appeal in the minds of the interviewed reputation managers.

In discussing reputation managers’ perspectives on Kerava’s reputation, some implications of reputation management are naturally presented, as well. Nevertheless, I will discuss reputation management separately as its own approach to reputation construction of Kerava in chapter 5.3. In this chapter, I will focus more on the perceived preconditions for reputation management which steer the conduct of the interviewees.

5.1.1 Elements of Kerava’s Reputation

Common conception between interviewees was that Kerava’s reputation is positive in the eyes of the people who live or work in Kerava. There was a remarkable distinction to be found in the estimations of Kerava’s reputation between the perceptions of the people who had experienced Kerava first hand and all other groups. The perceptions of the outside groups were not discussed with much precision, but they were rather referred to as a single unity which was determined by the fact that they were not in direct contact with Kerava. As soon as the discussion turned to images that are not
based on experiences of the evaluator, the estimated reputation took a negative spin to it and a role was bestowed upon the media:

Inhabitants of Kerava think that this is a good city, but then again, if in publicity we are the laughing stock of the nation’s most watched entertainment show (referring to Putous), does it mean that this actually is a stupid place? I don’t know…
– Current chief of communication

Of course, those who are from Kerava and know Kerava, their representations draw a positive picture of Kerava. But those who do not know Kerava but use Kerava [in media representations] do ugly work, and that ends up showing in the journalism as well.
– Previous mayor

The distinction between the evaluated perceptions of the inhabitants of Kerava and other stakeholder groups is related to two noteworthy elements that were apparent in the interview data. The first element has to do with how Kerava’s local culture is perceived. In the interviews it was depicted as a positive reputational factor:

I hope it shows in our spiritual climate that we have characteristics similar to a Gallic village; that we stand up for ourselves with a self-ironic smile but still truly believing that this is a great place. And we look after our own. So, our uniqueness emerges from us constructing a city where people can feel good and construct their own stories. We are not trying to sell a certain kind of a Kerava-story to people but, instead, the story emerges from the people themselves. – Member of city parliament

[Kerava’s reputational uniqueness is based on] hobbies, sports and culture... and there is a very active community movement as well, events and volunteering, foundations, things like that. So there is a lot to do here. – Current chief of communication

The second aspect that can be applied to the presented distinction between positive and negative perceptions has to do with identity formation. The presented depictions about Kerava’s reputation illustrated a dawning of an internal identity that was mainly positive. This was well elaborated by some:

Kerava is still a nonspecific suburban reflection on the side of Helsinki. But then again, for the inhabitants of Kerava, I have noted, Kerava has increasingly started to establish itself as a home that is distinctive from other places. It seems that Kerava and its inhabitants are achieving a different status; people perceive themselves as people of Kerava and are proud of it. – Current Mayor

While the interviewees were quite unified regarding the positive internal identity of Kerava, they were divided regarding negative external identity. As suggested above, the interviewees were quite unified in thinking that the people of Kerava value their own city more than outsiders do. However, another issue has to do with how the interviewees related to the conceptions of the people of Kerava. The noteworthy point here is that there was a clear distinction between 1) how did the interviewees think about Kerava’s external identity and 2) how did the interviewees think that the people of Kerava think
about their external identity. Some of the interviewees thought that the negative conceptions regarding Kerava’s negative external identity were commonly acknowledged. Alternative perspective suggested that the people of Kerava only think that Kerava is perceived negatively; thus, the negative external identity is seen as false:

When a person from Kerava suggests that we have a bad reputation, he refers to the outsider: the outsider thinks that we are like this. But when we ask that outsider, he does not have that conception. So, the people of Kerava have a false impression of themselves. – Current Chief of Development

The discussion of inside and outside perceptions illustrates Pekka Virtanen’s (1999, 7–9) theory on identities. Virtanen suggests that the concept of identity is two-fold: internal identity refers to people’s tendency to identify themselves with a place; it is based on a feeling of home and a concern of the municipality’s affairs. A positive internal identity can, according to Virtanen, enhance the allure of the municipality through the perceptions of its own inhabitants. The image of a municipality is in Virtanen’s argumentation connected to an external identity. He suggests that the common conception that people have regarding a municipality forms an external identity by describing what people know the municipality from. Therefore, that external image is also a certain kind of uniqueness. (ibid.)

On a more tangible level, Kerava’s reputation was connected to certain elements that were significantly similar in all interviews. Majority of responses included the elements of urbanity, compact size, good traffic communication and effective service production. As a whole, the responses drew a picture of an urban community that is easily accessible from the metropolitan area and where local services are well arranged. Other often emphasized factors were the proximity of the railroad and the presence of certain kind of industry. However, these elements are strongly connected to the established elements of traffic communication and service production. The only area of contradiction in the depictions was the sub-urbanity of Kerava. The conceptualization of sub-urbanity (lähiömäisyys) was essentially difficult to define since some depictions included both the adjectives of urban and sub-urban. These elements were, thus, not regarded as contradictory. Nevertheless, the implications of sub-urbanity as stillness, peacefulness or boredom were regarded as contradictory to the implications of urbanity as liveliness, urgency and active community.

Kerava appears as urban, not sub-urban. So, this is a city after all: small and compact, easy to move around and services are relatively well arranged.
The confusion regarding sub-urbanity can be connected to Kerava’s proximity to Helsinki which is discussed as a determining factor of Kerava’s municipal appeal in the following. Sub-urbanity can, thus, be thought as a relational element: Kerava is sub-urban in relation to Helsinki but urban in relation to the neighboring municipalities.

5.1.2 The Municipal Appeal of Kerava

As stated above, Kerava’s municipal appeal is strongly linked to the proximity of Helsinki. While there were varying positions towards Helsinki in the interviews, the Finnish capital’s significance as a general factor for Kerava’s reputation became clear. Kerava’s municipal appeal was much discussed in relation to Helsinki but also in relation to the other municipalities near Helsinki. While the neighboring municipalities of Kerava were usual subjects of discussion, Kerava’s significance was also reflected to many municipalities which are not very close to Kerava but which are close to Helsinki. Thus, the significance of a group of municipalities called “surrounding area” (kehysalue) became very apparent:

In the surrounding area we are on the same market for inhabitants and employment. There’s Sipoo, Kirkkonummi, Vihti and Nurmijärvi available… Tuusula if you prefer the rural municipalities of the surrounding area. – Current Mayor

The urban city environment of Kerava was emphasized as a significant factor for Kerava’s appeal. In this context, the competition between the municipalities in the surrounding area of Helsinki was always implied. Kerava is seen as an urban choice for neighboring rural municipalities. Another much emphasized element of Kerava’s municipal appeal was strong service production. Its significance is related to both the perceived urban character of Kerava and the proximity of Helsinki. Businesses and inhabitants were perceived to value similar things with altering emphases: good traffic communication, easy access, central location within community and favorable policies:

We can provide certain types of people and businesses with a location which supports our reputation as an urban option in the surrounding area. There is no other such option available; maybe Järvenpää in a way, but the others are rural municipalities where you get to live next to a field. Kerava is a city. – Current Mayor
21 minutes from that station over there and we are in the center of Helsinki. That’s what many people marvel; they only understand how quickly it goes after they visit Kerava. And when we get visits from city planners of bigger cities, they start walking towards our city center from the railway station and immediately realize how Kerava has the feeling of a city. – Member of the City Parliament

While the metropolitan area was the center of discussion when Kerava’s appeal was discussed, national significance was perceived as a factor for Kerava’s reputation as well. The interviewees implied in different instances that Kerava’s appeal was significant when Finnish people assessed their position towards municipalities:

I don’t think our reputation would carry very far without the TV parodies. But then again, when people are making the decision of moving around here, they carefully consider between Mäntsälä, Järvenpää, Hyvinkää, Kerava and others… and Vantaa and Helsinki, as well. At that point they carefully analyze our reputation and our service production. If it’s a family with kids, schools and daycare are important and then they consider the traffic connections and property prices… – Current Chief of Communication

Internationality was not a significant factor when the interviewees evaluated Kerava’s appeal. Some of the interviewees pointed out elaborately that Kerava has no international appeal. However, they did often see that Finnish municipalities in general can have international appeal. In this context, the closeness of Helsinki was again emphasized:

I hold international success as very essential factor for Finland. But in order to succeed internationally, we should have Helsinki-metropolis in which we would put all our resources. Everything should be ‘here in Helsinki’ because we [Kerava] are such a nonexistent little raisin internationally. – Current Chief of Development

There is two different dimensions of spatial significance of reputation that can be extracted from the discussion above. The established national significance of municipal reputation seems to refer to the realistic opportunities for segmentation; people within the borders of Finland can potentially be reached and affected by reputational efforts. However, this does not mean that Kerava’s reputation is well known within Finland. In fact, most of the interviewees stated that Kerava is mostly unknown for anyone outside the metropolitan area. In this context, the importance of more local appeal was often emphasized, as well:

Kerava is unknown to people. It’s known here in the metropolitan area, in Southern Finland. But further in the North, people don’t know where Kerava is; they might know that it’s located somewhere in the Southern Finland. It would be the same as asking me where some… Ala-Veteli is, for instance. I know it’s roughly somewhere in Ostrobothnia. But the point is: for whom does a municipality’s reputation need to be
It can be concluded that the more global preconditions of the new era of municipal reputation construction is acknowledged in Kerava as a true phenomenon but the importance of local uniqueness is emphasized over it in terms of Kerava’s own appeal (cf. Aula, Vehkalahti & Äikäs 2007, 15–16; Rainisto 2004, 9–10, 30–31; Kuss 2009, 265). The internationality seems especially related to competition over businesses and investors, but according to the interviews this competition does not recognize municipal borders inside the metropolitan area. Thus, while Kerava is seen as a part of Helsinki’s international agenda, Kerava itself bases its appeal on locality (cf. Jackson 2004, 153; Rainisto 2004, 42–44).

5.1.3 Arenas of Reputation Formation

The emphasized importance of locality was connected to the ways that the interviewees depicted the most important arenas of Kerava’s reputation construction. While the media were often mentioned in terms of how the images of Kerava are spread, the most essential arena of reputation formation was perceived to be face-to-face contact between the people of Kerava and people outside of Kerava. Thus, the most significant information about Kerava, according to the interviewees, is produced in daily service production and spread forward through word-of-mouth.

Inside of Kerava reputation is naturally formed through services. And then it is formed in the way that people’s acquaintances position themselves towards people from Kerava. The outsiders and insiders of Kerava are in some sort of interaction between each other, they influence each other. If people of Kerava are proud of their municipality and praise its services, their acquaintances are bound to think that Kerava is a good place.

— Previous Mayor

Another reputational factor that is strongly tied to locality is the physical environment of the city (Kavaratzis & Ashworth 2005, 506–513; Virtanen 1999, 10–11). This aspect was already touched upon in terms of how the positive reputational elements of Kerava are related to the practical implications of closeness and urbanity. However, mental conceptions were attached to the city environment, as well. The interviewees often stressed that Kerava can appear either ugly or beautiful depending on the point of view. There were varying depictions regarding the actual elements: concrete buildings,
railroad tracks, parks and cherry trees were among the most popular. A quite common conception was that Kerava’s environment appears ugly through the window of a train, which is the most common experience of Kerava for the people outside of Kerava. In turn, Kerava’s city environment was depicted as beautiful when observed more closely. Related to this discussion is the notion that positive experiences are the basis for a good reputation (Whelan et al. 2008, 1164–1171).

If you have a subjective conception of a positive reputation, it is based on reality, but you should at least come discover the basis for your negative perception, and see if the conception still fits after that. I myself was surprised by the fact that if this (Kerava) supposedly is a rough suburb of Helsinki, this is actually quite beautiful. There are lots of parks and cherry trees and buildings and so on – Current chief of communication

One very characteristic arena of reputation construction was established for Kerava in the interviews. Six out of eight interviewees mentioned village meetings (kyläilta) as an arena for Kerava’s reputation construction while there were no elaborate implications towards the subject in the question structure. Village meetings are a form of concentrated discussion between the municipal organization and the inhabitants of a certain area within the Kerava; these events are initiated by the municipal governance and they act as arenas of distributing and receiving information as well as discussing current issues. In the interviews, the village meetings seemed to serve as a kind of a landmark for the development of Kerava’s reputation. Many aspects of reputation construction were discussed in relation to these events.

When we started with the reputation construction in the first years of the new millennium, we started to develop these village meetings. It was based on an innovation that we must discover if the realities between different areas of Kerava are different from each other; previously that was not discussed at all. So this was the concept and it worked fine, we got people engaged. – Member of City Parliament

In terms of the communication that aimed to create security, very central were these village meetings. We went over all the areas of Kerava each year, we listened to their stories and told them ours. It was important that they all saw what the mayor and the other politicians looked like; they saw that they were just regular people. – Previous Mayor

In terms of micro-publicity and macro-publicity, it seems that the former is emphasized in Kerava. The reputational arenas that are set under these broader categories of publicity have usually been regarded as equally important in research (Aula & Heinonen 2011, 80). They are not similar, however. The reputational publicity is said to consist of all the arenas on which the organization and its stakeholders encounter and every arena has its own logic of reputational formation (Aula & Mantere 2008, 62). The notion that
micro-publicity arenas are emphasized in Kerava could be connected to the interviewees’ notion that there are limited resources for reputational endeavors in Kerava. The concept of cityscape can be used to illustrate this point. Cityscape is about how the city environment is related to Kerava’s reputation in the depictions of the interviewees (Virtanen 1999, 10–11). When the concrete and visual elements of the city environment are separated from mental images, the special nature of municipal reputation is underlined (ibid; Kavaratzis & Ashworth 2005, 506–513). As Virtanen (1999, 10–11) suggests, the concept of cityscape can be used to describe the visual character of the city. In Kerava’s case, the lack of distinguishable visual elements in the environment was much discussed in the interviews. This can be described as an obstacle for external marketing which, in turn, emphasizes the experimental reality and direct encounters as the main initiators of Kerava’s reputation (cf. Andreassen 1994, 20–21).

5.1.4 Current and Historical Elements

The interviewees were quite consistent in stating that history is a significant factor for Kerava’s reputation. The similarities in conceptions were especially connected to the way that Kerava’s reputation had started to form in the 1970’s as a consequence of quick growth and emergence of certain subcultures:

> It [Kerava’s reputation] has developed when you think about the last decades… We can think that the 70’s were significant for this city; from there began the huge growth.
> – Previous Chief of Communication

> It must be acknowledged that the conceptions about Kerava were strongly formed in the 70’s during the years of massive relocation. Kerava grew with great speed.
> – Previous Mayor

Many of the interviewees also discussed the acts by the city administration which led to the more purposeful management of Kerava’s reputation in the last couple of decades. Thus, the historical significance of reputation was also connected to Kerava’s own efforts of steering it. There was, however, one aspect to the subject that divided the interviewees: there was a difference to be found in the conceptions of how history has influenced Kerava’s reputation. In this context, the interviewees can be divided into two groups. The first conception can be summarized as a belief that history is a burden for Kerava which is difficult to shake off with active reputation construction. This conception also included an implication that the reputation of Kerava has moved into a more positive direction since the communication strategy came into effect in 2002.
We have already been stamped as a miserable little town and a weary suburb, so we have to build on that. We cannot try to suffocate these perceptions but to try to turn them into our advantage – Member of city parliament

It [reputation] is probably because of some old things that I don’t even fully understand because they have happened so long ago. I myself thought some decades ago, as my friend from work lived in Kerava, like 'how can you live there? It’s so far away and it’s such an ugly suburb’. But it is not that anymore, it is... I don’t know. At least I think the reputation has improved – Current chief of communication

The opposite view regards history as the basis for Kerava’s reputation. These evaluations perceive similar elements in Kerava’s reputation and history but there seems to be a significant difference in how positive or negative the history basis is perceived. Accordingly, in these perceptions the development of Kerava’s reputation is not explicitly positive. Instead, it is neutral.

It [reputation] has formed during a long period of time and it is difficult to change. Therefore, we can do whatever magic tricks and gimmicks but this is still a stop-over-town that has been established for a purpose… I don’t see that as a negative thing, I am not saying that. Today and in the near future it is, in fact, it’s an increasingly positive thing when we think about where the world is going and how city structures are developed. You can get fast to the capital and the traffic communication is good. – Previous chief of communication

Related to the issue of time continuum of reputation is the way that the interviewees emphasized the significance of very current reputational dilemmas. As a whole, the reputation of Kerava was perceived to be strongly affected by phenomena that have emerged during the last couple of years. Three categories were emphasized over others: 1) sustaining independency, 2) sustaining efficient services and 3) economic recession. Independency has to with resisting the pressure for mergers and expressing autonomy in the face of state policies. One of the central concerns in terms of sustainability of service production is much related to the autonomy from state policy: many of the interviewees depicted the ongoing (during the time of the interviews) healthcare reform in Finland as a factor for municipal reputation. The other central issue regarding service production is the concern over the regressing city center.

It [reputation of municipal sector] has been immensely influenced by all these mergers and healthcare reforms and such. I have taken the stand that they can progress without us promoting them and every time we are invited to take part in the planning of these processes, my response includes a picture of our township building with our escutcheon on its wall. That acts as a subtle message for them that they can plan whatever but Kerava is going to withstand. – Current Chief of Communication

The influence of economic recession to Kerava’s reputation was a category that divided the interviewees into two opposing groups. Some thought economic recession as a
negative influence, as one of the above presented quotes suggests. Some of the interviewees, in turn, suggested that the economic recession supports Kerava’s reputation by underlining the fact that Kerava succeeds in service production even in times of nation-wide economic difficulties:

Kerava’s economic success cannot go unnoticed in these difficult times. After all, one municipality expresses functionality in a region where others cannot. It cannot be a coincidence. – Current Chief of Development

The significant difference in perceptions seems to be the way that the interviewees see continuity as a factor for reputation. Karvonen (1999, 20, 97, 100) suggests that the longer people have conceived something in a particular way, the harder it is to change that conception. However, he also sees reputation as a continuum that creates an opportunity for change. He suggests that as a result of constant change of subjects and objects, images and reputations are re-evaluated all the time. (ibid.) Conceptions of Kerava’s history seem to include different positions towards this dilemma of change. The effect of economic recession to Kerava’s reputation can be evaluated in relation to municipal branding. The emergence of branding in public sector organizations has been characterized by the inclusion of social, cultural and political meanings (Aronczyk 2013, 8, 40). One expression of this is that in the face of economic failure brands are built on cultural imagery. In this context, a more relevant expression, however, is the way in which ‘hard times’ are used as the foundation on which reputation campaigns are built on. Thus, the economic crisis – or any other crisis, for that matter – can indeed work as a baseline to which a municipality’s own success in compared to (Greenberg 2010, 116–117).

5.1.5 The Public Sector as a Factor

The previously described current issues in Kerava’s reputation formation are related to the way that the public sector’s reputation was depicted in the interviews. Especially the evaluations of Kerava’s economic success can be connected to the way that national and global economies determine a municipality’s expression of effectiveness: if a municipality’s management strategies are not individually modelled and put into perspective in regard to broader structural hardships of the society, the development patterns are bound to be unfavorable (Gnevko 2012, 9–14). Accordingly, the development during the recent years was mostly perceived to have a negative influence on the reputation of the Finnish public sector and general municipal governance. The
interviewees suggested that people have become critical of public governance and, as a result, the legitimacy of the whole public sector has been questioned.

For probably the first time since the beginning of its construction in the 60’s, we have to contemplate how the public sector is positioned in Finland. I think this appears as multiple demands and interpretations regarding what public sector is, what it has been and what it should be. – Member of City Parliament

I think we are living tough times and municipalities, people and businesses are all fighting for their existence. At times like these, real expertise and ability starts to show through the established authority. – Current Chief of Development

One of the central challenges is perceived to be that the organizational structure and the political mandate of municipalities make expressing effectiveness difficult. The interviewees see that the nature of the democratic process and the demand for transparency bestow special preconditions for the operation of municipalities. Thus, complexity is at the root of municipal governance.

Making big structural changes in such environment is extremely difficult and for the stakeholders it appears as antic: we process and process but almost nothing gets done. – Previous Chief of Development

It is publicly discussed how the public sector is in trouble: it’s too heavy, too expensive, too slow, too much this and that… It demands some sort of renovation. And now, it is easy even for insufficiently informed people to criticize. – Current chief of Communication

The difficulty of the situation is also connected to the fact that municipalities are required to express the efficiency of their operation truthfully. Stakeholders have the right to follow the political processes and, thus, the problems in governance are transparent. While the depictions of the difficulties in the public sector were mostly unified, there was variance in the depictions of how the general public sector reputation reflects on Kerava. As stated before, by some the problems in the public sector were seen as an opportunity for municipalities to express their own success despite the difficult operational environment:

If we think about the differences in communities, there’s a kind of a juxtaposition. The role is different if we think about municipalities as opposed to general public governance. They all have their own roles. – Current Chief of Development

Kerava’s case illustrates how municipalities’ opportunities for constructing their own individual reputation is discussed in research. As public governance is faced with new demands for constructing reputation, individual municipalities have their own set of challenges in adjusting their operation to the new situation. Some studies have suggested that establishing an outstanding reputation in this situation is undesirable or
even impossible for any public organization (Luoma-aho 2007, 126–128; Wæraas & Byrkjeflot 2012, 186–206). However, the new preconditions have led some municipalities to find the advantages of a good reputation and, thus, there are differences in how individual municipalities have expressed their efficiency in relation to the situation (Rainisto 2004, 9–10; Karvonen 1999, 32–33; Hankinson 2001, 127–142).

5.1.6 The Depicted Reality-basis of Kerava’s Reputation

The exploration of the characteristics in Kerava’s reputation can be concluded by discussing how the established characteristics compare to how the interviewees depict the reality of Kerava. The own perceptions of the interviewees were often intertwined with how the interviewees presumed that the stakeholders of Kerava perceive Kerava’s reputation. While the difference is based on very subtle nuances, it can be argued that when the discussion concerned the operational reality of municipal governance and the phenomena related to it, the presented depictions were more personal. The depictions regarding more tangible characteristics of Kerava’s reputation, in turn, were much reflected to how the stakeholders were believed to perceive Kerava. From this basis, I will compare the interviewees’ conceptions regarding what Kerava is and what it is commonly believed to be.

One distinctive issue that was much shared among the interviewees is that stakeholders do not have a realistic conception about what Kerava is and how the municipality is managed. Instead, the reputation of Kerava is formed in discussions where relevant facts are not provided. Thus, one common issue in Kerava’s reputation is perceived to be that the stakeholders are ignorant about how Kerava really functions.

> It should be enough that we say what we are. But it’s extremely difficult when it is contrasted to the common conception of what we are. – Previous Mayor

> There’s false and inadequate information about us. The media steer the discussion into a direction of their willing and they often aim to produce a crisis in order to create discussion. And I think our job is to mundanely bring forward the real state of the situation. – Current Mayor

As can be noticed, the media is implied to be the initiator of the false ‘common conception’. This view was clearly elaborated in some responses, as well: the media, and the social media especially, were perceived to distribute stories about Kerava

69
without any requirement for holding on to the truth. These depicted false impressions of the stakeholders were perceived to extend outside of Kerava as well which influences the allure of Kerava in the minds of the interviewees. Thus, the interviewees believe that most people have a false conception of Kerava.

The conception is formed from random samples, from arbitrary contacts and events... from media snaps. Thus, the basis is completely irrational. That is why I think that there cannot be a unified conception of Kerava. – Current Chief of Development

While there was consensus between the interviewees regarding general false impressions of Kerava, there were inconsistencies in how those impressions were accounted for. The interviewees were divided regarding whether Kerava is better than its reputation. The false impressions were often connected to an overly negative picture of Kerava but some responses regarded Kerava’s reputation as just vague in relation to the general state of Finnish municipalities’ reputation:

It’s [Kerava] not better than its reputation. When we look at the situation closely, there are negative elements there. But Kerava is not necessary different from any other municipality. – Member of City Parliament

There might have been a common way of seeing things in the past, but now we are in a world of fragmented information where there are many truths and reputations which can be parallel or contradictory or intertwined. – Member of City Parliament

Some of the quotes presented above support the popular conception in research that reputation can be thought of as a plural since it is essentially consisted of the conceptions of all the stakeholders doing the evaluation (Kuss 2009, 267–270; Gaultier-Gaillard et al. 2009, 120). The presented quotes also illustrate how the organization’s role in providing ingredients for reputation is often perceived in research. It has been argued that the promoted images must be based on a foundation of real operation since reputations are consisted of both conceptions and experiences. It is noteworthy how the interviewees emphasize the role of providing ‘mundane’ information about how the municipal organization is actually operating (cf. Aula & Heinonen 2002, 36–37; Karvonen, 1999, 90).

5.2 Management of Kerava's Reputation

The previous chapter already touched upon some themes of reputation management as they were explored as characteristics of Kerava’s reputation. In this chapter the focus is shifted into the managerial conduct itself. I will discuss how the interviewees perceive
reputation construction as a part of managerial practices or as an intrinsic value. I will also establish which goals are central for the people managing Kerava’s reputation and which principles steer the aspiration of these goals. In short, the focus is on operation; how does operation steer reputation management vice versa.

Some of the established categories used in the analysis of management here are overlapping with those of the previous chapter. However, management perspective provides a contributing point of view to many of the already discussed subjects.

5.2.1 The Preconditions for Managing Kerava’s Reputation

The exploration of Kerava’s management can be begun by building on what has already been established. As suggested above, complexity of municipal organization, questioned legitimacy of public governance and difficulty in expressing effectiveness can all be accounted as characteristics of municipal reputation. These same categories can also be accounted as preconditions for municipalities’ reputation management. The interviewees drew a picture of a generally difficult environment for management:

> In municipalities, the decision-making process is very difficult because of the democratic system. It is not rational but irrational. For instance, when some party comes up with a good idea, the opposing party could actually think ‘that’s really good’, but they won’t support it anyway because the idea came from the opposing party. This is how the democratic system works all the time and that is why the democratic process makes municipal governance much more difficult [in comparison to private sector].
> – Current Chief of Development

One significant element in the preconditions for Kerava’s reputation management was that most of the interviewees recognized an essence of Kerava on which reputation management should be based on. The interviewees were remarkably unified in stating that Kerava is what it is and any artificial identity is not worth aspiring. The established essence was connected not only to the tangible and measurable elements but also to culture. It must be noted, however, that the interviewees were able to position themselves in a very objective way in relation to Kerava’s essence. Thus, they did not suggest that there actually is only one true Kerava. Their coherent view concerned the notion that Kerava’s reputation management must be based on what Kerava is already thought to be in the minds of its stakeholders:

> People have some conception to begin with and that conception is black and white. If there is 80% black and 20% white to begin with, you can pull whatever tricks you like but there will still be more of black after. The conception can change a little when new
The above-mentioned conception supports Karvonen’s (1999, 20) notion about the persistence of reputation: deeply rooted conceptions are difficult to change. There was, however, another interesting element to be found in the interviewees’ depictions regarding the persistence of reputation. There were implications that reputation is essentially fragile, that it can be diminished by an instant of bad judgement (cf. Gaultier-Gaillard, Louisot & Rayner 2009, 162). In research, this conception is often connected to the back-firing potential of artificiality: ‘fraud does not pay’ (Lochbihler 2009, 103). The interviewees, however, connected the fragility more pervasively to branding as a conduct. Thus, it was not only about the truthfulness of the message; marketing communication in general was seen as a distinctively fragile area of reputation construction.

My predecessor was a skillful man, but he tried tried to change Kerava’s reputation at once, like 'Kerava is actually just like Kauniainen'. It didn’t work out at all; it was too much at once. So, it’s about acknowledging the current state, how much it can be changed and how fast it can be changed. – Previous Mayor

Branding and marketing were not much in central focus in the interviews. However, the marketing efforts of Kerava were discussed in varying contexts. The most significant consistency in the discussions had to do with how the use of marketing tools and methods in municipalities was perceived. Despite many emphasized differences between public and private sectors, marketing efforts between them were depicted as essentially similar. Thus, general principles of marketing were depicted as applicable to Kerava:

It [municipal marketing in relation to private sector] is essentially about the same thing. Perhaps a municipality needs to split it up a little… But the core is the same. What I mean is that each organization is promoted with the arguments that are important to them. – Member of the City Parliament

The above discussed preconditions for municipalities are very general and they are much related to all perspectives explored under the following sub-headings. What can be concluded of the discussion so far is that the contradiction between the virtues of consistency and flexibility in operation is very apparent in Kerava’s case (cf. Aula, Vehkalahti & Äikä 2007, 17–19; Rainisto 2004, 9–10; Kuss 2009, 267; Wæraas & Byrkjeflot 2012, 191–192; 199–201). As stated in chapter 3, municipalities are expected to express trustworthiness and conservative values in their operation while,
paradoxically, they should be dramatic in their aspirations for development (Vahermo 2004, 44). The same demarcation seems to affect the management of Kerava according to the emphasized issues. What comes to marketing, the interviewees seem to support Rainisto’s (2004, 57) notion that the common elements of marketing are essentially quite similar between municipalities and private companies. However, some perspectives promoting the uniqueness of municipal ‘market’ are also implied in some discussions explored below.

5.2.2 Goals That Steer Reputation Management

As stated above, Kerava’s reputation management is characterized by a conception that Kerava’s current reputation must be acknowledged as a starting point. Thus, the starting point for aspiring positive reputation was perceived to be that Kerava’s reputation management aims to find the positives in what Kerava is.

Kerava has to have the possibility to actively influence on how dialogue is formed. The reputational aim back then [in 2002] was that we can actively work with our strenghts and underline them. Then again, we did not want to suppress the things that are difficult for us or the conceptions we think are false. That is never the correct way [to manage reputation]. – Member of City Parliament

As another starting point for this discussion, many interviewees emphasized that the goals and aims of reputation management cannot discussed as a simple and straightforward issue. Many of the interviewees proactively expressed the same thought of how a municipal administration must carefully contemplate all aspects of the chosen strategy and, above all, ask themselves: “what do we want to achieve with a good reputation”. From this basis the interviewees provided remarkably unified and comparable responses regarding what the goals are and should be. According to the interviewees, four goals can be regarded as significant reputational goals for Kerava: 1) secure and trustworthy profile, 2) luring in more inhabitants and businesses, 3) happiness of the inhabitants and stakeholders and 4) vitality of the municipality. The most often mentioned goal was luring in inhabitants and businesses and, thus, increased tax-income was emphasized. However, the other mentioned goals underlined the notion that municipalities do not exist for making a profit. Happiness is the common denominator in responses that emphasized the importance of people feeling good and proud about their municipality. Security and trustworthiness, on the other hand, emphasized more practical features of the municipality’s profile. Happiness and security
as goals can both be connected to Karvonen’s claim that municipalities exist to provide a good life for their inhabitants (Karvonen 2001, 52). Vitality (*elinvoima*), on the other hand, seems to draw all these elements together in a way. It was connected to the resources of providing happiness for those people that were lured in:

First we had to see that our processes were functioning before any reputation work could be done. We couldn’t say ‘welcome here’ before we made sure we could really provide the services we promised. For instance, in business politics we could say ‘Welcome, we have functioning services and low thresholds and you’ll get to the central locations near customers without being a minor part of a huge entity’. We could see that these things had significance because they started to cumulate and create vitality. It was good for Kerava. – Member of City Parliament

Sure, we could target our reputation work for companies by providing our individual message, like ‘If you come to Kerava, we have great traffic communication, good mobility for employees and so on…’ But in order to lure in customers, the reality is significant. For instance, can we provide accommodation for all new people? What kinds of people do we want to come? – Previous Chief of Communication

5.2.3 Most Important Stakeholder Groups

The question structure of the interviews implied certain stakeholder groups (inhabitants, businesses, the media) as important to reputation management by discussing them specifically in certain questions. Thus, the opinions of the interviewees regarding the most important stakeholder group must be evaluated with the notion that their choice might have been limited to certain selection. However, when the interviewees were directly asked what the most important stakeholder group was in terms of managing reputation, the responses were very similar: the role of the inhabitants was emphasized in all discussions. Many of the responses regarded inhabitants as the one stakeholder group that exceeded all others in importance:

The most important stakeholder group is the inhabitants. Inhabitants are the ones who we work for. It should never be forgotten, and they are also communicatively the most important focus group. – Current mayor

Based on the special role bestowed upon the inhabitants in the interviews, it can be concluded that the conceptions of inhabitants are distinctive in terms of Kerava’s reputation management. However, the reoccurring concept of ‘people from Kerava’ (*kuntalainen* or *keravalainen*) often seemed more inclusive than the inhabitants. When the interviewees discussed the people of Kerava, they often included implications of entrepreneurs or business actors as parts of this group. Some of the responses actually elaborated this perspective very comprehensively:
The most important stakeholder is naturally the inhabitant and, then again, also the entrepreneur. So, locality is emphasized, including the inhabitant and the entrepreneur.
– Current chief of development

I think Kerava’s communication is targeted to the people of Kerava; to the people using Kerava’s services… That includes them all – the businesses and the households.
– Previous chief of development

When the inhabitants and businesses/entrepreneurs were not bundled under one stakeholder group, they were often both emphasized as equally important. In fact, all interviewees suggested that the most important stakeholder group is either 1) the inhabitants, 2) the inhabitants and the businesses/entrepreneurs as parallel or 3) ‘the people of Kerava’ including both inhabitants and businesses/entrepreneurs.

The clear emphasis on inhabitants’ and entrepreneurs’ importance means that the interviewees emphasize strategic segmentation over inclusivity in reputation construction (cf. Jackson 2004, 35, 109; Gaultier-Gaillard, Louisot & Rayner 2009, 167). While different types of significance between stakeholder groups were acknowledged in some discussions, a clear majority of the interviewees saw that ‘insider’ stakeholder groups are more important in Kerava’s operation than the ‘outsider’ groups (cf. Aula & Mantere 2008, 144; Aronczyk 2013. 76–77). This was acknowledged as a characteristic of operation even when the interviewee at hand did not advocate such conduct. This implicates that the profit-oriented view of reputation management which emphasizes increased tax-income as a goal is not very strong in Kerava’s strategy. Instead, a consumer orientation based view that emphasizes positive experiences for the existing stakeholders was more present in the discussions. (cf. Cassel 2008, 102–114.)

5.2.4 Service Production and the Role of Personnel

As has been established, service production is perceived as a central element and generator in interviewees’ depictions regarding Kerava’s reputation. Accordingly, service production is perceived to be a central subject in reputation management, as well, and that is why Kerava’s reputation management is much related to the role of the personnel. The emphasized role of service production was one of the total of two categories in the whole interview data that all interviewees agreed upon. Most of them also described face-to-face contact as the most important arena:
Its [reputation] foundation is laid in every-day work situations where services are produced. So, the basic thing that should be in order is encountering people every day. – Previous Chief of Development

The reputation of one’s own municipality is intertwined with the every-day service production and the feeling of how personal commonplace things are going because the municipality’s employee is bound to become more human regardless of what he/she does. – Current Chief of Communication

The last quote elaborates one other significant finding in the interviewees’ common conceptions: the municipal organization becomes human through service production. Building on this, it can also be argued that the distant feeling that is perceived as a characteristic of bureaucracy can only be overcome in service encounters:

People don’t necessary grasp the appearance of municipal sector; it is conceived as passive and massive and remote. But when we start to discuss how it is consisted of teachers and doctors and caretakers, people can grasp it better. – Current Mayor

While the importance of the whole personnel is recognized by the interviewees, their strategic role in reputation management is perceived as modest or even adverse. The interviewees suggested that Kerava’s personnel is mostly unaware of the reputational strategies of the management and even if they are, their operation is ultimately based on other motivators that overweigh reputational efforts; usually the staff-members’ personal goals were perceived to be based on success in their own crafts and occupational roles which is further emphasized my their closest foremen:

Sometimes I had to ask in the executive board meetings who were really interested in working for the benefit of the whole municipality, I mean really. In a way that they would assess how their operation influences and appears to all stakeholders. Usually the only ones who raised their hands were the mayor and the chief of communication… The craft managers only looked out for their own advantage and they have always been extremely good at that. Of course they have their own pressure coming from their specific profession groups, their own customers and, in practice, also their own committees which are ruthless in advancing their own agenda. – Previous Mayor

The common approach of the interviewees to the issue of service production resembles the theory of customer orientation (cf. Whelan et al. 2008, 1164–1171). It seems essential how the needs of the inhabitants of Kerava are met on daily basis in the encounters between the municipality and the people using its services (ibid; Kavaratzis & Ashworth 2005, 507). These encounters are depicted as the basis for the evaluation that results in reputation formation. What can be concluded from the discussion regarding the personnel’s agenda is that the reputation management of Kerava is perceived to be burdened by an inability to work together; this specific characteristic was also explicitly distinguished as a one distinctive factor for Kerava’s reputation on
more than one occasion in the interviews. The discussion relates to Picci’s (2011, 48–50) notion that the personal motivations of personnel affect the alignment of reputational incentives within an organization. According to Picci, those incentives should be aligned if any beneficial reputation strategy is to be formed (ibid).

5.2.5 Communication as Reputation Management

One of the preconditions for Kerava’s reputation construction is that the work is about bringing forward the good features of operation, as has been suggested. Thus, communication is above all seen as a necessity for informing stakeholders about what the municipality is doing. Reputation construction, according to most interviewees, is and should be based on conduct rather than communication. This also means that communication can be used for supporting the operational strategy but not for constructing it:

It [communication] has to be based on something… Positive elements are, of course, emphasized in reputation and image construction but there has to be something to back up that communication. It cannot be separate from operation. – Member of City Parliament

I don’t believe that our municipal organization would advance the image that we are a young and jagged city just because we tell them to think that. They think about how they manage their own assigned missions and from that emerges the image that we want to communicate. Also, our communication tries to bring forward and underline specific features that we naturally have. – Current Mayor

Conduct without communication, however, is seen as useless in terms of reputation formation. The undertone in these conceptions lets on that the lack of communication would mean that Kerava’s reputation would suffer. This view was also explicated in some responses:

Communication is for keeping information in line and in truth. If there was no communication, it [reputation of Kerava] would become wild pray that anyone could take into the direction of their willing… It would be very one-sided. If we didn’t communicate about our doings, the truth would not come out – Current chief of communication

The basis is created with conduct, but doing something on the background is all the same if nobody knows anything about it. So, communication has a remarkable role in informing about those things – Current mayor

Bringing forward the true state of affairs was in itself one of the most apparent consistencies in the perceptions of Kerava’s reputation management. The main duty of the city management in the public discussion was seen as being the fact provider. This
notion also included the common conception that the media are regularly – either intentionally or unintentionally – delivering misguided information about Kerava. This applies to the news media as well as to social media, and therefore both journalists and other stakeholders are seen as potential sources of misguided information:

The role of the media is big, and therefore it would be nice that it [conduct] was based on extremely professional and unbiased journalism and not on gut feeling… It would be nice if the local newspaper brought up both aspects to things; if you always only bring forward the view of the common man who has no grasp on the big picture, the news are bound to be one-sided – Current chief of communication

Kerava’s reputation construction as a whole was discussed as something that has emerged quite recently. In many interviews, the discussion begun with a quick outlook to the short history of Kerava’s reputation construction. The starting point was often set in the first years of the new millennium. The first significant efforts of purposeful reputational management were often perceived to be the recruitment of the first chief of communication and the constitution of the first communication strategy. These notions were related to the equally popular conception that, during recent decades, communication has been realized to be something that requires a professional to do it.

In the 90’s municipalities did not communicate almost at all. Communication was about setting transcripts available somewhere for those who wanted to see them. If your child got positioned somewhere, for instance, you received a verdict and that was it. And then, gradually, we started to conduct a sort of segmented communication and after that, in the first years of the new millennium, Kerava hired the first chief of communication because we felt we needed a more professional touch to it. We noticed quite quickly that the person really had her place in the organization. – Previous Chief of Development

Regardless the perceived advancement of Kerava’s communication, its current state was not depicted as ideal in the interviews. Instead, communication was perceived as under-resourced and lacking of coherent strategy. Some interviewees pointed out that communication is naturally the part of operation that is easily evaluated as insufficient by the stakeholders regardless of how it is conducted in the organization. Nevertheless, the interviewees also stated that in Kerava’s case, this critique is partly justified. The lack of coherent strategy was perceived to stem from the complexity of organization and individual goals of different crafts. Thus, communication was mostly seen as uncontrollable. The uncontrollability of it, in turn, can be connected to lack of resources:

It might be that someone has presented some strategic goals sometime, but mostly our communication efforts are about assigning the chief of communication to do this and do that. How could she do all those things while she already has enough work for five people? It’s not possible. – Current Chief of Development
The role of communication in reputation management can, indeed, be explored through the principle that if the attributes of an organization are not communicated to stakeholders, the operational strategy might not have the desired effect. As stated, this view by Aula and Heinonen (2002; 36–37, 168–169) was strongly present in all interviews. What also stood out in the discussions was that the communication originating in the municipal organization must be based on facts; conceptions cannot promise something that cannot be reclaimed (Kuss 2009, 267–268; Gaultier-Gaillard, Louisot & Rayner 2009, 118–120; Karvonen 1999, 90). While the interviewees were unified regarding the subject of communication, strategic communication as a management tool was seen less clearly. What can be concluded of the discussions regarding lack of resources, coherence and strategy is that communication is perceived as something that has not yet been rooted in the managerial culture of the Kerava’s municipal organization.

5.2.6 Cooperation and Competition

When asked how other municipalities relate to the success of Kerava in terms of reputation management, the interviewees saw competition as a more determining factor for the current situation than cooperation. There is perceived to be competition between nearby municipalities over inhabitants and businesses. The relevance of competition was applied to the surrounding area of Helsinki and especially to the very nearby municipalities of Keski-Uusimaa region. In some responses, the competition was even depicted to be more than pragmatic; it was described to be of principle:

Nobody would admit to the neighboring municipality that ‘wow, you’re really good’. I couldn’t even imagine that someone in Tuusula would say positive things about Kerava. It is undermined and antagonized and in cooperation they try to deceive. In that sense the municipal sector is really envious. True cooperation is difficult to generate.
– Current Chief of Development

Regardless of the situation, cooperation was perceived as something worth aspiring specifically between the same municipalities that are now competing. Despite the pessimistic stance towards the current situation, some cooperation have been initiated in the area, as well, and Kerava has been an active party of it. Thus, the prospects of cooperation were seen optimistically. The interviewees perceived that cooperation between the municipalities of Keski-Uusimaa would potentially extend Kerava’s appeal to national or even international level.
KUUMA [coalition of municipalities in Keski-Uusimaa region] has tried to generate discussion of KUUMA-region as a counterbalance for the metropolitan area. I think there would be even more possibilities there; building something significant with cooperation and working on some specific issues. The distances are, after all, quite modest between Kerava, Järvenpää and Tuusula, for instance. Thus, we could try more. But municipalities have traditionally been in their own dugouts doing their own things.

– Previous Chief of Development

There was an interesting element to be found in the initial setting of competition described by the interviewees. While the competition was described as quite petty by some (as depicted above) the purpose was not perceived to be about taking something away from the other municipalities. It can be concluded that the optimistic prospects of cooperation were linked to a conception that municipal competition is not a zero-sum game: one’s success is not necessary the other’s loss. The reason was connected to the conception that municipalities need to work for the well-being of inhabitants. In that sense, competition was seen fruitless if it is not about reaching towards that end.

The initial setting for competition in private sector is that the strongest prevail; those who are flexible in creating needs and stories that people want to buy. But in public sector, the preconditions are different… We have underlined the positive influence of healthy competition; it keeps us all moving. A healthy competition between different elements keeps the system running and everybody wins. – Member of City Parliament

For instance, Tuusula asked about our website reform – they wanted assistance – and I told them honestly all I could. At the same time, I thought whether I should provide all the information in terms of this competition setting, but I provided it anyway because it is about helping the inhabitants. That information wouldn’t be so willingly shared between private businesses. – Current Chief of Communication

Kerava’s situation illustrates the change in preconditions for municipal cooperation that is depicted in research (Rainisto 2004, 9–10; Aula, Vehkalahti & Äikäs 2007, 13, 17–18). As geographical and informational boundaries for place promotion have faded, municipalities have new prospects for promoting larger regions in cooperation with the neighboring areas (Aula & Mantere 2008, 120–124; Rainisto 2004, 42–44; Vahermo 2004, 46). At the same time, municipalities’ success is still dependent of tax income which makes cooperation more difficult (Aula, Vehkalahti & Äikäs 2007, 13, 17–18; Fombrun 1996, 146; Rainisto 2004, 9–10). An additional challenge has to do with uneven distribution of gain, which was also touched upon in the interviews: if every party does not benefit equivalently, the unity of the coalition can crumble (Aula & Mantere 2008, 120–124). The responses also bring forward the role of legitimacy as a characteristic profit of reputational success in the municipal sector. The conception that municipalities can all benefit from healthy competition can be connected to the notion
that legitimacy is essentially an unlimited resource (Wæraas & Byrkjeflot 2012, 198–201).

5.2.7 The Roles of Reputation Management

The interviewees were remarkably consistent in terms of the roles bestowed upon certain people in reputation management. The mayor were seen as the most visible character in steering Kerava’s reputation. However, while some interviewees declared mayor as the single most important manager of reputation as well, most responses distributed the responsibility of management between political management and operational management. Three people stood out as the most important reputation managers: the mayor, the chairman of the city government and the chairman of the city parliament.

The mayor is naturally the figurehead, he’s the personal incarnation of the city and that’s why he has a significant role. But from the perspective of constructing reputation, I would say that the mayor is one actor but not the only one. A municipal organization has two realities – administrative and political – and these realities should be aligned. In some municipalities, a strong chairman can have a more important role than the mayor in terms of reputation. – Previous Chief of Communication

The previous implies that the personal characteristics of managers affect the formation of managerial roles. Accordingly, managers were perceived to have their own reputations which are distinctive from the role of the whole municipality. These personal reputations, in turn, were perceived to affect the role of the municipality.

In the political side it [reputation construction] is very person-dependent. In Kerava, we have two people – the chairman of the city government and the chairman of the city parliament – who have been around very long; one since ’69 and the other since ’78, I think. This city has more or less personified to them; their faces are the faces of Kerava. – Member of City Parliament

While the chief of communication is strongly related to the reputation construction of Kerava, as has been established, her role as a reputation manager was perceived to more supportive and impersonal. Her duty was perceived to be steering the informational environment into desired direction and managing publicity.

The chief of communication is a sort of a bouncer or a quarterback who steers other people. She cannot administer the whole sector, so she passes along information to the right people. – Member of City Parliament

The chief of communication brings the professional substance to how reputation should be managed and tools developed. – Previous Chief of Communication
As has been established previously, the role of face-to-face encounters are perceived as very important for the formation of reputation. Accordingly, many of the interviewees pointed out that however reputation is steered on top-level management, the employees participating in daily service situations still have the most important role. Thus, reputation management was perceived to be ultimately dependent on human resources management.

Reputation research promotes the notion that reputation management should be a collective effort of the whole organization (Aula & Heinonen 2011, 162, 191; Jackson 2004, 105–107, 113; Fombrun 1996, 60). It is also often underlined that the reputation of the manager is distinct from the reputation of the organization, and this fact should be acknowledged in operation (Kuss 2009, 263; Greenberg 2010, 118–119; Davies & Chun 2009, 312–313, 315–320). In Kerava, both of these positions seem to be well regarded among the members of the management. However, the situation is depicted as difficult in terms of how consistently different crafts and employees promote certain aspects of managerial efforts. It has been stated that the whole organization should be made aware of strategic goals if those goals are to be achieved (Vahermo 2004, 54–55; Hankinson 2001, 127–142.). The complex and political nature of municipal organization, however, makes this principle problematic (Wæraas & Byrkjeflot 2012, 186–206; Rainisto 2004, 50–51). As stated in the responses, there are many realities to a municipality’s reputation construction which poses certain challenges for consistency and coherence. I will explore these aspects of reputation management next.

5.2.8 Coherence in Operation

The inability to work together towards a same set of goals has been established as difficult in municipal governance, and this notion seems to apply to Kerava, as well. The external image of Kerava and the preconditions for reputation construction inside Kerava were both described as dependent on how well the different constituents of the organization are able to pull together. Many interviewees discussed the contentious nature of policy making which was seen as an issue which Kerava’s municipal governance has had to work with. (Vahermo 2004, 54–55; Hankinson 2001, 127–142.)
The precondition that we started it [reputation construction] from was that we have to get rid of the conception that we are contentious and we have conflicts and the parties are unorganized. We tried to create a conception that Kerava was generally able to negotiate. That was central. – Previous Mayor

A common conception between the interviewees was that many different crafts and the political nature of municipal governance make reputation management generally difficult. Related to this shared conception, however, were many conflicting views. One inconsistency was about conceptions regarding how much the construction and maintenance of reputation steers the operation of the municipal organization. As stated, most interviewees emphasized that operation comes first and all communication and reputation construction is based on the predetermined operational model. However, many interviewees also felt that reputation is, in fact, a strong factor in determining how operational models are planned and implemented. Some interviewees were able to see the effect of this inconsistency in the operation, as well:

This varies strongly between different crafts and it is also somewhat dependent on the manager. Some think carefully about the communication and connotations of things, so that things are correctly interpreted and there are no misunderstandings. Some just do things with no regard to what people might think; they do things like they have been assigned to be done. I think that reputation and the big picture should be considered more carefully in every turn – Current chief of communication

Another inconsistency was related to the extent that coherence in reputation management was possible or even desirable. Usually, if coherence was perceived as impossible, it was also perceived as something not worth aspiring. Some responses, however, emphasized that the impossibility is merely related to the current status of organization and something could – and should – be done about it. Thus, coherent reputation management was perceived as desirable by some, but in these cases the interviewees called for profound reorganization.

I believe that majority of our personnel does not know what we are strategically pursuing; about where we are going and so on… But that’s how it also goes in the war: the private does not need to think about anything but how to shoot the enemy. Generals think about how the war is won, and that’s strategy. I don’t believe in engaging people in strategy. – Current Mayor

It [coherence] was very much discussed before we constituted our communication strategy because I thought, then, that everyone should carry out the same strategy. In that time, it was promoted like that in all theories: similar conduct throughout the whole organization. To this day, I still think that the foundation should be the same for all: transparency, quickness, righteousness, justice, being helpful and proactive… basic communicative values like that. But every craft is a little different in features and that’s why strict control is extremely difficult to hold. – Previous Chief of Communication
The last quote illustrates one common conception among the interviewees that is connected to the difficulty in holding strict control. Many suggested that the coherent strategy should be based on very general messages that can be applied to different crafts depending on the nature of their operation. The virtue of generality was promoted by even those who doubted the possibilities for fully coherent strategy. Thus, the interviewees suggested that Kerava should express stability in basic conduct while expressing flexibility in lighter aspects of operation:

For instance, economic policy cannot fluctuate in a way that we make cutbacks this year and we spend money on the next. Its foundation must be based on stability. But then again, in lighter operation we can boldly try new things. We can try using iPads in our operation this year, for instance, and see what that amounts to. But keeping our economy and foundation as clear and stable must be based on consistent operation.

– Current Chief of Communication

It can be concluded that the virtue of coherence in reputation management was not seen as optimistically by the interviewees as it is perceived in research. Mostly, the pessimistic stances towards coherence were justified by the notion that it is not worth aspiring since it is not achievable. The difficulty of coherent communication can be compared to the different levels of communication described by Karvonen (1999, 63, 77–79) and Aula and Heinonen (2011, 145, 191): an organization communicates its purpose all the time, whether it wants to or not. Thus, inconsistency in organizational culture is continuously communicated to stakeholders through operation. This seems to be acknowledged in Kerava but possibilities for aligning the non-intentional communication is seen rather pessimistically. In general, it can be argued that many of the categories in the interview data conflict with the ideal of consistency in research which implicates that the acquisition of a good reputation is a shared responsibility between all parts of the organization (cf. Fombrun 1996, 60–67; Aula, Vehkalahti & Äikäs 2007, 17–19). However, the interviewees were able to distinguish different levels of operation in terms of how tangible or specific the nature of operation is. While different crafts and agendas were recognized as too diverse in nature to put under one reputational strategy, a common foundation of very general elements and messages was promoted as the desirable uniting factor (cf. Aronczyk 2013, 10). It seems that the ideal of consistency in reputation management was found on an abstract level. This can be explored through what Jackson (2004, 77–79) calls integrity: a moral alignment within an organization can help construct the organization’s character by bringing the multiple ethical selves of the organization together. Thus, in a healthy organization culture,
complex as it may be, communication based on integrity can penetrate all levels of
operation (cf. Aula & Heinonen 2002, 25; Aula & Heinonen 2011, 191). I shall focus on
the abstract and ethical determinatives of Kerava’s reputation next.

5.2.9 Values and Social Responsibility

The abstract unity that Kerava wants to coherently communicate can be explored in
relation to how values and social responsibility is presented in the municipality’s
reputation construction. Expressing values is, according to the interviewees, difficult for
municipalities for the same reasons why expressing coherence is generally difficult:
complex organization and political mandate. The responses regarding values were also
equally divided as were the responses regarding coherence. When asked about the
values in Kerava’s operation, some interviewees contested the presumption that there
can be such thing as municipality’s values:

The question about values is impossible because of what a value is and what it is
consisted of. If I speak of justice, it means different things to you than it does for me…
Everyone has their own conception and it even changes over time. Can a municipality
have clear values then? I wouldn’t think so. – Member of City Parliament

The conceptions that contested the existence of municipal values were all at least partly
justified by the notion that in an organization that bases its policies on democratic
process, there has to be a variety of values.

The question about values is difficult because it is related to the elections that are the
basis for democracy. People are elected based on what their own values are. If we could
draw our common policy from that, what would be left of values? I was careful about
declaring values myself because it is against democracy. If we declare our values, the
people that are against them have the right to declare their opposing opinion. In fact, it’s
their duty to declare their opposing opinion. That’s why discussion on values is shallow.
– Previous Mayor

However, some interviewees saw values as a quite natural part of Kerava’s operation
and municipal operation in general. There is a set of values that are documented in
Kerava’s communication strategy and that was often the basis for the interviewees’
approach on values:

We have values such as customer satisfaction, unity, strive for development and things
like that. So, we have an aspiration for constant development and making Kerava
dynamic, fresh and flexible. It’s in the core of our operation. But we have to remember
that the whole public sector is constructed on specific values such as justice, security,
unbiased treatment and so on. These aspects strongly determine the operation on public
sector… – Current Mayor
Regardless of the stance towards the possibility of expressing values, the one thing that
the interviewees commonly agreed on was that the bureaucratic and political nature of
the municipal organization is the factor which makes expressing values difficult (cf.
organizational complexity for reputation-based governance is widely recognized in
research, the theoretical literature used in this study does not explicitly support the
stance that expressing values is impossible in the democratic system (cf. Luoma-aho
noted, however, that the virtues of social responsibility and ethicality is law-based in the
Finnish public sector and, thus, it is understandable that their reputational effect is not
recognized by the interviewees (Vahermo 2004, 47). This position is well elaborated in
the quote of the current mayor presented above. The reputational advantage of
expressing values can, nevertheless, be discussed in relation to the public sector as well.
While municipalities do not have similar opportunities to establish values through their
marketing and story-telling, expressing values can be perceived as a way of generating
legitimacy and justifying the organization’s existence (Aula & Mantere 2008, 136;
16) suggests, this means that municipalities can be more able to justify their existence
and use of power. Thus, while enhancing effectiveness of operation through values is
difficult for municipalities, it can still excel in obtaining respect in its community by
expressing good nature and virtuousness.

5.2.10 Managing Publicity

As presented previously, most interviewees perceive that Kerava’s most essential role in
public discussions is to be the fact provider. Thus, Kerava’s participation in public
debates often means distributing correct information and correcting misinformation.
However, when the discussion turned to the specifics of managing and operating on the
public arenas, the general conception of fact distribution got many additional flavors to
it. In the context of discussing the emergence of more professionalized communication
in Kerava since the beginning of the new millennium, many interviewees stated that
publicity has in itself become more difficult to control in recent decades:

Controlling communication has become more and more difficult as new tools for
communication have emerged. And I wonder how actively one should participate in
online discussions. In private sector, if you look at how hotels manage their reputations,
for instance, if someone writes something negative – or even positive – in Trip advisor, there’s always someone who answers every time. I don’t think the municipal organization participates in social media discussions that much. And I don’t know if that’s good but that’s where reputations are pretty much formed in these days. – Previous Chief of Development

Many of the interviewees connected the difficulties in publicity work to the expanded informational network and the changed nature of the media. Related to both of these elements is the notion that publicity work has spread out from cabinets. This means that the constituents of publicity work are not controllable anymore. Some interviewees connected this development to the decreased professionalism of reporters and some reckoned that journalism itself has changed its nature. Nevertheless, the essential notion was that reporters are not dependent on cooperation with the public officials and other stakeholders can produce and distribute information themselves:

During the last decade the situation has changed so that things cannot be resolved in cabinets anymore. The significance of the reputation initiated in those cabinets decreased and the significance of the press media-based reputation increased instead. Previously that wasn’t an issue because the press were easy to deal with; they were a part of those same cabinets. – Previous Mayor

The new possibilities for stakeholder-based information production have caused the municipal organization to re-evaluate their standing as an information provider in public discussions. They acknowledged that the municipal organization was not the only party producing information, which led them to position themselves towards the information produced by the stakeholders. One significant perception was that correcting information does not mean that negative impulses should be suppressed or critical voices silenced. Instead, the municipal should try to be more straightforward in dealing with issues:

Being bold in discussing unpleasant issues is important. They should not be hushed or mellowed but instead, whatever the issue, they should be brought forward in good time. For instance, if some tough policy is being made that is known to stir up discussion, it is hard to bring that up publicly because it will probably complicate the preparation. But then again, in many past instances, wouldn’t it had been just easier to bring up the tough issues earlier – if we think of the amount of work that they produced? – Previous Chief of Communication

Demands for open discussion are related to many other perspectives that stood out in the interviews. The quote represented above implicates the need for proactivity which was discussed more elaborately as well. Initiating discussion proactively was perceived to have at least two positive reputational effects. First, it allows the municipal organization
steer the discussion into a direction of its willing. Second, it helps make the bureaucratic system more legible for people which increases legitimacy.

The field of communication is very challenging at the moment as the social media has become significant during the recent years. If the management of Kerava doesn’t approach this issue seriously and proactively, if they don’t communicate issues upfront before anything actually happens, the inhabitants will take matters into their own hands – in fact they already have in some instances. And that’s when things start to happen. Even politicians get to marvel as initiatives and delegations are formed which manage to get changes done. And if the municipality’s representatives would only have conducted a little differently, these things could have been carried out with more style.

– Member of City Parliament

In addition to dealing with issues, it is also considered how operation is wanted to appear. There is clearly pressure for expressing that things are dealt with professionally, properly and thoroughly; pressure for keeping everybody calm by reacting fast. The goal is to create a reputation regarding the means of operation. There is currently a strong urge in the public sector to communicate what they are doing; like: ‘Look, we are doing things as they should be done’. Previously it was about just conducting but now it is also about communicating about that conduct.

– Previous Chief of Development

Many of the discussed issues in publicity management are related to the exchange of information between the municipal organization and its stakeholders. Accordingly, one issue emphasized in the interviews is that Kerava should focus on creating reciprocity on public arenas. There was variance regarding the current state of interaction but the interviewees were quite unified in emphasizing the importance of the issue.

If we think about different arenas, it should be considered what other means could be utilized. If the municipality wanted to create something new out of interaction, it should be considered how information could be received in addition to providing it. If we think about how we have focused on mobilizing people, it is very much about telling them something and leaving that up for commentary. The inhabitants can discuss issues but they don’t get to take it into any direction.

– Previous Chief of Communication

In technical sense, the utilization of public arenas was subject that divided the interviewees into two groups. Some thought that different channels and platforms are quite well utilized in Kerava. Some, in turn, thought that as a specific area of development.

We have developed online services and chats and reciprocal channels. We answer people and discuss with them. I think it is actualized quite well.

– Current Chief of Communication

Of course, we do have communicative platforms that we encounter inhabitants on. But maybe it is still a bit underdeveloped. I would invest in developing social media.

– Current Chief of Development

As can be interpreted from the quotes above, the social media was understood as one significant platform of publicity. While the interviewees presented varying perspectives
regarding the general usage of different technical channels, there was still a distinctive
unity between the interviewees regarding how the social media are currently being used
and how that aspect of operation should be developed. All the interviewees stated in
their own words the essential thought that Kerava should try to manage the social media
by proactively initiating and participating in discussions. This represented need for
development is related to another category of unity: most interviewees depicted that
Kerava is unprepared for the social media becoming a significant public arena for
reputation formation.

It is hard to estimate how much it [social media discussion] can be influenced and how it
relates to other forms of communication. But the communication personnel should have
some sort of vision about that. I think the central change that is happening is that
communication is spreading into those arenas. It might happen that soon we find
ourselves in the same situation as in the 90’s. That no matter how much the person
responsible for communication works she is incorrigibly late or beside the point because
most of the communication is taking place in the social media.
– Previous Chief of Development

The emergence of internet, and the social media especially, in this circle has renewed the
arenas that the municipality should attend to. It doesn’t mean that we should constantly
work on those web arenas or that we should emphasize the people that are the loudest on
those arenas and be constantly available to them. It means that we should think of the
ways that things are communicated punctually, clearly and extensively and we should
also reserve the time for dealing with the issue at hand. – Member of City Parliament

The interviewees’ statements regarding publicity management seem to be generally
concerned over how trustworthiness, reliability and responsibility are expressed in
Kerava’s operation (cf. Lochbihler 2009, 103). This supports the notion that
withholding information leads to bad results in municipal governance. Thus, the
principle that administrations should always be understandable and accessible for the
administrated people was very apparently present in the interviews. (Coleman & Ross
2010, 24; Aula & Mantere 2008, 66–67.) What also becomes relevant in this context is
the claim that active citizenship is ultimately dependent on the accessibility and
transparency of the administrative organizations. As Picci (2011, 62–65) suggests,
legibility does not always make conduct easier for an administration, but it helps that
administration express legitimacy. Openness and transparency should not be only by
expressed through communicating the organization’s operations, as the interviewees’
depictions illustrate. Instead, openness and transparency should be natural parts of
operation (Aula & Heinonen 2011, 73–76, 135). When conducted properly, open
dialogue and proactive communication can promote a good organizational culture.
6. Conclusions and Discussion

This study has explored the ways that the city of Kerava communicates, constructs and manages its own reputation. I have tried to discover the characteristics of municipal reputation management through a case study that explores how the work towards a better municipal reputation is conducted in a certain contextual setting. In doing so, my essential aim has been to produce micro-level knowledge about reputation construction in the public sector and in municipalities in particular.

As I have focused more on the characteristics and management of Kerava’s reputation in the previous chapter of my analysis, I will now discuss the more abstract and underlying conceptions that seem to steer the interviewees’ conceptions regarding what municipal reputation is, how it is formed and how it can be influenced. The discussion below is partly overlapping with exploration of data in the previous chapter. This is because the analysis conducted in this chapter works as a kind of a conclusion of the interview data. As I proceed with this concluding analysis, I will aim to provide answers to my research questions during the process. I will reflect back to the established categories in the interview data and to the academic literature used as a theoretical background for this study.

6.1 Conceptualization of Municipal Reputation

The views regarding Kerava’s reputation and reputation management in general were remarkably similar between different interviewees. Unified categories and units were easy to establish from the data and Kerava’s reputation was discussed in relation to the same factors and phenomena between different interviewees. The interviewees’ conceptualizations of the concept of reputation had subtle differences, however, which steered the discussions into various directions. These underlying conceptualizations, in fact, proved to be very strong determinants of the progression of discussions. The interviewees were not directly asked about how they would define the concept of reputation and some of them picked that up. The interviewees often pointed out that discussing Kerava’s reputation as a coherent entity that can be easily grasped would be an over-simplification of its nature. For instance, two of them stated that there are in fact many reputations for a single municipality. This conception of reputation as a plural...
conceives municipal reputation as something that is dependent of the cultural setting and the people doing the evaluation. There is much support in research regarding these claims (Kuss 2009, 267–270; Gaultier-Gaillard et al. 2009, 120; Wæraas & Byrkjeflot 2012, 195–196) and, thus, they are highly relevant in the context of this study.

Despite the recognized subjective dependence, for most of the interviewees there was also a certain essence of Kerava to be found outside the tangible cityscape that was mostly used to describe the elements of reputation (cf. Virtanen 1999, 10–11; Kavaratzis & Ashworth 2005, 506–513). As the interviewees stated that ‘Kerava is what it is, and that is difficult to change’ or ‘artificial identity is not worth aspiring’, they seemed to refer to a foundation of determining preconditions that set limits for reputation construction in municipalities. While a coherent perception of what reputation as a concept means could not be established from the interviews, the interviewees still managed to underline the conception that reputation is a complex entity that consists of different constituents and depends on the organization (cf. Wæraas & Byrkjeflot 2012, 186–206). It terms of general constitution of reputation, the interviewees confirmed the notion that reputation essentially consists of perceptions. The responses, thus, illustrate that Kerava’s reputation is the outcome of all the evaluative perceptions towards the organization (cf. Fombrun 1996, 72, 111).

I have suggested that many approaches to municipal reputation in research resemble exploration of what municipalities try to promote in their operation rather than what they actually do (cf. Aula & Mantere 2008, 26–27; Aula & Heinonen 2002, 48–52). Thus, municipalities are seen as active constructors of their reputation (Aula, Vehkalahti & Äikäs 2007, 17–18). In Kerava’s case, this conception can be contested. The meaning of municipal reputation to each interviewee could ultimately be established only in relation to the conduct and phenomena that reputation as a concept was attached to. As the importance of service production in reputation formation was one of the most consistent perceptions between interviewees, the relation between actual operation and reputation became apparent. Marketing and branding as means of constructing reputation were remarkably little discussed by the interviewees. In this sense, the interviewees supported the perspective that reputation should be understood as a long-term evaluation of the organization that regards all of its past and present attributes (cf. Karvonen 1999, 17). When marketing and branding were discussed, their role in
reputation construction was depicted as somewhat limited. Marketing and branding were mostly understood as communicational extensions of what Kerava naturally is. In this sense, the interviewees supported Kostiainen’s (2001, 11) notion that marketing a city means developing it and developing a city means marketing it. When questions steered the discussion towards producing mental imagery and reputational stories, the interviewees stressed that all communication efforts are essentially tied to the operational strategy. Thus, the interviewees rarely separated the imagery of Kerava from the reputation of Kerava.

The discussions regarding municipal marketing often consisted of comparisons to the private sector. The interviewees’ observations illustrated partly conflicting positions regarding the distinctiveness of public organizations. Private companies were depicted as free to tell stories and create imagery about themselves in a way that was depicted impossible for municipalities. In slight contrast with this claim was the equally popular conception that public organizations the preconditions for marketing are essentially similar for all organizations regardless of craft. Indeed, the basic elements and goals of marketing have been regarded as similar in research regardless of craft (cf. Rainisto 2004, 55; Kostiainen 2001, 10). Nevertheless, different preconditions for segmentation and the political nature of organization are perceived as determinants of marketing for municipalities – in research and in the conducted interviews (Rainisto 2004, 57; Whelan et al. 2008, 1165; Wæraas & Byrkjeflot 2012, 196). What can be concluded of this is that artificial image construction was not seen as profitable in the long run – even for private companies (cf. Aula & Heinonen 2002, 22). However, the complex structures and political nature of municipal organization seem to make the very conduct of municipal marketing problematic according to the interviewees. Thus, the act of marketing itself is perceived as fragile.

The interviewees seem to acknowledge that the best way for Kerava to create opportunities for itself through reputation construction is to reflect its unique identity through its actions (cf. Fombrun 1996, 9–11). The construction of identity in terms of developing place product seems to mean emphasizing cultural identity because of the lack of concrete elements in Kerava’s cityscape (cf. Virtanen 1999, 10–11). Accordingly, what could be established from all evaluations regarding Kerava’s
uniqueness is Kerava’s cultural identity; the local culture of Kerava was emphasized in many instances of the interviews. This could even be perceived as a form of compensation since there is an absence of concrete elements on which to build on (cf. Rainisto 2004, 16–17, 55–56).

6.2 Municipal Organization as a Constructor of Reputation

The complexity of organization appears as an all-encompassing theme in the exploration of Kerava’s reputation. In the interviews, political mandate, democratic policy and multiple independent crafts were all acknowledged as preconditions that affect all efforts of reputation construction and all conduct in general. In fact, the focus was often in the municipal organization’s basic conduct rather that reputation construction when the complexity of organizational structure was discussed. Thus, the elements and goals of reputation management were ultimately perceived as something that could not be separated from the basic conduct; reputation management was ultimately perceived to be of secondary importance. It can, however, be argued that the importance of reputation management was accepted as a basis for all discussions. When asked directly, none of the interviewees stated that reputation management is irrelevant, and some interviewees even specifically underlined its importance. Nevertheless, the conduct of reputation management was connected to preventing crisis and upholding status quo rather than distributing positive conceptions (cf. Luoma-aho 2007, 126–128; Aronczyk 2013, 14). The operation of the municipal organization was often perceived to leave little room for reaching for a more positive reputation and that is why any flagrant campaigns were depicted as potential trouble (cf. Wæraas and Byrkjeflot 2012, 191–192, 197–198). Thus, the interviewees’ depictions regarding the advantages of reputation construction are related to legitimizing the municipality’s conduct as a public administration that must meet expectations regarding consistency and trustworthiness.

Legitimacy was addressed in many interviews in the context of general public sector reputation and, accordingly, critique towards the legitimacy of public governance was ultimately perceived as something that was aimed at the Finnish national system. Through that notion, general public sector reputation was connected to Kerava’s municipal reputation. Thus, the way that the Finnish public sector as an entity was perceived in the interviews affected the way that the current state of Kerava’s reputation
was experienced. If the state was seen as a constituent of municipal operation, its influence on the reputation of Kerava was perceived quite negatively. However, some interviewees pointed out that the perceived stiffness and heaviness of the entity of public sector highlighted Kerava’s own success. In both conceptions, the state was not seen as a partner of Kerava or Finnish municipalities in general; the state was depicted as a more of an adversary. In terms of Kerava’s reputation construction, there were no positive implications to be found from the depicted relationship between Kerava’s and state administration’s reputations. It is fruitful to compare the interviewees’ conceptions to Vahermo’s (2004, 50–51) depiction of how the relationship between state and municipalities has developed in recent decades. He suggests that until 1980’s municipal government was strongly perceived as an extension of the state government; a municipality’s function was to serve the administrative guidelines of the state in its own area. Since late 1980’s the deconstruction of state norms began and municipal government changed in its nature. As a result, municipalities are no longer directly connected to state in their aspirations but they have their own demands regarding operational goals – even though their operation is essentially based on law. (ibid.)

Kerava’s cooperation with the municipalities in the same region was depicted challenging because of the competition setting that positions the municipalities against each other in terms of luring in inhabitants and businesses. Nevertheless, many of the interviewees stated that the healthy competition between neighboring municipalities keeps the region vital and everybody wins. What can be concluded from this discussion is that city districts are an important factor in constructing Kerava’s municipal reputation (cf. Vahermo 2004, 52–53). This was further underlined by the comparisons to Helsinki which were discussed in almost all interviews. Thus, the interviews confirm that promoting a small municipality is dependent on how it relates to the district that it is a part of. In Kerava’s case, there are two districts that hold significance to Kerava’s reputation formation: 1) the surrounding area of the metropolitan area and 2) Helsinki region. In relation to these districts, Kerava’s reputation can be described to be about competition between the municipalities in the surrounding area and adaptation to the Helsinki-brand. Thus, if Kerava’s reputation is evaluated through its implications to better known brands, as Rainisto (2004, 42–44) suggests, the influence of Helsinki-brand is very strong.
Perhaps the most interesting area of conflicting views occurred in the perceptions of how reputational strategies should be carried out in Kerava. The use of communication and leadership in engaging personnel into carrying out the reputation strategy of Kerava was depicted as desirable and achievable by some. However, it was depicted as impossible and undesirable by others. These inconsistencies were based on different positions regarding how pervasive strategic conduct should be and whether consistent conduct should be demanded of personnel as a policy. While research more often supports coherence and unity as an ideal for reputation strategy (Fombrun 1996, 60; Aula & Heinonen 2011, 162, 191), possible reasons for the more pessimistic views of Kerava’s reputation strategists could be discovered from the other phenomena that surround reputation construction. One relevant point has to do with expressing values. As stated in chapter 5, values were a highly problematic subject for the interviewees. It can be argued that the interviewees acknowledged Picci’s (2011, 46–47) notion that equal standards of ethical conduct are difficult to establish in a network of conflicting interests. Therefore, the democratic criterion that apply to municipal governance are in conflict with organizational values. According to Picci (ibid), the best that municipalities can do is advocate active participation of people with varying interests. The question of democracy implies the special reputational preconditions that come with political mandate. It is important to acknowledge that there are two kinds of management in Finnish municipalities: political and professional (Vahermo 2004, 49). The city government and city parliament represent political management as they are responsible for decision making and operational policy. The mayor and the managers of different branches in the municipality represent professional management. Ultimately, this division means that there are two reputational realities, as well; both of these realities cannot be engaged under one specific strategy because they exist for different purposes (ibid). Thus, as some of the interviewees explicitly presented, municipality’s reputational strategy can only be based on very general messages that can be applied to different crafts. Essentially, this whole discussion can be brought back to the all-encompassing nature of organizational complexity.

One central dilemma of Kerava’s reputation construction lies in the way that Kerava’s municipal governance positions itself towards conduct on different platforms of publicity. In short, the interviewees depicted Kerava as technically equipped and
resourceful in terms of communication but still unprepared for the new era of communication. They suggested that Kerava has followed its time in providing resources for communication but it has not taken into account the new communicational culture in which anybody can produce content and easily observe the informational networks around them. The interviewees also recognized that journalists are no longer dependent on municipalities for information and, yet, the municipality’s conduct can be distributed to millions of recipients through the media faster than before. It can be concluded that as the media have spread out of municipalities’ cabinets, their contiguous presence on newly emerged platforms of many-to-many communication have changed the media environment of municipalities even more pervasively (cf. Knight 2010, 175–178; Coleman & Ross 2010, 38–44). This is especially visible in the social media, which was thoroughly addressed with all interviewees. It can be argued that there has been a shift of power in providing communal information, which is seen very problematic for all municipalities that are not ready for it – Kerava among them. The central difficulty here lies in the notion that managing publicity is not entirely about controlling the levels of publicity (cf. Aula & Mantere 2008, 64). While different channels have to be acknowledged – as Kerava has – it is equally important to understand how those channels relate to the informational environment. Thus, reputation management is not only about providing sufficient resources for communication and utilizing different tools for doing so. Successful reputation construction is also about readiness for open dialogue and proactivity in bringing up issues (Coombs & Holladay 2007, 50, 107; Aula & Heinonen 2011, 48, 73–76, 135).

It can be argued that the established reputational goals of luring in tax-payers and making inhabitants feel happy about Kerava are tightly related to each other. Many interviewees who brought up the importance of tax-income as goal elaborated that reputational strategy is also about making sure that those tax-payers are provided for. Thus, there is no point of luring in inhabitants and businesses if Kerava cannot meet the demands of their expectations (cf. Gaultier-Gaillard et al. 2009, 118–120; Wæraas & Byrkjeflot 2012, 191–192, 197–198; Karvonen 1999, 21). There were also subtle differences in the emphases of why luring in inhabitants and businesses was a goal worth aspiring. Tax-income was the obvious gain that was also elaborated in most discussions. The ultimate goal, however, seemed to be increasing the vitality of Kerava through increased income. This essentially means that increased tax-income was not
perceived as an intrinsic value. Instead, it was perceived as a boost to the vitality (elinvoima) and happiness. All these elements are connected to each other in the discussions. This can be perceived as a distinctive characteristic of municipal reputation since the positive causal relation between turnover, vitality and happiness is depicted as inverse to profit-oriented thinking: more tax-income produces happy customers and vital operation. More profit-oriented logic would be: happy customers and vital operation produce more tax-income (cf. Karvonen 1999, 32–33; Aula, Vehkalahti & Äikäs 2007, 13).

6.3 The Relevance of This Study and Possible Areas of Further Exploration

It can be argued that the essential importance of this study is based on supplementing reputational research with an outlook to an organization which does not emphasize financial profit as the determinant or essential goal of reputation management. As can be interpreted from the analysis above, profit-oriented evaluation of reputation construction emphasizes certain aspects of operation (cf. Picci 2011, 2; Wæraas & Byrkjeflot 2012, 189).

Studies focusing on municipal reputation have been conducted before and, thus, the focus has not been entirely in profit-oriented conduct. Nevertheless, these studies have mostly provided theoretical frameworks that include very general elements – many of these elements even contradicting to other studies concerning public sector reputation management. There are, for instance, quite opposite approaches in research regarding the special preconditions for municipal reputation construction in relation to other organizations; as some studies focus on municipalities’ reputational efforts in relation to private sector and general marketing logics (cf. Karvonen 1999, 21; Aula, Vehkalahti & Äikäs 2007, 13; Kostiainen 2001, 10), others underline the distinctiveness of the municipal product (Kavaratzis & Ashworth 2005, 506–513; Rainisto 2004, 55–57; Aronczyk 2013, 3–4). There is also much variance regarding the stakeholder groups that municipalities should or should not emphasize in their reputational efforts (cf. Fombrun 1996, 57, 139; Kostiainen 2001, 23–24, 56; Kuss 2009, 270–272). The virtue of this study is that it provides a rare micro-level approach to municipal reputation construction. Thus, the theories that have been established in research regarding
municipal reputation are in this study put into perspective in regard to the reality of Finnish municipal sector and one Finnish municipality.

One central aim of this study has been to produce new kind of knowledge about the encounters and stakeholder relations which influence the reputation formation of one specific municipality. This also means that the cultural ties that reputation formation is dependent on are regarded as factors in this study. This essentially means two things. First, this study connects municipal reputation construction into such cultural and historical setting that most studies have only touched upon theoretically – if at all. Second, the results of this study are hardly generalizable. The fact that the results of this study are only meaningful in its own context is, thus, both a strength and a defect of this study.

In the analysis of this study, I set all the interviewees as equal to one another in terms of how they depicted Kerava’s reputation management. In retrospect, the selection of interviewees might hold more significance that I originally presumed. This claim is based on two observations. First, the interviewees’ occupations and roles in the municipal organization seemed to determine their responses to some extent. Thus, there were implications in the interview data that opinions regarding management of reputation are somewhat dependent on the occupational position of the interviewee. Many responses between the interviewees having held the same occupational position in Kerava were much similar to one another than the consistency of all responses in general. Especially in conflicting categories, the holders of the same occupation usually had the same position towards the issue at hand. The second observation has to do with the notion that a municipality has two realities with their own preconditions for reputation construction (Vahermo 2004, 49; Picci 2011, 46–47): 1) political reality including the members of city parliament and city government and 2) professional reality, consisting of public officials. In this study, the professional reality is emphasized in expense of the political reality as five out of eight interviewees represented public officials (The previous chief of development is a current member of the city parliament). As a result of the selection of interviewees, the conclusions are bound to be imbalanced in terms of the two realities.
The possible subjects for further research can be connected to the attributes and defects of this study, described above. Since this is a highly context-dependent study, its approach to municipal reputation could be applied to other municipalities with different statuses. It can be presumed that exploration of municipalities with different social realities would shed light on the characteristics of municipal reputation that are more relational. Thus, bigger municipalities with international recognizability, for instance, would be interesting subjects of study. In studying municipal reputation management, the occupational factor could be explored in detail. If conceptions of people with certain occupational positions are similar to one another, the social reality aspect can be extended to the organizational structure, as well.

Further studies could also provide a more holistic perspective to the reality of one municipality. As stated, the conclusions of this study are based on a subjective account of the management parties of Kerava. My approach, thus, only focuses on the other side of the interactive relationship from which reputations are formed. The results of this study – or some other case study – could be utilized in exploring how the perspectives of municipal governance relate to the perspectives of the stakeholder groups of that municipality.
Bibliography:


Municipal taxing in 2015:

Principles of Open Governance in Finland:
http://vm.fi/documents/10623/307557/Suomen+avoimen+hallinnon+ensimm%C3%A4inen+to
imintasuunnitelma.pdf/92de53d8-abce-4068-98ef-e6ac1d579fef

Municipal Law in Finland: https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/1995/19950365

Helsingin Sanomat 23.1.2014: http://www.hs.fi/kaupunki/a1390432516014

Statistics on Finnish Municipalities:
http://www.kunnat.net/fi/tietopankit/tilastot/Sivut/default.aspx
### Appendix 1: All established categories from all interviews

A: Elements, characteristics and developments that form Kerava’s reputation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Occurrences of equivalent claims</th>
<th>Occurrences of conflicting claims</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elements of Kerava’s reputation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active local culture</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerava has a negative external identity</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerava has a positive internal identity</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective Service production</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good traffic communication</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small/Compact</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railroad city</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kerava’s municipal appeal</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerava’s appeal is nationally significant</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerava has no international appeal</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerava’s appeal is based on close connection to Helsinki</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being a media-transmitted joke is bad for municipal appeal</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locality is more important for Kerava than international appeal</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerava is mainly unknown to people outside Finnish metropolitan area</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Finnish municipality can have international appeal</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerava’s appeal is based on effective services for</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of municipal reputation</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Score</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too slow and heavy for expressing effectiveness</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The previously secure role of public sector has been questioned</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General public sector reputation reflects on Kerava’s reputation.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>History as a factor for Kerava’s reputation</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kerava’s reputation is tied to history</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerava’s history is something that should be gotten rid of</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purposeful management of reputation has emerged in Kerava during the last couple of decades</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970’s determines the formation of Kerava’s reputation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The relation between reality and reputation</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most people have a false conception of Kerava</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reputation emerges from true operation, not communication</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholders of Kerava do not realize how Kerava is managed</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media discussions are characterized by false information and/or low level of interaction</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerava is better than its reputation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arenas that Kerava’s reputation is formed on</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reputation spreads through word-of-mouth</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstream media are and have been important constructors of Kerava’s reputation</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical environment determines reputation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive experiences are the basis for good reputation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyläilta is a valuable arena for reputation construction</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The special preconditions of public sector and municipal sector for reputation construction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organizational structure makes expressing effectiveness difficult</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reality-basis is a requirement in all communication</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demand for transparency</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### B: Management of Kerava’s reputation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Occurrences of equivalent claims</th>
<th>Occurrences of conflicting claims</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Most important stakeholders</strong></td>
<td>The inhabitants are the most important stakeholder group.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There is a distinction between insider groups and outsider groups.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘The people of Kerava’ including inhabitants and entrepreneurs are the most important group.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Successful reputation management is based on segmentation.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The preconditions for managing Kerava’s reputation</strong></td>
<td>Kerava is what it is; difficult to change</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Artificial identity is not worth aspiring</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Democracy (political mandate) makes effective reputation management difficult</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The previously secure role of public sector has been questioned</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Municipal brand is fragile</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Municipal reputation is persistent</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The marketing methods of private companies are applicable to municipal sector</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goals that steer municipal reputation construction</strong></td>
<td>Security and trustworthiness are important goals</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Luring in inhabitants and businesses is an important goal of rep. management</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Making people feel happy about their municipality is an</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Important Goal

| The gains of a good reputation for a municipality are complex and relational | 4 |
| Good reputation increases the municipality’s vitality | 4 |
| Reputation management is about finding positive in what Kerava already is | 5 |

### Service Production

| Effective service production is important for municipal reputation formation | 8 |
| Face-to-face contact is the most important arena of reputation formation | 5 |
| Municipal bureaucracy becomes human through service production | 5 |

### The Role of Communication in Reputation Management

<p>| Communication is needed to bring up the positive features of Kerava | 5 |
| Communication is needed to provide factual information | 5 |
| Communication should be used as a tool for supporting the operational strategy | 6 |
| Purposeful communication has emerged in Kerava during the last couple of decades | 5 |
| There is a lack of resources in communication | 4 |
| Communication is always perceived as insufficient by stakeholders, no matter what | 3 |
| Effective reputational communication requires communication professionals | 4 |
| Reputation can be influenced with communication but not constructed with it | 5 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cooperation and competition</th>
<th>Kerava’s communication has lacked coherent strategy (now is more strategic)</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local cooperation between municipalities should be reached for</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There is competition between close-range municipalities</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One’s success is not another’s loss; not a zero-sum game</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles of reputation management</td>
<td>The mayor is the most visible actor in reputation management</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The mayor and the political leaders together are the most important actors in reputation management</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employees encountering customers face-to-face are the most important</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chief of communication has a supportive, impersonal role</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Managers have their own reputations that are distinctive</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal reputation of managers affects Kerava’s reputation</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The role of municipal personnel in reputation construction</td>
<td>The personnel is mostly unaware of Kerava’s strategy</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stakeholder’s experiences from the municipality’s services are the most important factor in reputation formation</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inability to work together affects reputation negatively</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stability and flexibility</td>
<td>Kerava should express stability in basic conduct</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kerava should be flexible in ‘lighter’ operation</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The stability of political power</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coherence in operation</td>
<td>Kerava is known for its contentious nature in policy-making</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independent crafts make coherent reputation strategy difficult</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coherent reputation management is needed</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complexity of organization makes full coherence in strategy impossible</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reputation strategy should include very general elements and people should be able to apply to them differently</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reputation is not much considered in operation</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inability to work together affects reputation negatively</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values and social responsibility</td>
<td>Kerava operates according to certain values</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A municipality can express values</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transparency is a basis for a good reputation</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transparency makes reputation management more difficult</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bureaucracy is problematic in terms of values</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing publicity</td>
<td>Negative impulses should not be suppressed</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Municipal governance should be made more legible for people</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participating in public discussion is about providing facts and correcting misinformation</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Score1</td>
<td>Score2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different channels of communication are quite well utilized in Kerava</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reputation management has spread out from cabinets</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>being proactive helps publicity management</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerava should try to manage the social media by proactively initiating and participating in discussions</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The municipal organization of Kerava is unprepared for social media becoming a central arena for discussion</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>publicity has become more difficult to control</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalists draw a false impression about Kerava</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unprofessional journalism affects Kerava’s reputation negatively</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerava should focus on creating ways of reciprocal discussion for stakeholders</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2: The Question Structure

1. The characteristics of Kerava’s reputation and municipal reputation in general

- How do you perceive the reputation of public sector (if public sector is thought of as a collective actor)?
- How do you perceive the reputation of public officials / politicians / other actors of the municipal governance?
- How do you perceive Kerava’s reputation?
- How does Kerava’s reputation relate to reality?
  - Is the reality better than the reputation or vice versa?
- From which factors is Kerava’s reputation formed?
- What is Kerava’s identity?
  - Is this identity communicated? How?
- What kind of values is Kerava’s operation based on?
  - Are these values communicated? How?
  - How do these values appear in the municipality’s conduct?
- What makes Kerava unique?
- From which factors do you believe Kerava’s municipal reputation is formed in the minds of its central stakeholders?
  - How about in the minds of people in other municipalities?
- How far-reaching do you believe Kerava’s municipal reputation is?

2. Vision and estimations regarding the development of Kerava’s reputation

- What does municipal reputation mean for you?
  - What elements does it consist of?
- How do you see that reputation construction in public organizations differs from reputation construction in private businesses?
  - What resemblances do you see?
  - How much does economic perspective determine the conduct of Kerava?
- Which goals have steered the selection of communicative policies in Kerava?
- If Kerava had a reputation strategy that was separate from communication strategy, what would be the basic messages in it?
- What kind of a reputation do you wish Kerava had? In which direction should it be developed?
- How has Kerava’s reputation developed over time? How do you believe it will develop in the future?
- What is / would be the central gain of a good reputation for Kerava?
  - What about the disadvantage of a bad reputation?
- Is good reputation rather born out of continuity or readiness for change?

3. Reputation formation in encounters with stakeholders

- In what kinds of interaction situations is a municipal reputation born?
  - Direct and indirect encounters?
- Do you believe that Kerava’s current reputation (as depicted) steers the basis for interaction situations between inhabitants and municipal organization? How?
  - How do customers position themselves towards encounters?
- What do you believe is the most important stakeholder group in terms of reputation formation?
  - Who does the municipality aim to keep happy?
- How does the municipality encounter the inhabitants of Kerava? What are the preconditions for operation?
- How are the encounters between the municipal organization and inhabitants supported with communication?
  - The communicative problem: The municipality functions but the inhabitants are unaware of that?
- How openly does Kerava communicate its values?
- How openly do/did you communicate your values as a part of Kerava’s reputation management?
- What do you think is the average position of the inhabitants of Kerava towards their home municipality?
- Which groups among inhabitants are most central for Kerava?
- Who do you believe is the most important representative of the municipality in terms of reputation formation?
- What is the role of the media? How do the media create direct or indirect encounters? How do the media generate reputation formation?
  - Encounters with reporters?
  - Are the media truthful in generating Kerava’s reputation?

4. The communicative relationship between Kerava and its stakeholders

- How would you describe the current state of Kerava’s communication?
  - Is it effective?
  - Is it invested enough?
  - Are stakeholders reached?
- What do you believe are the most important stakeholder groups of Kerava?
  - By what means does the municipal organization construct relations to its most important stakeholder groups?
- How does the municipal organization communicate to its inhabitants?
- How is the managerial culture of Kerava transmitted to its inhabitants?
  - The integrity, honesty and responsibility of the management board?
  - The professionalism and expertise of the management board?
  - The ability to cooperate between politicians and public officials?
- How much do the opinions of the inhabitants steer the operation of the municipal organization?
- In what kinds of arenas do the municipal organization and inhabitants communicate to one another? Are some of these arenas especially important?
- How is the reciprocity between the municipal organization and its inhabitants supported?
  - Technological tools?
- How do you position yourself towards the communication that originates from the inhabitants?
  - Private communication and public communication?
- What differences are there in communication with different stakeholder groups?
- How does Kerava support the activity of its inhabitants?
  - Finance? Cooperation? What else?
- How ethical do you think Kerava’s operation is? How does it appear and how is it communicated?
- How would you describe the optimal communicative relationship between a municipality and its central stakeholders?
  - Are inhabitants thought of as customers or constituents?
  - How does this vision compare to the current situation?
- How important do you think a functioning communicative relationship between a municipality and its stakeholders is?
- How long-term/short-term do you believe the changes in relations between a municipality and its inhabitants are?
- Can the inhabitants of Kerava be addressed as a one single focus group of communication?
- Are private and public communications as important in the maintenance of a functioning relationship with stakeholders? If not, which one is emphasized?
- How is publicity managed in Kerava?
- Is Kerava’s operation transparent for the inhabitants? How does it appear?
- What is communality in Kerava?
  - How does Kerava support that?
- Does the political nature of the municipal organization influence the way that stakeholders are addressed? How?
  - Are unpleasant policies communicated in a certain way?
- How do you perceive the media’s role as a stakeholder group of the municipal organization?
  - Customer? Collaborator? Something else?
5. Reputation management

- Does Kerava have a reputation strategy? What does it include?
- How do you see your own role in Kerava’s reputation formation?
- How do you see the role of communication in reputation formation?
- Whose responsibility is Kerava’s reputation management?
- How do you believe that Kerava’s reputation would emerge if the municipal organization would not try to influence it at all?
- Can municipal reputation be influenced with mere communication?
- How consistent is reputation management in Kerava’s municipal organization?
  o Does the whole personnel support the reputational strategy?
  o Is the whole personnel aware of Kerava’s reputational goals?
- What elements does Kerava emphasize as it distributes or creates images of itself?
  o Mental conceptions vs. concrete elements?
  o Economic perspective? Green values? Service Production?
  o Core messages?
- How truthful (reality-based) do you believe Kerava’s reputation construction is?
  o How important do you believe truthfulness is?
- How does the production of municipal services support Kerava’s reputation?
  o Which factors does Kerava emphasize regarding service production?
- How much are Kerava’s reputation construction and branding based on mental imagery? How much are they based on tangible/concrete elements?
- Is there a competitive aspect to Kerava’s reputation construction? If there is, how does it appear?
- How should Kerava react to the public discussion regarding itself?
  o e.g. the social media?
- Does Kerava have an organizational story? What is it like?
  o How is the story constructed?
- How does the HR policy of Kerava support reputation construction?
  o How are employees regarded?
  o The level of engagement?

6. Reputation and everyday-conduct of the municipality

- How much is reputation considered in making policies regarding Kerava’s operation?
- How does the praxis of Kerava’s municipal organization support reputational strategies?
- How is Kerava oriented towards the future?
  o How does this appear in the reputational strategy?
- Which broader societal developments steer the operation of Kerava’s municipal organization?
- Do you experience the transparent nature of municipal governance as a positive or negative factor for Kerava’s reputation?
  o A challenge or an opportunity?
  o How openly does Kerava position itself towards different stakeholder groups?
- How are long-term operation and flexible image construction balanced in Kerava’s reputation strategy?