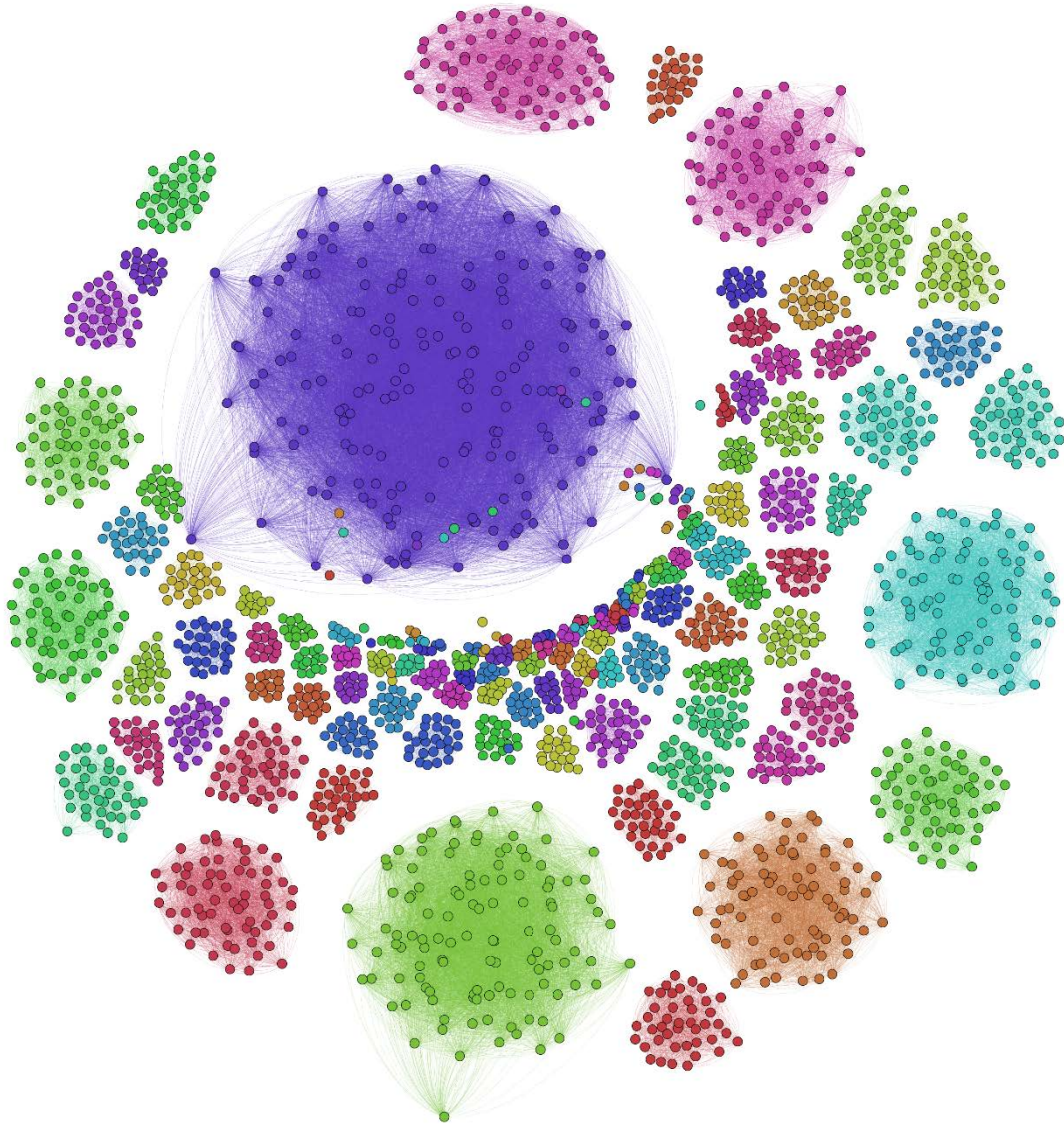


Collective Empowerment through Local Memory Websites



Balancing between group interest and common good

Mike de Kreek

2016

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Collective Empowerment through Local Memory Websites

Balancing between group interest and common good

Collectief empowerment via online buurtgeheugens

Balanceren tussen groepsbelang en gemeenschappelijk goed

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Prof.dr. S. L. Reijnders

Overige leden: Prof.dr. H. C. Dibbits
Dr. J. C. Hermes
Prof.dr. F. M. G. de Jong

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1. Introduction and outline

The research in this dissertation explores the social significance of local memory websites. These websites are part of a contemporary “memory boom” which is related to the rise of the World Wide Web and social networking technologies (Hoskins, 2011). Following these developments, an increasing number of people are collecting and sharing their memories online, whether on dedicated memory websites or on broad social networking websites. A considerable part of these online platforms concern memories of particular places and experiences in neighbourhoods. As such, they form a rather new social phenomenon: local memory websites (Garde-Hansen, Hoskins, & Reading, 2009; Stillman & Johanson, 2007; Worcman & Garde-Hansen, 2016). The online memories are mostly made by residents and consist of video, audio, photos or text and combinations thereof. Sharing memories online often involves the possibility for visitors to leave comments on each single contribution. People of all ages are involved in these initiatives and may even start their own local memory websites. The underlying aims of these platforms range from preserving impressions of the past to connecting residents in the present.

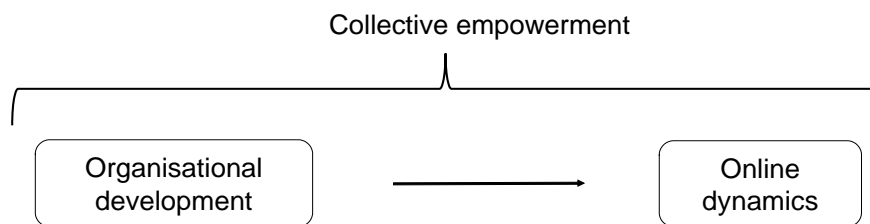
Local memory websites offer both academic and practical challenges as the following example illustrates. Working towards an exhibition about Amsterdam East in 2003, the Amsterdam Historical Museum (which changed its name to Amsterdam Museum in 2011) initiated a website called “the Memory of East”. After its closing date, the residents who had been involved wanted to continue collecting memories online, a wish that was acknowledged by the museum. However, apart from the burden continuing the professional support of the residents, the historical value of the memories remained a point of discussion in the museum at least until 2010 (van Eekeren, 2012). At the same time, the museum recognised the social value of the website which grew steadily over the years in terms of its content and interaction. These considerations led to the museum’s decision to continue hosting the website, but also to transfer the responsibility for the Memory of East to the group of participating residents in 2010. That group of residents became very active generating more new memories and comments than ever before. However, the total number of people involved in the website decreased and the published memories mainly covered a limited set of topics relevant to the small group that stayed. For some members of the group this led to questions about the social value of the website for the neighbourhood as a whole. Despite one of the aims of the site being to contribute to feelings of belonging for all residents, they assumed that many people were not reached and that their topics were not recollected. Consequently, a second growing concern was how the group’s efforts could be organised in such a way that the social value would improve for people beyond those already involved.

The developments of the Memory of East indicate two theoretical issues that concern local memory websites in general. Firstly, the Memory of East’s online activity about a limited set of topics is regarded as having been successful from the perspective of the group of actual participants, but unsuccessful in terms of the neighbourhood as a whole. Presumably, this tension between core-group and wider community interest is present in various degrees within local memory websites in general. Secondly, the withdrawal of the museum and the take-over by a reduced group of residents is likely to have influenced the websites’ character in terms of decreasing both online participation and the number of topics covered. This suggests a relation between the organisational developments and the online dynamics of local memory websites.

Both issues are well-known phenomena in empowerment theory and research. Empowerment is both a theoretical model and a value orientation about improving and balancing quality of life on the personal, group and community levels (Rappaport, 1987). This entails an interrelatedness of personal, group and community efforts and interests. Consequently, empowerment theory consists of both processes and outcomes (Zimmerman,

2000). In the example of the Memory of East we see organisational developments influencing online outcomes on collective levels, i.e. the group of involved participants and the entire neighbourhood community.

The foregoing leads to the conceptual model, depicted in Figure 1, that steers the research in this dissertation. It shows that the relation between the organisational development and the online dynamics of local memory websites will be studied through the lens of collective empowerment. More specifically, the issue of tensions between group and community interests that might arise through the online dynamics is translated into empirical Question 1: What collective empowerment do the online dynamics express? The relation between organisational characteristics and online dynamics is further empirically studied by means of Question 2: How does the organisational development influence the online dynamics?



1. What collective empowerment do the online dynamics express?
2. How does the organisational development influence the online dynamics?

Figure 1: Conceptual model

The currently available literature about empowerment and local memory websites does not provide an adequate response to the practical and academic challenges described. Although the available studies present the online nature of local memory websites as a key driving force of empowerment on collective levels, empirical research of their online data is still scarce (Burgess, 2006; Hoskins, 2011). This dissertation is inspired by research in another context of user-generated content which focuses on collective aspects of online participatory culture on YouTube (Burgess & Green, 2009). In addition, when it comes to analysing local memory websites for their empowerment processes and outcomes on collective levels, adequate methods still need to be developed (Matthews & Sunderland, 2013). Suitable methods are found in the literature about organisational storytelling where narrative methods are applied for studying patterns in collectively construed discourse (Boje, 2001). Last but not least, the “ethics of memory work” required for capturing ordinary people’s memories with the current technologies are still being explored (Worcman & Garde-Hansen, 2016). Following Flybjerg’s work on “making social science matter”, the insights of this research are developed not only for academia, but also explicitly for and with the groups involved to enable them to construct their own ethics (Flyvbjerg, Landman, & Schram, 2012; Flyvbjerg, 2001). This way, the research in this dissertation contributes to the mentioned theoretical and practical gaps in the body of knowledge about local memory websites. The outline of the dissertation as a whole is as follows.

Chapter 2: New directions in research on local memory websites

In Chapter 2, a systematic review of the existing research (36 articles) about local memory websites shows that their social significance can be adequately described by the empowerment framework (de Kreek & van Zoonen, 2013b). More specifically, it results in an analytical model with concepts on the individual, group and community levels to which empirical findings can be related. In addition, the review reveals that while empowerment on

the individual and group levels has been empirically studied in these contexts, it has been based on data collected among physically present participants. The available literature also mentions the online nature of local memory websites as being crucial for empowerment, especially on the group and community levels. However, analyses of data representing the online dynamics on these websites are missing, because the websites studied are mostly static. This is explained by a strong focus in the literature reviewed on institutional initiatives for making short videos of local memories. I derive five tentative organisational dimensions by explaining how this focus leads to static websites with hardly any online activity.

Chapter 3: Mapping an emerging field: local memory websites

An important insight from a field study covering 80 websites in Chapter 3 is the considerable variation in terms of how local memory websites are organised (de Kreek & van Zoonen, 2013a). The five organisational dimensions from Chapter 2 are further concretised into various possible organisational characteristics for each dimension by means of a qualitative analysis. Apart from institutional initiatives, approximately one third of the field consists of residents' initiatives and one third consists initiatives by local associations. In addition, most contributions on local memory websites consist of pictures and texts. The online activity in terms of the yearly number of contributions (memories and comments) varies from zero (18 cases) to more than 100 (13 cases). Furthermore, based on a quantitative analysis, the field study offers insights into the relation between organisational characteristics and online activity. I argue that the influence of organisational characteristics goes beyond online activity and is crucial for how the broader online dynamics of a website, for example, the number of different online participants, develop.

Chapter 4: A narrative approach to empowerment within local memory websites

In the research design, developed in Chapter 4, the findings of the previous chapters are translated into two empirical questions for a double case study: 1) "What collective empowerment do the online dynamics express?" and 2) "How does the organisational development influence the online dynamics?". Apart from the Memory of East, another website, the "Memory of West", is studied as well. The Memory of West was initiated in Amsterdam New West in 2004, inspired by the Memory of East, which had started a year earlier. To bridge the gap between online dynamics and concepts on collective levels of empowerment, narrative methods for the study of organisational discourse are introduced. This leads to methods for an exploratory data analysis of two datasets covering more than ten years of online activity. The relation between organisational characteristics and patterns in online dynamics is described as a qualitative analysis of the former explaining relevant quantitative patterns in the latter. Finally, the cross-case analysis and quality control are described.

Chapters 5 and 6: Evolving empowerment in the Memory of East and the Memory of West

The case studies of the Memory of East and the Memory of West follow in Chapter 5 (de Kreek, 2014b) and Chapter 6, respectively. In Chapter 5, I iteratively explore possible relations between patterns in the data and concepts from the analytical model. This process results in the elaboration of three concepts: the variety in collective identity formation, the degree of social learning processes and the diversity in social network configurations. These concepts are related to three composite indicators in the online dynamics: online diversity, online activity and online participation, respectively. Next, the patterns in the indicators are analysed and related to the development of the Memory of East along the five organisational dimensions. Finally, in the conclusions of Chapter 5, the social significance of the relation between the organisational development and collective empowerment is described, which

brings in a fourth concept, that of inclusion. Having established the relevant concepts, indicators and relations in Chapter 5, I then apply them in the analysis of the Memory of West in Chapter 6, which has a similar outline.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and discussion

Chapter 7 starts with a recapitulation of what has preceded. Then, following the analytical approach described in Chapter 4, the two empirical questions are revisited by comparing the findings of the single case studies. The growing independence of the Memory of East led to a website containing strong social capital but underrepresenting many of the district's inhabitants. The core business of the Memory of West to broadly cover neighbourhoods and residents resulted in an inclusive website, but one with weaker social capital. Then I turn to the social significance of the two local memory websites studied. I first illustrate how the different positions of each case on five organisational dimensions explain the differences in their social significance in terms of collective empowerment on the group level. Then I relate this to the social significance of both websites for their respective communities as a whole. In order to elaborate the social significance of local memory websites in general, I discuss the conclusions of the previous section against the background of the literature review (Chapter 2) and the field study (Chapter 3). This also leads to methodological suggestions for further research and theory development about local memory websites. Concluding, I reflect on my role as a researcher who operated from within the communities of the Memory of West and the Memory of East. This position makes it possible to have an impact on them in terms of shifting practice wisdom, which is why I advocate participatory research in these contexts.

2. New directions in research on local memory websites¹

2.1. Introduction

Local memory websites offer local residents a platform on which to collect and share their memories about particular places or experiences in their neighbourhoods and districts. The digital memories consist of audio recordings, videos, pictures or text. A prominent case in the body of literature is the Sharing Stories project,² developed in the Kelvin Grove Urban Village (KGUV) in Brisbane, a former non-residential area that hosted military barracks, a university and indigenous people. As part of the redevelopment process, residents from the surrounding neighbourhoods were involved in a series of professionally led workshops resulting in short videos recording stories of what they knew about the KGUV's past. Another frequently cited example in the body of literature is the Memory of East project³ in Amsterdam, in which, as part of an online and offline exhibition that it was preparing about the eastern district of the city, the Amsterdam Museum trained residents from the district's neighbourhoods in the collection of memories of local everyday life. Volunteers interviewed other residents or went to group meetings to collect stories together. After the exhibition closed in 2003, an active group of volunteers notified the museum that they wanted to continue collecting memories and presenting them online (Ernst, 2006) and have continued to do so to the present.

In the digital age, it is not surprising that researchers and professionals note the importance of such local memory websites for the well-being of a neighbourhood and its individual residents. Books such as *Constructing and Sharing Memory: Community Informatics, Identity and Empowerment* (Stillman & Johanson, 2007) and *The Participatory Museum* (Simon, 2010) discuss innovative interventions that combine new media, memory and locality to solve problems that often arise in modern cities, with their high diversity and density. In doing so, these and other authors mention a wide range of effects that ultimately foster a stronger local community. We see two problems in the research within this promising field of intervention. Firstly, the set of concepts used to theorise about the effects of these interventions remain fragmented, but could be combined to become the building blocks of a comprehensive view on the benefits of this emerging field. Although the term empowerment is used in some of the reviewed articles, here we will address the following question: Can the empowerment framework be applied to analyse interventions using local memory websites? Secondly, and partly arising from the first issue, it appears difficult to identify which of the claimed effects have been substantiated by empirical findings and which have been merely theorised on the basis of some kind of aggregation – if any. This leads to a secondary question for this chapter: How have the interventions been studied?

This chapter will address these questions by systematically reviewing the current research on actual interventions using local memory websites. The first section will describe how we found and selected relevant articles. In addition, it will explain what these articles have in common in terms of their research approaches and how we analysed them with respect to the concepts the authors applied to describe the effects of the interventions. Based on our analysis, the second section proposes an overall framework with concepts on three levels. Furthermore, we illustrate this by describing in concrete terms how the concepts from one specific case fit into this model. The third section demonstrates how our findings

¹ This chapter was published in the *Journal of Social Intervention* (de Kreek & van Zoonen, 2013b).

² The Sharing Stories project and its successors ran roughly from 2006 to 2009. The digital memories were online until 2011 on the website <http://www.kgurbanvillage.com.au/sharing>.

³ Here we use a translation of “Het Geheugen van Oost”: <http://www.geheugenvanoost.nl>.

map onto the empowerment framework and provides some examples of empowerment outcomes that remained implicit in the articles reviewed. The final section will conclude with a discussion of the limitations of the existing body of knowledge, proposing two necessary directions for further research.

2.2. Local memory websites as interventions

We began by conducting a comprehensive literature search using Google Scholar, with the search terms “community memory”, “social memory”, “urban memory”, “local memory” and “cultural memory” derived from an article describing the discipline of memory studies (Roediger & Wertsch, 2008, p. 19). We also made a short list of additional constraints that we could apply, depending on the term used. For geographical constraints we used “local”, “neighbourhood”, “district” and “communal”; for constraints that pointed towards the involvement of the internet we used “new media”, “online” and “website”; for variations on the memory aspect we used “narratives”, “storytelling”, “life writing” and “stories”. To select relevant articles from the search results we applied the following criteria:

1. The article had to describe a study on an initiative involving the collection of local memories online.
2. Each digital memory had to be a non-fictional expression regarding a place or an experience in the neighbourhood.
3. The initiative had to have a dedicated website containing at least 20 memories.
4. At least five residents had to be involved in the creation of the digital memories.
5. The initiative had to be limited to a particular neighbourhood, district, city or town.

An initial search and selection led to a set of four articles. For each one, we performed a backward search via the references used and a forward search using the “referenced by” function. We also checked other publications by the authors of the selected articles. The end result consisted of 36 articles, 16 of which related to the well-researched KGUV case in Brisbane and 20 of which described 11 other – sometimes multiple – case studies. Nearly all of the 36 articles had four things in common. Firstly, almost all of them involved action research approaches.⁴ Although this research strategy has different definitions (Foth, 2006a), it always aims at changing some aspect of reality by creating or facilitating an intervention into that reality. The researcher and the participants work closely together, which empowers the latter to act and provides the former with knowledge about how to intervene. Secondly, the overall aim of the interventions described in each of the selected articles is formulated in terms of “the development of healthy and sustainable neighbourhoods” (Klaebe & Foth, 2006, p. 2). Thirdly, in all but one case,⁵ the intervention is primarily characterised by a method called Digital Storytelling (DST). This method was developed by the Center for Digital Storytelling in 1994 and provides detailed guidelines for making short videos or “digital stories” (Lambert, 2002). Finally, the data analysed in the action research projects described were mainly gathered offline. Only two of the articles offer a systematic analysis of the online memories and interaction associated with them (Burgess, 2007; Thumim, 2009).

Against this background, we conducted a rigorous qualitative analysis of the literature to identify and organise the concepts used to explain the effects of these interventions. Our analysis resembles the hermeneutics of the coding process in grounded theory (Bryman, 2008, pp. 542–543). Processes of constant comparison, saturation and three phases of

⁴ Three articles were exceptions (Carpentier, 2009; Poletti, 2011; Thumim, 2009).

⁵ The one exception was the CLIO project (Ringas et al., 2011).

coding are important characteristics of this approach. In the following it will become clear how we applied these processes.

We decided to start by analysing the cluster of 16 articles on the Brisbane KGUV case, based on the assumption that it would cover a large part of the body of knowledge on local memory websites. The first phase involved a process of close reading and open coding of text elements while constantly comparing them as indicators of concepts in development. The result was a list of more than 47 concepts that differed in terms of their level of abstraction. The second phase consisted of axial coding based on our research notes, as well as a second reading of the articles, which divided a remaining set of 39 codes into three levels of abstraction. For example, digital creativity was coded as barely abstract, inclusion as moderately abstract, and cultural citizenship as highly abstract. In the third phase, the remaining concepts were reconsidered in a process of selective coding, once again by re-examining the literature and our research notes. This resulted in the identification of three meta-concepts, each of which had a set of six intermediate concepts more or less related to it. A set of 14 directly observable concepts was noted to be largely common to all the articles on the KGUV project. Although the final codes seemed to have reached a level of saturation at this point, we further analysed 11 key articles⁶ on the other case studies, one by one. The analysis of the first articles led to some small adjustments in the terminology for a few concepts, but no further adjustment was required for the later articles. After analysing the ninth article we concluded that the resulting code tree had become saturated and as such was suitable for further modelling.

2.3. Modelling the intervention effects into a framework

We distilled micro, meso and macro levels of analysis from our coding results, a model of which is provided in Figure 2. The concepts closest to the empirical observations form the micro level. These concepts were used to describe the direct individual effects of being involved in collecting local memories online. In turn, these effects were further developed into intermediate abstract concepts – forming the meso level – describing effects for larger groups in the community. The macro level contains three meta-concepts – community memory, cultural citizenship and community capacity – used to explain and frame varying selections of the lower level concepts.

Although the literature on KGUV dominates the body of research on interventions using local memory websites, the framework is based on all of the articles reviewed. This implies that all of these articles can be visualised with the framework. This is illustrated by two examples plotted in Figure 2: A1 (Ringas, Christopoulou, & Stefanidakis, 2011) and A2 (Copeland & Miskelly, 2010). The aim of the intervention described in A1 was to facilitate community memory in new ways in order to “retrieve lost ambience in urban sites due to the constant change of the physical environment as time goes by” (Ringas et al., 2011, p. 327). The article explicitly related the intervention to community memory, combining a rather small subset of all the concepts available in the two inner circles. The intervention in A2 aimed to increase community capacity by applying “digital storytelling as a cross-boundary method for community building and activism” (Copeland & Miskelly, 2010, p. 192). The effects pursued were discussed in the context of a rather large subset of concepts at the meso and macro levels.

⁶ These 11 key articles were selected from the 20 articles on other case studies because they were either the most recent or they were peer-reviewed (see Appendix A).

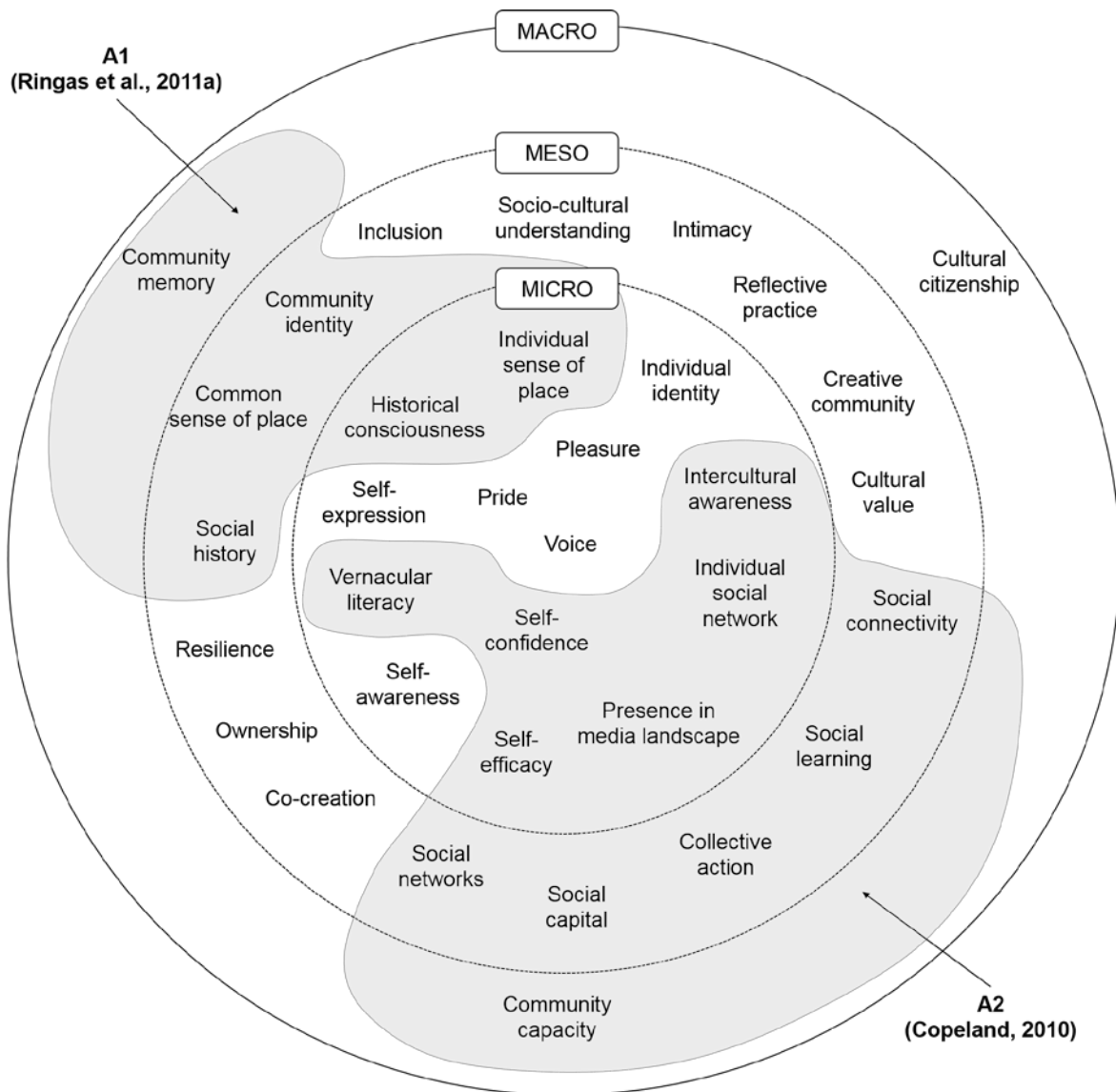


Figure 2: The levels of analysis for the effects of interventions using local memory websites

Obviously, each article in our empirical corpus had its own focus, as the reported intervention had or still has its own specific aims. However, the basic process was similar in all interventions, with residents participating offline and online, producing and sharing stories based on their memories of the neighbourhood. Thus, with the right ingredients, an intervention using a local memory website could have effects that relate to all of the concepts on all levels within the framework. As the KGUV intervention was the only case for which this was claimed in the literature, in the following section we use the literature on this specific case to illustrate how the effects are related within and across the levels of analysis. The three meta-concepts on the macro level will be our starting point.

2.3.1. Constructing community memory

About half of the articles selected on the KGUV project describe the online collection of local memories in terms of the construction of “community memory”, which is defined as “the collective representation of past events and experiences that leave traces in the appearance of the built environment and contribute to a shared socio-cultural understanding of residents in a given locale” (Klaebe & Foth, 2007, p. 145).

Prior to the urban development process, residents from the surrounding neighbourhoods made short videos about the KGUV's past in a series of professionally led workshops. These started with participants' recollecting and sharing personal memories about the area, which reinforced their connection to KGUV and contributed to their sense of place (Foth, Klaebe, & Hearn, 2008). By publically recounting these stories related to their personal past, as well as to the past of other people and the past of the area, the storytellers were assisted in the construction of their identity in the present (Burgess, Foth, & Klaebe, 2006; Klaebe, 2006). Furthermore, the stories tended to make references to important events that had affected the area and in this way reinforced a historical consciousness among the participants (Burgess & Klaebe, 2009; Klaebe, Foth, Burgess, & Bilandzic, 2007). Being involved in storytelling workshops also offered the participants a pleasant opportunity to recount what they knew about the area to a rather new audience. Sharing and comparing these memories was reported to be one of the most engaging aspects of these workshops (Burgess & Klaebe, 2009). When the stories contained elements of the storyteller's residential history and sociocultural heritage, this also raised the listener's awareness of differences in background and values (Burgess & Klaebe, 2009; Foth et al., 2008).

In this way, the collective set of memories about KGUV grew among the participants in the workshops (Klaebe et al., 2007; Klaebe, 2008). In addition, the co-created videos represented the participants' perspectives on the site's past, giving them a sense of ownership in relation to the creation of its history. Locals from the surrounding area could easily identify with these perspectives because "the incorporation of ordinary 'voices' can facilitate the affective communication of ... history to a broader public" (Burgess & Klaebe, 2009, p. 164). Thanks to this emotional element, the stories provoked discussion, reflection and enthusiasm among the viewers when shown at organised public events and to spontaneous micro-publics (Burgess & Klaebe, 2009; Klaebe, 2006, 2008). It also meant that the collection of videos attracted more traffic than any other content on the KGUV website (Burgess & Klaebe, 2009; Klaebe et al., 2007), which suggested it would be an accessible and engaging reference point for future residents (Klaebe, Adkins, Foth, & Hearn, 2009).

At a later stage, the new residents moving into KGUV were also involved in sharing memories (Klaebe et al., 2007; Klaebe, 2008). Among other things, they were invited to translate their own sociocultural heritage and past residential history into narrative paths mapped onto a Google Map interface. These stories offered the new residents insight into the variety of their backgrounds in terms of sociocultural heritage and residential history (Klaebe et al., 2009; Klaebe, 2008). In addition, some identified with the online stories because they described the anxiety they felt on arriving in the new community (Klaebe et al., 2007). Contributors also discovered crossroads and analogies in each other's history lines, which contributed to mutual recognition and even instigated personal meetings (Klaebe et al., 2009). On a collective level, these memories contributed to a better understanding between the neighbours and of the developing neighbourhood as a whole (Klaebe et al., 2007; Klaebe & Foth, 2007). With respect to this collective level, the KGUV research drew on Dolores Hayden's book, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History*, which includes creative aspects of local preservation (as cited in Foth et al., 2008). These aspects lie at the basis of the theoretical perspective on local memory websites discussed below.

2.3.2. Practising cultural citizenship

The community that emerges from an online collection of resident-created videos is claimed to host a practice of cultural citizenship. Burgess and her colleagues subscribe to Joke Hermes' view of cultural citizenship to a great extent, which she defines as "the process of bonding and community building, and reflection on that bonding, that is implied in partaking of the text-related practices of reading, consuming, celebrating, and criticising offered in the

realm of (popular) culture” (as cited in Burgess et al., 2006, p. 4). However, the transformation of popular culture caused by the growth of user-generated content in new media contexts forces Burgess et al. to “take into account the interweaving of everyday life, creative content production and social life that are characteristic of digital culture” (Burgess et al., 2006, p. 4). In addition, they specify the text-related practices as “everyday active participation in a networked, highly heterogeneous and open cultural public sphere” (Burgess et al., 2006, p. 5). Moulding the memories about the KGUV area into short videos led to a blending of informal and formal learning, resulting in what Burgess calls “vernacular literacies”:

They include not only “learned” skills, like the ability to conceive and execute an effective narrative and use a computer, but also the more intuitive modes of collecting and arranging textual elements (as for scrapbooking), the oral performance of personal stories (learned through everyday social interaction), and the combination of sonic and visual elements to create televisual flow (learned through the consumption of television, film and animation). (Burgess, 2006, p. 210)

The creators enjoyed both the process of engaging in these kinds of self-expression and the final products themselves (Burgess, 2007). By publishing them proudly online, the participants gained both access to and a presence in the media landscape. This contributed to a growth in their self-awareness (Foth, 2006c) and self-confidence (Klaebe & Foth, 2006). As self-expressions, their stories had an authentic character: “[f]or the storyteller, the digital story is a means of ‘becoming real’ to others, on the basis of shared experience and affective resonances. Many of the stories are, quite literally, touching” (Burgess, 2006, p. 211).

From the perspective of the viewer, the stories contained certain effective and affective qualities, which explained their strength in social communication. Firstly, especially with respect to videos, the personal voice-over led to a sense of intimacy. Secondly, familiarity with certain lexical elements such as stereotypical themes, clichés, nostalgia and sentimentality, gave the stories the power of social connectivity. Thirdly, the sense of authentic self-expression that was conveyed by these familiar lexical items lowered the barriers to empathy. Finally, these stories claimed agency for ordinary people in making sense of their lives within their social circumstances and in working out what “living a good life” means (Burgess, 2006).

What Burgess calls the “even access to ‘voice’ in the media-landscape” (Burgess, 2006, p. 201) implies that the participants became involved in new practices with an important democratic potential. The intertwining of offline and online participation was based on cultural products that displayed multiple “modes of discourse, including everyday life, affect and pleasure” (Burgess et al., 2006, p. 3). In this environment, people negotiated local matters of personal concern that might not relate to a narrow view on democratic participation at first sight, but that in fact contain “the most powerful modes of citizen engagement” (Burgess et al., 2006, p. 3). According to Burgess, this follows Jürgen Habermas’ definitions of “episodic” and “occasional publics”, but also introduces new public spheres with their own cultural value, in which there is little room for a popular culture that originates from mass media or dominant institutional discourses (as cited in Burgess et al., 2006). The resident discourses that develop through a practice of cultural citizenship play an important role in determining how a community steers itself towards the future. This is the third perspective on initiatives using local memory websites in the KGUV literature.

2.3.3. Growing community capacity

In the KGUV area, where new residents had only recently become neighbours, the memory project is claimed to have contributed crucial elements to the growth of community capacity, which is defined as “the awareness and ability of a community to effectively use their assets” (Foth, 2006b, p. 314). As Foth (2006b, p. 314) puts it, in a context which was characterised by “the absence of an established community culture and history, neighbourhood community building efforts ha[d] to focus on cultivating the assets, skills and values that lay dormant in individual residents”. The KGUV literature describes this in terms of the participants showing their digital memories in the context of family, friends or roommates, which tended to be popular and increased the creators’ pride (Burgess & Klaebe, 2009; Burgess, 2006). An important side effect for some participants was that their knowledge about and attitude towards new media shifted to become more positive (Burgess, 2006). During the production, the participants experimented with making independent choices about content and form for their future online expressions. This tended to demonstrate their growing agency in certain situations and helped them to develop a voice (Burgess et al., 2006; Burgess & Klaebe, 2009; Klaebe, 2006). In addition, meeting new people at the workshops and on the website (Burgess, 2006; Foth, 2006b) enlarged the participants’ social network, which in turn strengthened their sense of belonging to a community (Klaebe & Foth, 2006).

In this context, the participants were encouraged to improve their self-efficacy in general and “to gain a better appreciation of their capacity to bring about change within their local community” in particular (Klaebe & Foth, 2007, p. 150). This appreciation grew when the digital memories not only informed the representations of space during the redevelopment planning phase, but also fed back into the ongoing development process and the discourses about the KGUV (Klaebe et al., 2009). In this way, the urban planners and residents became a co-creative community in the urban design process:

The development of a discursive method to activate and embed rich, multivalent conceptions of the situated experience of the built environment (via multi-modal experiential narratives) in urban planning and design processes, offers the opportunity to move well beyond the conception of users as abstract/passive into a reality of a co-creative community. (Foth et al., 2008, p. 8)

In the KGUV case this discursive method was organised in the light of Barry Wellman’s claim that in the network society “the nature of the social ties people establish and maintain changes from what used to be door-to-door and place-to-place relationships to what are now person-to-person and role-to-role relationships” (as cited in Foth & Adkins, 2006, p. 118). The ties between people thereby become weaker and more egocentric, but the social connectedness they imply remains well developed. It was precisely this phenomenon that the narrative approach tapped into “via co-creation of content, and the use of locative media to reinstate ‘the local’ in the midst of the global” (Foth et al., 2008, p. 4).

Thus, residents might not have engaged in many dialogues with their neighbours, but they were clearly informally in touch with residents in the same locale. The social capital involved in such interactions is recognised by KGUV scholars (Foth, 2006a) and incorporated with the other aspects mentioned into what is called “a local learning infrastructure” by Foth et al. (2008) and “a communicative ecology” by Klaebe et al. (2009). In this environment, community members share memories and experiences in new social networks, through which they create their own discourse that favours collective action (Foth et al., 2008).

Having illustrated how the concepts in our framework manifest themselves as claimed effects in the theoretically fragmented literature on the KGUV case, the question arises of

whether and how the three levels of analysis we propose here are compatible with the empowerment framework.

2.4. Taking the empowerment framework as a comprehensive view

Empowerment is seen within the empowerment framework as a multilevel construct with the micro (individual), meso (group) and macro (community) levels influencing each other in the ongoing attempt to bring our lives, our organisations or groups, and our communities closer to our ideal (Peeters, 2012; Rappaport, 1987; Zimmerman, 2000). Obviously, this fits well with the three levels of analysis we distilled from the originally fragmented analysis of interventions using local memory websites in our empirical corpus of literature.

Although the term empowerment is used in the articles reviewed, it remains implicit as an analytical framework to approach the interventions studied. We will discuss some examples of incidental occurrences of the term to illustrate how a more explicit connection to one of the three levels of analysis could be made. In the literature, the term empowerment is sometimes used in the context of what we have called direct benefits for individual participants – the micro level – for example, the development of technical skills (Davis, 2011; Ferri, Mangiardi, & Pozzali, 2010; Klæbe et al., 2007; Shewbridge, 2007; Watkins & Tacchi, 2008) or the growth of self-efficacy (Davis, 2011; Klæbe & Foth, 2006; Thumim, 2009). At other times it relates to meso-level concepts such as inclusion by increasing the online presence of a certain underrepresented group in the cultural identity of a city (Lenstra & Alkalimat, 2012; Vos & Ketelaar, 2007). Finally, the growth of power is also articulated with respect to each of the three meta-concepts at the macro level. Firstly, in constructing community memory, residents present their own views online on how the past and present of a particular area should be represented for future use (Burgess & Klæbe, 2009; Ferri et al., 2010; Klæbe et al., 2009; Ringas et al., 2011). While these views do not replace the professional historical interpretations, they do extend the available reservoir of texts and interactions related to a certain locality. Moreover, this is a self-enforcing process, because these views are easily distributed online, and at the same time their authentic character invites other residents to participate in this process (Burgess, 2007; Ringas et al., 2011). Secondly, as a practice of cultural citizenship, people use local memory websites to creatively express their experiences of and opinions about the local culture. Alongside commercial popular culture and institutional discourses, these environments form a growing independent public sphere where meaning is negotiated (Burgess, 2006; Davis, 2011; Freidus & Hlubinka, 2002; Lenstra & Alkalimat, 2012; Shewbridge, 2007) and cultural value is judged by ordinary people. A final example on the macro level with respect to community capacity, is that community members share memories and experiences in new online social networks, creating their own discourse in favour of future collective action (Carpentier, 2009; Copeland & Miskelly, 2010; Foth et al., 2008; Thumim, 2009; Watkins & Tacchi, 2008). Again, this does not necessarily replace community-building professionals, although it does influence their profession because their work may shift towards facilitating a co-creative community (Klæbe et al., 2009).

These examples show that empowerment theory, with its three levels of analysis, can be an overall framework for analysing and framing interventions using local memory websites. In addition, we can see that the use of new media tools and the internet is considered an important driving force in the underlying argument for the empowerment process. More specifically, the use of online environments seems to provide continuity of access related to claims on the meso level and particularly on the macro level, where past, present and future become connected. While the digital memories that we create in the present “result from a combination of recall and desire, which in turn are incentives to

remodel our past and fashion our future” (van Dijck, 2007, p. 173), they also need to be available for interaction in the future.

2.5. The next step: further research

Despite the promising empowering processes on different levels, the studies reviewed only reveal an awareness of a limited kind of intervention using local memory websites. The claims about the effects are substantiated through data predominantly collected during interventions hosted by institutions that applied the method of digital storytelling to collect and produce digital memories.

The choice of digital storytelling has five consequences. Firstly, since many of the participants involved are unable to acquire the level of technical skill needed to make short films, professionals remain essential to their production (Burgess, 2006; Thumim, 2009). Secondly, although the professional is empathetic to the storylines coming from the participants, the institution he or she works for influences the content of the videos (Burgess, 2006; Carpentier, 2009; Thumim, 2009). Thirdly, the fixed notions of what a good and understandable digital story should consist of force participants to reflect in a certain way on a limited set of themes (Burgess, 2006; Poletti, 2011). Fourthly, the content produced often remains on the websites of the institutions, which means the intended public remains at a certain distance (Poletti, 2011). Finally, these websites are often static, which implies that online interaction is almost impossible and that online social networks are unable to emerge around the content (Burgess, 2006).

These five consequences explain why the claims in the literature are predominantly based on data gathered through face-to-face interactions. Observations during workshops, public screenings, focus groups and interviews obviously deliver the data for claims about intervention effects on the micro level. Although the internet plays a crucial role in the claims on the meso and macro levels, data from online participation is absent in the research substantiating these claims. Statistical insight into how often a story or website has been visited occasionally plays a role, but other data about online behaviour is lacking, because it simply does not exist. Without a certain level of autonomy in terms of making authentic content and an interactive platform for an active audience, problems emerge with respect to long-term participation, which Carpentier (2009) claims is due to the emphasis of these interventions on micro-participation to the detriment of macro-participation.

More autonomous initiatives by residents to collect local memories using other methods – including text or pictures – and to create an interactive website remain underexposed within the existing body of literature. Only one such case, *The Brisbanites*, has been studied by Burgess in the context of Flickr (Burgess et al., 2006). The members of this group spontaneously developed a process of combining and discussing the old and new cityscapes of Brisbane. They scanned and uploaded old photographs and also added new ones, all of which fuelled discussion related to the changes in the city, both online and offline. The level of autonomy in this case, the more accessible level of technical skill needed to contribute and the website’s affordances have all led to a community of practice that has been around since 2004.

To determine whether and how the claims of empowerment on the meso and macro levels can be empirically grounded, we must increase our insight into the dynamics of online interaction about digital memories within more autonomous groups such as *The Brisbanites*. However, before we start studying such cases, it is necessary to establish the exact composition of the field of local memory websites. It is important to have a clear understanding of the distribution of institutional and autonomous initiatives. Based on the issues discussed in relation to institutional contexts, we propose that the following categories

be used to describe a more diverse set of initiatives: the initiators, the aims, the methods of collecting and creating, the characteristics of the digital memories and the affordances of the websites involved.

3. Mapping an emerging field: local memory websites⁷

3.1. Taking local memory websites as empowering settings

In this chapter we map the field of local memory websites. These websites are platforms where residents collect their memories of particular places and experiences in their neighbourhoods. These digital memories consist of audio recordings, videos, pictures or texts. A prominent case in the academic literature about such websites is the Sharing Stories project,⁸ developed in the Kelvin Grove Urban Village (KGUV) in Brisbane, a former non-residential area that hosted military barracks, a university and indigenous people. As part of the redevelopment process, residents from the surrounding neighbourhoods were invited to a series of professionally led workshops to make short videos about their memories of KGUV's past (Klaebe & Foth, 2007). Another example is the Memory of East project⁹ in Amsterdam, in which the Amsterdam Museum trained residents from the neighbourhoods of the city's eastern district in how to collect memories of local everyday life. Neighbourhood volunteers interviewed other residents or went to group meetings to collect stories together. These online memories were part of a larger exhibition. After the exhibition closed in 2004, an active group of volunteers continued to collect and present online memories (Ernst, 2006).

In the academic literature about local memory websites, empowerment effects are claimed at three levels: for individuals, for groups and for the community as a whole (de Kreek & van Zoonen, 2013b). This fits in with the common notion of empowerment as a “multilevel construct” covering interdependent micro, meso and macro levels (Maton, 2008; Rappaport, 1987; Zimmerman, 2000). On the micro level, the benefits for the individual involved in creating digital memories are, for example, the development of technical skills (Klaebe et al., 2007) or the growth of self-efficacy (Klaebe & Foth, 2006). On the meso level we see examples of empowerment like the inclusion in the media landscape of a certain underrepresented group in the cultural identity of a city (Vos & Ketelaar, 2007). An example on the macro level is how residents, by collectively presenting their memories and experiences online, become an authority – in addition to memory institutions – in terms of how their environment should be represented for future use (Burgess & Klaebe, 2009; de Kreek & Oosterbroek, 2013; Ferri et al., 2010; Klaebe et al., 2009). In general, the use of new media tools and the internet is considered an important driving force for the empowering processes described in the existing literature. More specifically, long-term online participation on local memory websites is claimed to provide the crucial mechanisms for empowerment on the meso and especially the macro levels, where past, present and future become connected.

Despite the promising empowering processes on different levels, the existing studies only show insight into a limited kind of local memory websites. The claims are substantiated through data collected predominantly during initiatives hosted by institutions that rely on the method of “Digital Storytelling” (i.e. creating short movies)¹⁰ to collect and produce digital memories. This limitation has two important consequences (de Kreek & van Zoonen, 2013b). The first and obvious effect is that more autonomous initiatives of residents collecting local memories online with other methods – including texts or pictures – remain underexposed in

⁷ This chapter was published in the *2013 CIRN Prato Conference Proceedings* (de Kreek & van Zoonen, 2013a).

⁸ See Case 15 in Appendix B.

⁹ See Case 1 in Appendix B.

¹⁰ “‘Digital storytelling’ is a workshop-based practice in which people are taught to use digital media to create short audio-video stories, usually about their own lives” (Hartley & McWilliam, 2009, p. 3).

the academic literature. Thus, we lack insight into the wider presence of these websites, the way they emerge and how they are organised. The second consequence is that the claims on the meso and macro levels of empowerment have hardly been substantiated with empirical data on online behaviour, because the specific studied institutional cases have not generated considerable levels of online participation. Thus, there is a deficit in our understanding of the online activity and participation related to the way local memory websites are organised.

To improve the insights into this emerging field, we have examined a comprehensive set of local memory websites with respect to their organisational and participative aspects. We first develop the issues with online participation that are identified in the current academic literature into six analytical dimensions. Next, we show how we found and selected 80 cases of local memory websites and how we coded them for the six dimensions. We then explain the analytical techniques before we illustrate the most remarkable results of mapping the cases from the field, including three types of local memory websites. In the final part we arrive at conclusions in relation to the issues with online participation and we discuss further research.

3.2. Articulating the analytic dimensions

Having two purposes with our analysis – mapping the field and gaining insight into what influences online participation – we followed two steps to arrive at adequate dimensions. As a start, we adopted the categories that McWilliam applies in her mapping of the field of Digital Storytelling around the world (2009). These categories were host type, purpose, online presence, location, type of participant and sector of the programme. Next, we investigated the academic literature on local memory websites and related topics, looking for clues that influence online participation and that could contribute to our analytic dimensions. An ideal continuum in intensity of online participation, like on YouTube or Flickr, consists of a platform with adequate affordances and a context in which communities of practice can emerge that will autonomously create their own, authentic content as a means for social connection (Burgess & Green, 2009; Burgess, 2007; de Kreek, 2011; Kietzmann, Silvestre, McCarthy, & Pitt, 2012). However, institutionalised contexts and the method of Digital Storytelling have a number of disadvantages for participation that have been acknowledged by the present academic literature. Firstly, since many participants involved are unable to acquire the level of technical skills that are needed to make videos, professionals remain essential to their production (Burgess, 2006; Thumim, 2009). Secondly, although the professional is empathetic to the storylines coming from the participants, the aims of institution he or she works for influence the content of the videos (Burgess, 2006; Thumim, 2009). Moreover, in actual practice, most of the institutional local memory projects studied emphasised aims in terms of micro-participation to the detriment of macro-participation (Carpentier, 2009). Thirdly, the fixed notions of what a good and understandable digital story should consist of force participants to reflect in a certain way on a limited set of themes (Burgess, 2006; Poletti, 2011). Fourthly, the content produced often remains on the websites of the institutions, which creates a distance to the intended public (Poletti, 2011). Finally, these websites are often static, which implies that online interaction is almost impossible and that online social networks are unable to emerge around the content (Burgess, 2006).

Reconsidering these issues with respect to participation, we distilled the following final dimensions for our analysis: the initiating parties, the aims formulated on the website, the methods involved for collecting and creating memories, the desired characteristics of the digital memories, the affordances of the memory website and the level of online participation. Obviously, the context of parties involved can be of great influence, together with the chosen

methods to find and create digital memories. But also, the initiative's aims are important, because they can directly or indirectly affect the authenticity of the digital memories. In addition, the methods applied influence the sense of autonomy and the involvement of professionals. With respect to the desired characteristics of the digital memories, the format (e.g. video or text) influences the required skills, and thus the experience of autonomy. Furthermore, the decision about the period and the frame of the digital memories is an important factor to note, because this affects the authenticity of the content. Another important dimension to map consists of the websites' affordances, since this directly influences autonomy. The final dimension we decided to add is the level of online participation, determined by recording the number of contributions in the year prior to data collection. Before we turn to coding these dimensions for specific websites, we first explain how we collected 80 of them.

3.3. Finding and selecting local memory websites

The process of finding exemplary cases of local memory websites consisted of four parallel strategies. Firstly, we collected the cases studied in existing literature (de Kreek & van Zoonen, 2013b). Secondly, we searched the internet using terms like "my neighbo(u)rhood stories", "our town memory" and "the memory of X" in different languages. Thirdly, we asked colleagues and friends in our national and international network whether they knew of something that could be considered a local memory website. And fourthly, we snowballed from cases already found. We selected those cases that met the following criteria:

1. The website had to be part of an initiative to collect local memories online.
2. The invitation to contribute a digital memory had involve a non-fictional expression about a place or an experience in a neighbourhood or district.
3. The initiative had to have a dedicated website, containing at least 20 digital memories.
4. At least five residents had to be involved in the creation of digital memories.
5. The initiative had to be limited to a neighbourhood, district, city or town.

The selection resulted in a set of 80 cases (see Appendix B) that satisfied these criteria. The origins of the cases were as follows: Dutch (34), British (24), American (9), Australian (4), Argentinean (3), Belgian (3), German (2) and Spanish (1). The dispersion in these origins does not represent the frequencies of the occurrences of local memory websites in these countries, but is a result of the snowball sampling strategy for finding cases (Bryman, 2008). Many local memory websites have unique names such as "Boisevoices" (Case 50) and "Strandlines" (Case 80). A number of cases were found through the community software builder involved: eight through Community Sites in Britain and five through Mediamatic in the Netherlands. The organic process of finding cases and applying the selection criteria produced a set of comparable cases with a certain degree of variation within and across the dimensions. The size and composition of the set allow, in our opinion, tentative conclusions with respect to the field of local memory websites in general. In the next section we show how the set of attributes for each dimension developed inductively during the coding of the cases.

3.4. Analysing the data in two phases

The analysis processes consisted of two consecutive phases: a qualitative one (to code the data in preparation of the second phase) and a quantitative one (in which we applied exploratory data analysis).

3.4.1. Coding the dimensions

This first, qualitative phase of the analysis is called “data reduction” by Miles and Huberman (1994), because it compresses the raw data for each case to text elements organised by a limited set of codes. In order to conduct this process, the websites’ texts that contained the information related to the dimensions were imported into a software program for qualitative data analysis.¹¹ In this way, we elaborated the six analytical dimensions inductively by coding attributes that characterised each of them on a more concrete level.

With respect to the dimension of partners involved, we found participating parties to be local associations, historical institutions such as museums and archives, residents (as initiators), local media, social welfare institutions, knowledge institutions such as schools, universities and libraries and, finally, governmental bodies. We put parties like artists and social entrepreneurs into a residual category “other parties”. We also distinguished a group of “supporting” parties which contained donors, members paying contribution, the buyers of products and funds, in addition to the parties already mentioned.

The dimension of aims developed into five attributes. One group of aims focused on preserving memories without any explicit social benefit. Other aims were coded as individual learning on the micro level of empowerment. A third set of aims was coded as inclusion on the meso level of empowerment. A fourth group of aims pertaining to the macro level of empowerment were coded as community building. Finally, there were aims relating to products such as an exhibition, a play or a book. To see whether the “community-building” aims bore any relation to concepts found in the research literature on macro level (de Kreek & van Zoonen, 2013b), we also categorised these aims deductively with the concepts “community memory”, “cultural citizenship” and “community capacity”.

The methods dimension refers to the finding and creating of content for the website and includes researching archives, writing own memories, co-creating and interviewing. The former two are done either by a professional or a resident, whereas the latter two can be a professional-resident or a resident-resident interaction.

The characteristics of the digital memories consist of three elements: format, period and frame. The possible formats found were audio recordings, videos, texts and image. The periods which the content on the website describe, were: the past, the present and the future. The stories were framed with different vocabularies on the websites. We found variations of “local history” and “local heritage” on one hand and “everyday memories” and “experiences” on the other. In a few cases we found “reports” as a label for the content.

We divided the kinds of affordances in two groups: interaction and navigation. Interaction was developed into the following: adding a story through e-mail, adding a story directly to the website, adding comments on a memory, adding a question and adding something to a guestbook. For navigation, we identified the following: categories or themes, latest stories, latest comments, news, search field, contributors as categories and associative browsing.

As a measure for online participation, we took the number of contributions in a certain period. From the last 27 cases we coded, we collected the total number of contributions and

¹¹ The program MaxQDA 10.

the number of years the website had been in use. This led to an average of 343 contributions per year and a median value of 132 per year. In order to distinguish the more active websites from the less active websites, we decided to record the number of contributions (X) during the last complete year prior to the data collection using the following ranges: $X = 0$, $0 < X < 50$, $50 \leq X < 100$ and $X \geq 100$.

3.4.2. Exploring the data

The coded data from the first phase formed the basis for the second, quantitative phase of the analysis. It offered the basis for a cross-sectional design with some multiple case study elements (Bryman, 2008). In this chapter, we focus on an exploratory data analysis (Tukey, 1977) for which we needed a specific function of the codes, that of Boolean operator. This means that for each case, every attribute, for example “format: video”, got the value 0 when it was absent and 1 when it was present. Consequently, by transforming all codes to Boolean variables, we obtained a dichotomous data-matrix on which various quantitative operations could be executed. We mainly generated frequency tables, hierarchical clusters (Burns & Burns, 2009) and contingency tables in a software program for statistical analysis.¹² We investigated the results for patterns within and between the dimensions as depicted in Figure 3.

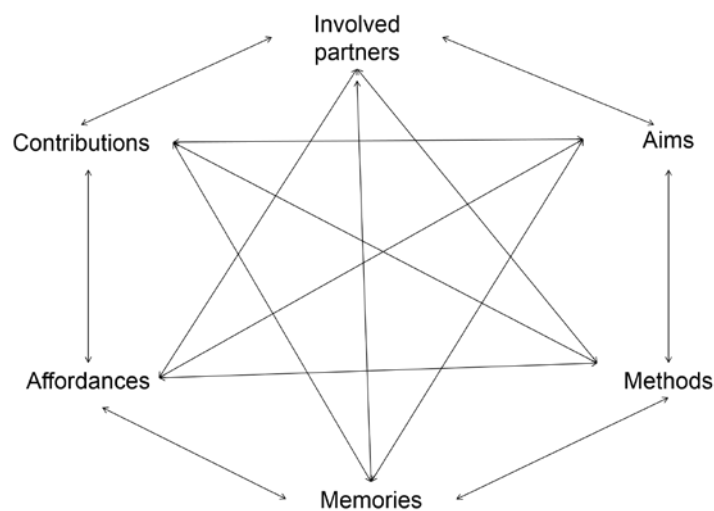


Figure 3: The investigated relations between the dimensions

3.5. Distinguishing patterns across the dimensions

Although the analysis also showed interesting results within the dimensions, in this chapter we only present the results of the analysis across pairs of dimensions and across multiple dimensions.

3.5.1. Patterns across pairs of dimensions

The initiatives started by combinations of institutions – including governmental bodies – are relatively rich in aims in terms of individual learning, inclusion and community building. Once a historical institution is involved, community building is articulated as constructing community memory, whereas when a social welfare institution is involved there is more

¹² The program SPSS 19.

emphasis on community building in terms of cultural citizenship. The cases initiated by residents without partners lightly prefer preserving and community building compared to the other aims. Once they work together with historical institutions this preference gets stronger and shifts towards community building in the capacity of community memory. Solo operating associations also mainly aim for preserving memories. Once they work together with historical and knowledge institutions, constructing community memory and individual learning processes become a stronger part of their repertoire.

Institutions and combinations thereof are likely to opt for methods in which professionals play a role. At the same time, these cases also involve residents creating content from their own personal memory. Once welfare institutions or governmental bodies are involved, there is more emphasis on residents interviewing residents. Historical institutions that are involved put more emphasis on residents researching archives and residents depending on their own memories. The cases initiated by residents are characterised by dependence on personal memory to create digital content. Finally, the cases initiated predominantly by local associations prefer residents researching archives and residents interviewing each other.

Across the dimensions of the partners involved and digital memory formats, we notice that institutions co-occur with the video format more than average. Cases that have associations among their initiators have a higher than average preference for the use of audio recordings. Residents' initiatives, in contrast, show a high presence of images and texts but a low presence of video or audio. With respect to the periods described by the memories, local associations prefer a limitation to memories about the past. Historical institutions and social welfare institutions put more focus on the present, whereas knowledge institutions and social welfare institutions also incidentally include future expectations. Residents seem equally interested in both the present and the past. When it comes to framing the memories, we see that historical institutions or local associations emphasise a historical frame. However, social welfare institutions and residents increase the framing of memories in terms of everyday life.

Inclusion, individual learning and community building by means of constructing community memory correlate with interviewing methods, both by professionals and residents. In the cases where community building is formulated in terms of cultural citizenship and community capacity, co-creation methods are more apt to be used both when professionals are involved and when it concerns residents only. These cases also more apt to show a presence of products. The cases that are characterised by preserving aims in combination with constructing community memory show a high presence of methods where professionals research archives and residents create expressions from personal memory. On the other hand, the cases that are only characterised by preserving memories show predominantly residents researching archives.

Cases where learning, inclusion and cultural citizenship are important often also exhibit videos and expressions of the present and future, which are framed as everyday stories. A higher than average presence of preserving aims and community building in terms of community memory co-occurs with a higher presence of the audio format, while the other memory characteristics are more or less equal with their averages for the whole dataset. When the aim of preserving is present more than average and the other aims are present below average, the format tends to be a combination of texts and images, while the period described by the memories shifts to the past and the frame becomes predominantly historical.

Methods involving residents only are directed predominantly towards texts and images and only rarely towards audio recordings and videos. In contrast, methods involving professionals co-occur with a higher presence of video and audio and a lower presence of texts and images. In addition, interviewing methods correlate with the audio format. Cases

with co-creation and interviewing methods – by both professionals and residents – exhibit an emphasis on everyday events and reporting stories about the present and the future. A high presence of residents writing from personal memory goes together with a high presence of memories about the present and the past which are more apt to be framed as historical. A focus on researching archives both by professionals and residents correlates with memories about the past predominantly framed as historical.

Among the cases in our dataset we found 18 inactive websites ($X = 0$), 38 cases between 1 and 50 contributions ($0 < X < 50$), 10 cases between 50 and 100 contributions ($50 \leq X < 100$) and 13 cases with more than 100 contributions ($X \geq 100$) (see Appendix B). As one case did not mention any dates with the contributions, it was impossible to identify its online activity. Assuming a relation between the affordances and the number of contributions, we counted the average of the number of affordances (interactional and navigational) for each range of online activity in terms of number of contributions during the last complete year prior to the data collection (see Figure 4).

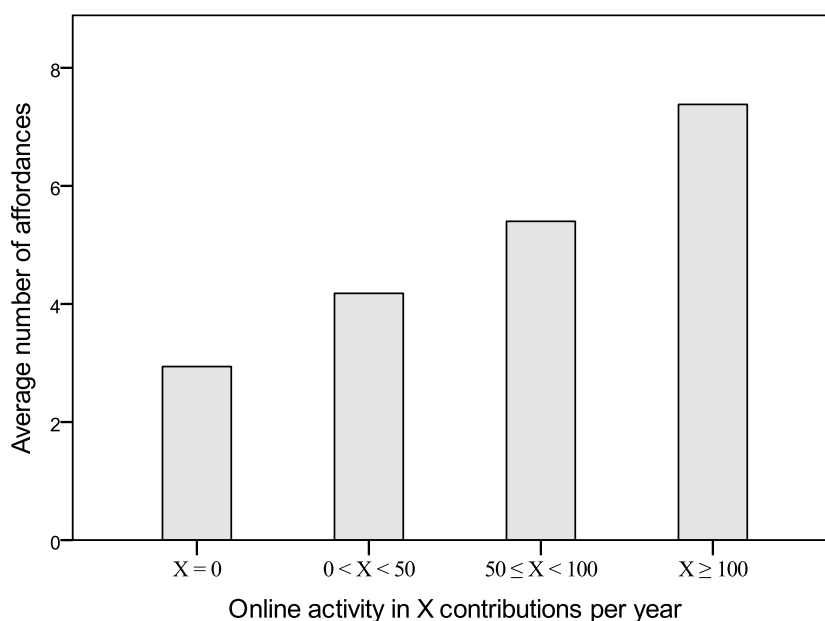


Figure 4: The correlation between affordances and online activity

The bar chart in Figure 4 shows that there is a correlation between online activity and number of affordances. More specifically, it seems likely that the number of affordances facilitates a higher online activity. We also explored the relations between the first four dimensions and the number of affordances. Cases that were initiated by institutions tend to have greater number of affordances, whereas cases started by local associations have lower numbers of affordances. A rich set of aims, from individual to community level, also correlates with the number of affordances, as well as with methods in which residents write from personal memory or interviews others. The cases in which residents do research in archives show a low presence of affordances. Furthermore, cases with at least text and videos tend to have more affordances than, for example, those with only video or audio. Cases with memories describing the present and the past have considerably more affordances than cases where memories only emphasise the past. Similarly, cases where the memories are framed as everyday and historical facilitate online activity better than cases which frame their memories as only historical.

Although the set of cases with more than 100 contributions is small, the observations with respect to the relations between the dimensions and the number of affordances seem to be confirmed by exploring the 13 cases that belong to it. In this set, we see a low presence of

local associations and a high presence of historical institutions and governmental bodies. Aims in terms of preserving in combination with community memory are highly present. With respect to methods, residents creating content from personal memory and interviewing other residents are more present than average. Among the 13 cases we also see either combinations of the formats texts and images or combinations of images, texts, audio recordings and videos. In addition, the cases with memories describing the present and the past are more frequent in the subset than cases where memories only emphasise the past. Similarly, this subset contains more cases in which the memories are framed as everyday and historical than cases with only a historical frame.

3.5.2. Patterns across multiple dimensions

We have shown that associations can be identified in the dataset across the dimensions in a pair-wise manner. Re-reading these results leads to the conclusions that these associations are not only identifiable between two dimensions, but often seem to have a transitive character across more than two dimensions. The cluster of local associations, for example, correlates both with aims relating to 'preserving' and with residents doing research in archives. At the same time, the aim of preservation correlates with residents doing archive research. Thus certain combinations of characteristics are interrelated across several dimensions and keep a subset of cases together. This leads to three subsets of local memory website initiatives that describe a relatively large part of our dataset as described below.

The first subset, which we call the "residents' initiative", concerns privately financed initiatives started by one or more residents with the aim to preserve local memories in order to strengthen the community. The area in which the latter should occur is often left unspecified. Its memory collections contain mainly everyday stories consisting of texts with images created by residents based on their own personal memories about the neighbourhood up to the present. Compared to the other subsets, memory websites in this subset (initiated by residents) offer an average facilitation of online activity.

The second subset could be called the "institutions' initiative", because it concerns funded or subsidised cooperations between institutions that have various aims. The cases in this subset also aim for community building, which is often made explicit in terms of community memory, but also in terms of cultural citizenship. At the same time, they would like to improve the competencies of participating residents and include various groups from the neighbourhood. Preservation plays a less important role in this subset. In the methods applied, professionals often play a role, although residents also create digital memories about their own personal experiences. This results in a collection of everyday and historical memories in various formats in which the present and the past are represented equally and the future may even incidentally play a role. Institutional cooperation leads to a higher level of interaction affordances than residents' initiatives do.

The third subset, the "association's initiative", concerns initiatives by local associations organising their support mainly by membership fees and donations. In addition to community development by means of constructing community memory, the aim of preservation is a strong part of their agenda. Residents examine different kinds of archives to arrive at memories – texts and images – about their environment, but they also interview other residents, which in turn sometimes leads to the presence of audio recordings. These local memory websites show memories predominantly about the distant past which are framed as historical. The typical association's memory website has fewer affordances than the cases in the other two subsets.

In the overlap of these three types we also see some smaller groups of exceptions like local associations cooperating with knowledge institutions and historical institutions

cooperating with residents. We also see governmental bodies operating independently in a number of cases.

Among the 13 cases that received more than 100 contributions per year (see Appendix B) we see three occurrences of strictly institutions' initiatives and three of strictly residents' initiatives but no occurrences of local associations' initiatives. There are three cases of local associations working in cooperation with institutions, however. The cooperation between historical institutions and residents is also found three times, twice with one other institution. One case was initiated by another party, essentially a communication company. All but one case aim for preserving in order to strengthen the community by means of community memory. Other aims like learning skills and the inclusion of groups are present but in the minority. The methods applied in these 13 cases are clearly resident-based. In almost all cases residents create stories from their personal memory and in half of the cases residents interview other residents. All cases contain text and images, while two also have audio and video format. The memories cover past and present in all cases except one, which focuses on the past only. With one exception, the content is framed as everyday memories; in ten cases that goes together with a more historical frame.

3.6. Conclusion and discussion

From this description about the organisational and participative aspects of 80 cases we can draw some important conclusions and reflect on the issues derived from the existing research literature. One obvious conclusion is that the field of local memory websites is not merely an institutional one, as the existing literature might lead one to believe. Instead, local memory websites are often initiated by residents and local associations, as the three types of local memory websites show. Another straightforward conclusion is that cases with a high degree of online activity are currently available in the field, whereas such cases are nearly absent in the existing studies on local memory websites that focus on institutional initiatives based on Digital Storytelling. At the same time, the low number of cases with a high degree of online activity should adjust whatever expectations one might have constructed of local memory websites based on the available studies. Although the inactive cases studied might facilitate empowerment on the micro level, they hardly show a continuum of participation in which participants autonomously create and publish digital memories based authentic topics which encourage any affective online communication. This implies that empowerment on meso and macro levels is very unlikely to occur (Burgess & Green, 2009; Burgess, 2007; de Kreek, 2011). Considering the issues formulated above, we arrive at the following conclusions with respect to the relation between organisational aspects and online participation.

3.6.1. Online participation in the field

A high level of involvement by institutions does not lower the rate of online participation. On the contrary, current institutional websites invite interaction. Moreover, their aims, formats, periods and frames seem to vary sufficiently in order to nurture both autonomy and authenticity on the side of the participating residents. In turn, this feeds the continuum of participation which is crucial for empowerment on macro levels (Burgess, 2007; de Kreek, 2011). One remaining threat with respect to authenticity that might occur is that the institutions involved put too much emphasis on the involvement of professionals in the methods.

Indeed, a high presence of methods involving professionals seems to lower the rate of online participation. In the dataset these methods correlate with a low presence of

affordances and with low numbers of contributions. The presence of professionals seems to influence the participants' feeling of being allowed to tell authentic memories, as indicated by Poletti (2011) and Thumim (2009). In addition, our data shows that the opposite of this proposition is also valid: a low presence of professionals – and thus a high presence of residents – in the methods generates more online activity.

With respect to the influence of the formulation of the aims on the rate of online participation, it is harder to arrive at conclusions. If we apply the Kellogg Foundation's logic model for interventions (W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004) to the aims, we arrive at the following. Preserving digital memories could be categorised in "outputs" which are direct products available in the short term. Both individual learning and inclusion comply with "outcomes" which could be defined as longer-term achievements like learning certain skills and changed behaviour. Finally, the community development aims are labelled as "impact" with an incubation period of up to seven years. Carpentier claims that merely focusing on a short term aim like "preserving" offers too little incentive to reach a high level of long-term online activity (2009). Our results neither contradict nor confirm this claim at this stage.

Less accessible formats seem to lower the rate of online participation. Among the 13 cases with 100 or more contributions, four have audio recordings and videos, but they also include texts and images. The four cases in our entire data set with only audio or video formats – or with a combination of those – represent the lowest online activity; they can all be considered inactive in the sense described by Burgess (2007) in her discussion of autonomy. Cases including young adults as participants might soon become an exception to this (e.g. Case 21), because their technical skills are different from those of most of the older participants in our data set.

As we expected on the basis of the literature (Burgess, 2007; Kietzmann et al., 2012), a low number of affordances on a website lowers the rate of online participation. Our data indeed confirms both this assumption and its opposite, namely that a higher number of affordances increases online participation. Obviously, affordances offer no guarantee for online activity as Case 8 shows, for example. This case used to have six affordances, but, after a period inactiveness and loss of funds, the memories were moved to a more static website belonging to a local association in order to preserve them.

3.6.2. Further research

Some of the cases could be said to have organised sufficient conditions to favour online participation, but still fail to realise high levels of online activity. Of course, one explanation for this is that some of the cases involved a very small scale, covering only one street for example, so this does not fit with our characterisation of 100+ contributions as being exemplary of high online activity. In order to get better insight into variations like this, we would have to apply pattern-matching analysis to our textual data following the replication logic as described by Yin (2009). Another explanation could be that, as we see in Case 8, the core group of participating residents has fallen apart and a follow-up is lacking.

Despite there being no strict or complete recipe for a successful local memory website in terms of online participation, our conclusions constitute a contribution to the discussion of the issues in the current academic literature, leading us to propose some tentative rules of thumb. Participants should indeed have a high level of autonomy to contribute memories or comment on them. In addition, and partly following from this autonomy, they should have control over the content of their contributions in order for them to be authentic. Based on our findings, this implies having a combination of aims, a minor role for professionals in the methods, a combination of all formats, room for memories up to yesterday and a reasonable set of affordances. These characteristics maximise the chances that a local memory website will mature into a longer-term phenomenon with a critical mass

of memories and comments carried by many people from the local community in different roles. How the cultural dynamics of affective online communication (Burgess & Klæbe, 2009; Poletti, 2011) fuels such a local memory website and its empowerment on meso and macro levels is an important question for future research. As we have shown in this chapter, empirical data for such research is available.

4. A narrative approach to empowerment within local memory websites

4.1. Introduction: the empirical research questions

In this chapter, I introduce the research design for a double case study about the Memory of East and the Memory of West, both local memory websites in Amsterdam. The empirical research questions are introduced here and translated into research methods. As presented in Chapter 2, a systematic literature review resulted in an analytical model based on the empowerment framework with concepts on the individual, group and community levels that empirical findings can be related to. The review also showed that the claimed relation between online dynamics and empowerment lacks empirical substantiation, especially on the group and community levels, which I call the “collective levels”. Finally, Chapter 2 discusses five tentative organisational dimensions that influence online activity. In Chapter 3, the exploration of 80 local memory websites resulted in the confirmation of the relations between these five organisational dimensions and online activity (in terms of numbers of contributions per year). I argued there that these dimensions go beyond online activity to influence other online dynamics as well, such as the number of different online participants. Combining the insights from chapters 2 and 3, I want to explore in the present chapter the following empirical questions to arrive at insights about the social significance of local memory websites:

1. What collective empowerment do the online dynamics express?
2. How does the organisational development influence the online dynamics?

The conceptual model at this stage is depicted in Figure 5. The model contains the organisational dimensions and the group and community levels of empowerment that were identified in Chapter 2. Figure 5 also clarifies that relevant patterns in the online dynamics are still largely to be determined in the intended exploratory data analysis.

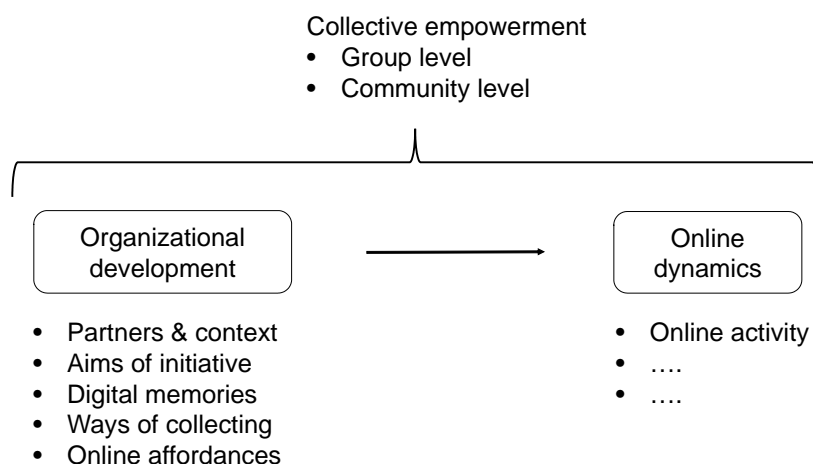


Figure 5: Conceptual model for the exploratory data analysis in the double case study

Since empowerment is a process across time (Zimmerman, 2000), two phases of analysis will be required with respect to Question 1. Firstly, it is necessary to determine which concepts of collective empowerment can be empirically related to online dynamics. Secondly, time-based patterns have to be established in these online dynamics in relation to the chosen concepts of empowerment. To find answers to Question 2, the organisational

developments are studied as to their influence on the identified patterns in the online dynamics.

The two Amsterdam-based local memory websites to be studied are briefly introduced in the next section. In the sections after that, the research questions are translated into research methods. With respect to Question 1, I first introduce a narrative approach to establish how online dynamics relates to collective empowerment. Then I present an exploratory data analysis of the online dynamics. With respect to Question 2, I describe a qualitative approach for the analysis of the organisational influence on online dynamics. Afterwards, I introduce the framework that enables the comparison of the findings and the conclusions of both case studies. In the final part of this chapter I introduce the quality control that I applied in this research.

4.2. The Memory of East and the Memory of West

In this section, I explain the background and development of the two Amsterdam-based local memory websites, as well as their similarities and differences.

4.2.1. Mediamatic's community software: Anystory

As described in Chapter 3, there are a variety of local memory websites in the Netherlands (de Kreek & van Zoonen, 2013a). A number of these websites are more or less similar as they are all based on the same original idea and use the same software, both of which come from Mediamatic.¹³ This Amsterdam-based company develops community software, and in 1997 it designed an early local memory website in central Netherlands (Zeist) that ran on software called Anystory. The project stopped prematurely, but it functioned as both an example and an inspiration for the Memory of East, which started in Amsterdam in 2003. In turn, this local memory website inspired the Memory of West in the following year, and other "Memory of ..." websites in various cities after that. Today, these two local memory websites are the largest and most active online communities that are collecting local memories in Amsterdam. As such, I regard them as exemplary cases for an analysis of the relation between organisational characteristics, online dynamics and empowerment.

4.2.2. A short history

In 2001 the Amsterdam Museum (known in those days as the Amsterdam Historical Museum) started with the preparations for its first neighbourhood exhibition in 2003 called "East, an Amsterdam Neighbourhood [*sic*]". This area (at the time a city district) had a highly diverse population, demonstrating various lifestyles and social backgrounds. The Amsterdam Museum was also thought to be unknown in this area, which is why it wanted to promote itself among the inhabitants there. In collaboration with a social welfare institution, an outreach project was set up for the district. It consisted of collecting and sharing local memories on a website called the "Memory of East". Their aims with this project consisted of "improving social cohesion and accessibility, increasing skills and helping people to become better acquainted with art and culture, as well as the history of Amsterdam" (Ernst, 2006, p. 110). The exhibition ended in 2004, but the participants are still actively collecting memories online to the present day.

¹³ Mediamatic stopped making community software in 2014 and transferred the existing online communities to another software developer called "Driebit".

Inspired by the Memory of East, the administration of the “Geuzenveld-Slotermeer” district in Amsterdam West initiated the “Memory of West” in 2004, setting up the website together with a local community centre called “De Brug”. Around 2000, some areas of that district had fallen prey to urban renewal because of the supposedly negative effects of high concentrations of ethnic minorities. These redevelopment projects were set up in order to produce social cohesion by differentiation, aiming at “a larger variety of apartments and environments as well as inhabitants” (translated from Hellinga, 2005, p. 86). In this context, the Memory of West aimed to “increase social cohesion in Amsterdam West, prevent social isolation among the inhabitants, improve the memory skills of the elderly and create more tolerance among young and old by increasing knowledge and understanding about each other and each other’s past” (translated from Bekker & Helbergen, 2010a, p. 1).

4.2.3. Similarities

The characteristics of the online data on the Memory of East and the Memory of West are to a great extent similar. Both sites have been active for about a decade, a suitable period for analysing their individual long-term developments, but also for a comparison of both. At present, both websites contain more than 2500 online memories, each of which consists of a maximum of 350 words, one or more pictures, and one or more topics, locations and periods. In both cases, the number of comments far exceeds the number of memories, which implies an active online community. The majority of memories are written by local residents based either on their own memories or on the memories of others that were collected in interviews. Each online memory has the names of its storyteller and author attached to it, as well as the name of the person who published it.

Since both websites were designed by the same developer, and since one served as inspiration for the other, there is also a high degree of similarity with respect to the affordances that each one provides. The main features for navigation mimic the way humans recollect stories (Oosterbroek, 2008). People remember largely by association, which means one story will remind someone of another. Similarly, each story on the website is presented in a context of related stories by means of an algorithm. The strengths of these relations are calculated on the basis of a number of features including keywords, the storyteller and the story’s author. The related stories are presented to the right of the main story on the page in decreasing order of strength. The sets of keywords was developed in cooperation with the story collectors and consists of rather stable numbers around 60. Other main navigation features include clusters (such as the latest comments and the latest stories), locations (such as quarters and streets) and personal profile pages. When it comes to interactivity with the website, the main affordance is the commenting system, for which one has to make oneself known with a name and an e-mail address. In both cases only editors can publish the memory items.

4.2.4. Differences

Stakeholders in both communities also assume that the organisational characteristics influence online dynamics, but exactly how that happens is mostly a matter of speculation. An important aim of this comparative case study is to assess whether differences between the online dynamics of the two websites are rooted in differences in the organisational characteristics, and if so, how. Some of these differences are already rather explicit and common knowledge among the websites’ participants. For example, one commonly appreciated difference is that the Memory of West’s stated aims of “creating more tolerance” and “preventing isolation” are not among the aims of the Memory of East.

Other, less explicit differences concern the context of the initiatives and partners involved, the processes of producing stories, the characteristics of the memories, and the online navigation tools. The numbers of contributions per year form another difference. It is acknowledged that these numbers fluctuate in both communities, as do the numbers of storytellers and authors, and the frequency of keywords, periods and locations, for example.

4.3. A narrative approach to collective empowerment reflected by online dynamics

Question 1 for both case studies concerns the expression of collective empowerment by the online dynamics on the two websites. In this section I argue that a narrative approach is suitable to address issues of power and empowerment. I adopt methods developed in the context of organisational storytelling, and I introduce how I will apply them in an exploratory data analysis.

4.3.1. Narrative approach meets empowerment

A unique characteristic of the narrative approach is that narratives are considered not only to reflect reality, but also – and more importantly – to be instruments that construct that reality (Czarniawska, 2004; Spector-Mersel, 2010). This implies that narratives are regarded as actions with effects, be they conscious or not, for which the makers can be held accountable. In the construction of reality by narratives, power has two important forms. Firstly, people can feel excluded by being unable to connect to legitimate narratives in a certain society. They cannot use their personal narratives to “attribute meaning to their lives by relating them to the legitimate narrative of the society to which they [belong]” (Czarniawska, 2004, p. 6). Secondly, narratives can become a question of power when narratives about an individual or group are created by other people or institutions without involving them. In this way, some people actively influence or even “decide about other people’s jobs, their livelihoods, their identities” (Czarniawska, 2004, p. 5). Narrative approaches shed light on differences in power, but also on how they develop and how they might be changed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

These ideas have also been adopted by Rappaport, who was one of the first to urge the empowerment research community to combine “the study of empowerment ... with a narrative approach to theory and method” (1995, p. 796). He claims that inclusion or exclusion with respect to a collective identity is determined by “what is allowed to be remembered” (Rappaport, 1998, p. 229). This influence manifests itself in the available collective narratives which may or may not function as resources for personal identity stories for someone to connect with. People who can connect are included in the collective identity, and those who cannot are excluded from it. In addition, he considers dominant narratives about certain groups to be “overlearned stories communicated through mass media or other large social and cultural institutions and social networks” (Rappaport, 2000, p. 5). A social change that influences the possibly negative effects of these dominant narratives on personal life stories requires the creation of new ones or the modification of existing ones. Based on these assumptions, Rappaport emphasises practical and theoretical analogies between the narrative approach and the empowerment framework (Rappaport, 1995). Since he regards narratives as crucial resources in empowerment processes, empowerment practice should ideally involve helping people to create settings where they can discover,

create and enhance their own community narratives and personal stories.¹⁴ With respect to empowerment theory, he states that the mutual influence between personal, group and community narratives could give new insights into how individual, group and community empowerment might be interdependent.

4.3.2. Narrative methods for analysing online dynamics

Several studies have followed Rappaport's suggestions, but when it comes to analysing local memory websites as empowering narrative settings, applicable methods still need to be developed and tested. Mathews and Sunderland state that "[their] search for other work that maps out ways of analysing large-scale databases of life narratives did not produce a model for [them] to follow" (2013, p. 101). I built a narrative approach for the two Amsterdam case studies based on the narrative methods of Boje and Luhman in their work on organisational storytelling (Boje, 2001; Luhman & Boje, 2001). Their narrative approach of organisational discourse is based on the assumption that it incorporates both the reflection and the creation of organisational reality. They state that, at any given moment in time, there are numerous individual narratives. These narratives are not only part of an individual's discourse, but also part of a "complex system of a collectively construed [discourse] of organizational 'reality'" (Luhman & Boje, 2001, p. 163). Introducing the aspect of time as well, they offer the following description:

The organizational discourses flow through time, allowing for the interpretation, reinterpretation, and negotiation of memories and anticipations of future events. As time moves from time t to time $t+1$, a new complex system of organizational discourse emerges, creating a slightly or largely different collectively constructed discourse of organizational reality. (Luhman & Boje, 2001, p. 164)

This "reality" as such can unintentionally or intentionally exclude or include people or group as described above. In addition, two forces influence the difference between a new and a former reality: 1) changes in the organisation's context, and 2) hegemony of individual or group discourses. Narrative research in organisations should, therefore, study the changes in realities over time and how they depend on organisational changes and hegemonic forces.

I transposed this approach to organisational discourse to the context in which a local community is collecting memories online. In such a context, the discourse is not embedded in and related to an organisation, but rooted in and focused on a neighbourhood. More in particular, I adopted the "story network analysis" as described by Boje (2001) to analyse the online dynamics around the memories. According to this method, stories can be labelled with types of actor, story, theme, etc. in order to explore patterns and processes. The labels give the analyst tools to trace how the collective storytelling behaviour of the online community is developing. In the Memory of East and the Memory of West, I used the main features (topics, locations, periods, storyteller, etc.) of the online memories as labels for the analysis. For validity reasons, Boje mentions the importance of the involvement of participants in assigning labels to narratives. The labels of the websites fulfil this requirement, because the labelling of the digital memories is done by the community (of Amsterdam East and Amsterdam West, respectively) itself.

¹⁴ Rappaport considers "narratives" to be idiosyncratic to groups and "stories" to be for individuals (Rappaport, 1995).

The resulting data will be subject to an exploratory data analysis (Tukey, 1977), for which the analytical model arrived at in Chapter 2 provides the sensitising concepts, i.e. “directions along which to look” (Blumer, 1954, p. 7).

4.4. Operationalising the exploratory data analysis

To be able to conduct an exploratory data analysis, the approach described in the previous section to answer Question 1, needs to be further operationalised. In this section I describe the creation of data sets, the rationale behind relevant key figures and the analyses applied to various features for exploration.

4.4.1. Creating the data sets

I scraped the memories and all their public features from both websites and complemented these with non-public elements from copies of both databases. Making suitable “scrapers” with the tool Outwit Hub¹⁵ required knowledge of regular expressions and several test runs on each website. This led to an Excel-file for each website containing a number of fields for each single memory. The complementing of this with non-public data, such as the “e-mail address” of a commenter, was done by importing the Excel files into both of the Structured Query Language databases. This would produce an extra table in the database which could be linked to data from other tables by performing SQL queries. The cleaning and further preparation of the data sets was performed with OpenRefine.¹⁶

For the Memory of East, the resulting data set contains 2662 memories published in the period from 19 June 2003 to 13 March 2014. The resulting data set for the Memory of West contains 2798 memories from 30 April 2004 to 13 March 2014. Each data set consists of the following features for each memory:

Table 1: The features in the data set for each memory

Feature	Explanation
Identification number	A unique number in de database
Memory title	The title of the memory
Memory text	The text that was submitted
Storyteller	The person who holds the memory
Author	The person who wrote up the memory
Editor	The person who published the memory
Publication year	The year the memory was published
Period start year	The start year of the memory’s period
Period end year	The end year of the memory’s period
Topic keyword 1, ... topic keyword 10	A maximum of 10 topic keywords
Location keyword 1, ... location keyword 10	A maximum of 10 location keywords

¹⁵ <http://www.outwit.com>. “OutWit Hub breaks down Web pages into their different constituents. Navigating from page to page automatically, it extracts information elements and organizes them into usable collections. The Outwit website scraper collects content : text, images, email addresses, html code, links ...” (The Outwit Team, 2015).

¹⁶ <http://openrefine.org/>. “OpenRefine ... is a powerful tool for working with messy data: cleaning it; transforming it from one format into another; and extending it with web services and external data” (OpenRefine Community, 2015).

Number of comments	The number of comments left by visitors
Number of visits	The number of visits to the memory

Since the potentially unlimited number of comments was difficult to harvest with a scraper, we applied various joining operations on our first data set in the SQL database. This led to a second data set for the Memory of East containing 20,285 comments and a second one for the Memory of West containing 8,844 comments. These data sets consisted of the following features for each comment:

Table 2: The features in the data set for each comment

Features	Explanation
Identification number	The comment's unique identification number
Comment text	The text that was submitted as a comment
Memory identification number	The memory commented on
Name commenter	The name of the commenter
Comment year	The year the comment was contributed

4.4.2. Key figures of the main features

Based on the two data sets, the following key figures were determined that could give a first impression of the online participants, the scope of the memories and the activity on the website:

Table 3: Key figures of the main features (to be calculated)

Feature	Key figures
Memories	Number of different memories
Storytellers	Number of different storytellers
Authors	Number of different authors
Editors	Number of different editors
Periods	The years covered by the memories
Topic keywords	Number of different topic keywords
Location keywords	Number of different location keywords
Comments	Total number of comments
Commenters	Total number of different commenters
Visits	Total number of visits

4.4.3. Univariate analyses

Next, I delved deeper into the data by counting how often each category (e.g. a specific storyteller "Dineke Rizzoli") occurred within a feature (e.g. the categorical variable "Storyteller") across the set of memories.

Storyteller	(indication of activity distribution of storytellers)
Author	(indication of activity distribution of writers)
Editor	(indication of activity distribution of editors)
Commenter	(indication of activity distribution of commenters)

Topic keyword	(indication of popularity of topics)
Location keyword	(indication of popularity of locations)
Publication year	(indication of activity in terms of published memories)
Period covered	(indication of popular periods described)

For some numeric features (e.g. number of visits) I analysed their distribution across the set of memories.

Number of visits	(indication of popular stories)
Number of comments	(indication of popular stories)

4.4.4. Bivariate analysis

In order to explore patterns, I conducted bivariate analyses on a number of combinations of features in both data sets:

Author ≠ storyteller	(indication of interview situations)
Author = storyteller	(indication of the author's own memories)
Publication year / author	(indication of development of number of authors)
Publication year / storyteller	(indication of development of number of storytellers)
Topic keyword / location keyword	(indication of topics in neighbourhoods)
No. of comments / topic keyword	(indication of popular topics)
No. of comments / location keyword	(indication of popularity or activity neighbourhoods)
No. of visits / no. of comments	(indication of attraction of online dialogues)
No. of visits / topic keyword	(indication of popular topics)
No. of visits/ publication year	(indication of influence of period online)
Topic keyword / publication year	(indication of course of topics last 10 years)
Topic keyword / period	(indication of popular topics in certain periods)
Author / topic keyword	(indication of theme specialism)
Storyteller / topic keyword	(indication of theme specialism)

4.4.5. Cluster analysis

A final set of analyses consisted of cluster analyses of various features.

Topic keywords clustered by stories	(indication of related topics)
Commenter names clustered by stories	(indication of networked commenters)
Locations clustered by topic keywords	(indication of topically related locations)

For the cluster analyses I used Gephi,¹⁷ a tool that supports exploratory data analysis and network analysis, and I visualised patterns using Raw.¹⁸

4.5. Analysing the influence of organisational development

In Chapter 3 five organisational dimensions were identified, along with their relation to online participation in terms of contributions per year (de Kreek & van Zoonen, 2013a). These dimensions play a central role in answering Question 2, which concerns the influence of organisational development on online dynamics in both cases.

4.5.1. The organisational dimensions and their influence

For convenience' sake, the five organisational dimensions are briefly repeated below.

1. The context and initiating partners
2. The aims of the website
3. The methods for collecting and creating memories
4. The desired characteristics of the digital memories
5. The local memory websites' affordances

4.5.2. Data used for analysis

The following sources were collected and analysed:

- External documents such as books, newspaper articles and other webpages.
- Internal documents such as the minutes of meetings, project plans and subsidy applications.
- The website's "about-pages", containing subpages with things like aims, statutes, invitations to participate and regulations for use.
- The news contributions on both websites, highlighting important moments in the history of the websites and their respective communities.
- Reflective memories made by active participants, describing their impressions of the developments of the websites and their respective communities.

The access to these sources was facilitated by the fact that both online communities had started to regard me, the person conducting the case studies, as "their researcher". In 2008, I became involved in a project describing local memory websites in the region of Amsterdam. Since 2010, I had been studying both websites with the consent and support of each community. In that role I was also involved in organising symposia for both websites and for other communities collecting online memories in Amsterdam.

4.6. Comparing the two cases

I will present each case individually in chapters 5 and 6, respectively, and then go on to compare them in Chapter 7. Each case can be regarded as exemplary of active local

¹⁷ <http://gephi.github.io>. "Gephi is an interactive visualization and exploration platform for all kinds of networks and complex systems, dynamic and hierarchical graphs" (Bastian, 2015).

¹⁸ <http://raw.densitydesign.org>. "Raw is an open web app to create custom vector-based visualizations" (Caviglia, Mauri, Azzi, & Ubold, 2015).

memory websites. Yin (2009) calls such cases “representative”, but Bryman (2012) prefers to use the word “exemplifying”. Both writers agree that such a case can be an illustration of a larger category of cases. The single case studies led to case-dependent insights into both the collective aspects of empowerment in the online dynamics and the organisational influences on those. By conducting the study of both cases following a similar design, it became possible to compare the findings and conclusions for each case. Miles & Huberman describe such a cross-case analysis as follows:

... a case-oriented approach considers the case as a whole entity – looking at configurations, associations, causes, and effects within the case – and only then turns to comparative analysis of a (usually limited) number of cases. We would look for underlying similarities and constant associations ..., compare cases with different outcomes ..., and begin to form more general explanations. (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 174)

For our comparison of the findings about the Memory of East and the Memory of West, I followed the approach as depicted in Table 4. In Row A I compared patterns in the online dynamics and the development of collective empowerment in terms of certain concepts. The specific patterns and concepts were determined in the first case study and then applied in the second case study as well in order to be able to compare the findings. The organisational influence on the online dynamics (Row B) was compared according to the five available dimensions. Finally, the conclusions of the influence of organisational development on collective empowerment were compared (Row C).

Table 4: The matrix that functioned as a guideline for comparing the two cases.

		East	West	Notes
A. Collective empowerment expressed by online dynamics (Question 1)	Online dynamics			
	Collective empowerment			
	Conclusions A			
B. Influence of organisational development on online dynamics (Question 2)	Context & partners			
	Initiative's aims			
	Producing methods			
	Digital memories			
	Website's affordances			
	Conclusions B			
C. Social significance of the two cases studied	Conclusions relating B to A			

4.7. Quality control

Trustworthiness and authenticity are relevant criteria for assessing the quality of my research, because they are associated with exploratory designs that generate new theoretical ideas (Bryman, 2012). Both criteria are elaborated in this final section.

4.7.1. Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness can be further divided into credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability. In order to contribute to the credibility of my research, I invested in participant feedback and in triangulation. The participation of local residents and professionals in the research process had three characteristics. Firstly: my preliminary findings were validated and discussed during the regular monthly meetings. Secondly, from 2013 onwards, the various online memories in Amsterdam organised a yearly symposium where aspects of this and other research are discussed by involved residents and professionals. Thirdly, near the final stage of both case studies, a focus group meeting was organised to validate and complement the findings with respect to both research questions. Triangulation was aimed for by searching for composite indicators of collective empowerment.

I improved the dependability of the research design by incorporating auditing events by research peers and by ensuring the transparency of our data collection and analyses. Peer debriefing was organised by attending conferences with paper presentations and discussing the content with researchers from different disciplines. At the 2013 Community Informatics Research Network (CIRN) conference in Italy, I presented the model of empowerment that I synthesised (Chapter 2) and the rules of thumb for online participation (Chapter 3). At the biannual Narrative Matters conference in 2014 I elaborated on the relation between complex systems and the behaviour reflected by the online dynamics in the cases I studied. The relation between concepts of collective empowerment and indicators in the online dynamics of the Memory of East (Chapter 5) was presented at the 2014 CIRN conference. In addition, the explanation of the evolvement of collective empowerment in terms of the organisational development in both cases was presented at the European Conference of Social Work Research in 2015. Finally, the organisational development of both cases (chapters 5 and 6) was presented and discussed during the International Federation for Public History's 2014 conference Public History in a Digital World.

I contributed to the transparency of the research process by archiving various steps of the data collection and preparation. In addition, especially for the first case, a progress document was continuously updated with all of the analyses I conducted, including my first comments. Consequently, the relevant analyses and concepts for the second case had already been established by the first case study.

The transferability of the findings and conclusions to other contexts was optimised by conducting a double case study and by offering thick descriptions. Inspired by Skocpol & Somers (1980), systematic contrasts between the two cases offered a commentary on each other's uniqueness which served to strengthen the conclusions (Skocpol & Somers, 1980). With the thick descriptions of the organisational development of each case, I facilitated the judgement of the reader about the transferability to contexts with other characteristics.

An important aspect about confirmability is that it prevents the researcher's "personal values or theoretical inclinations" (Bryman, 2012, p. 392) from becoming dominant. This criterion was fulfilled with respect to the labelling of the memories because it was the participants from the community who assigned the labels to the online content. In the progress document, rival patterns were explored that could have weakened the

interpretations of patterns that were thought to be relevant in the case studies. In addition, the peer debriefing and participant feedback described above, increased the confirmability.

4.7.2. Authenticity

The criterion of authenticity covers the impact of the research on members or groups present in the social context studied. It can be divided into fairness and four particular kinds of authenticity: ontological, educative, catalytic and tactical (Bryman, 2012). It is also closely related to the role I played as a participative researcher in the two communities (see also the introduction in Chapter 1). In that role, I was able to become a stronger part of the communities. During the whole research period, I fed back and discussed interesting results and insights at various meetings. Reflecting on this period, I was able to behave as if I were a volunteer, i.e. as a regular participant, conducting various activities on behalf of the community. In terms of fairness, this approach resulted in the incorporation of the viewpoints of various stakeholders. The insights that revealed the collective behaviour of the website and its possible effects contributed to the understanding of the online community as being a part of a larger whole (ontological authenticity). This understanding, in turn, fuelled the appreciation of the effects for other parts of the larger community (educative authenticity) and the motivation to change (catalytic authenticity). The steps that could be taken by the local memory communities to actually invoke change (tactical authenticity), began to be explored during the yearly symposia and other meetings.

5. Evolving empowerment in the Memory of East¹⁹

5.1. Introduction: a gap in the literature

In the slipstream of what both Assman and Hoskins call a contemporary “memory boom”, an increasing number of people are presenting their memories online (Assman, 2010; Hoskins, 2011). A considerable part of these online collections concern memories of particular places and experiences in neighbourhoods (de Kreek & van Zoonen, 2013a). As such, they form “local memory websites”, which are studied for their possible contributions to the social sustainability of the community. Such studies lack an empirical foundation for the claims made with respect to benefits for groups or larger collectives, however.

Based on an analysis of the available studies on local memory websites, we have shown elsewhere that the empowerment framework offers an applicable model for explicating the contributions local memory websites can offer (de Kreek & van Zoonen, 2013b). Our systematisation of the existing concepts used to describe these websites’ social benefits is congruent with the notion of empowerment having individual, group or organisational and community levels of analysis. However, the available research conducted on the benefits in this field has mainly been based on data collected in real-life situations and limited to the individual and in some cases group levels of analysis. Data about online participation is nearly absent in the cases studied, simply because the affordances of the websites in the existing studies did not facilitate interactivity. It is important to fill this empirical gap in the body of knowledge, because the current literature claims that specifically empowerment on collective levels is related to the accessibility and the continuity of the online nature of local memory websites (de Kreek & van Zoonen, 2013b).

To determine whether and how empowerment evolves empirically on collective levels, we need to increase our insights into the dynamics of the online activity and the participation in these settings. In this chapter, we partly fill this need by analysing the online dynamics of an interactive local memory website based in Amsterdam which started in 2003: the “Memory of East”. After describing its main features and basic figures, three successive phases of analysis will follow. In the first phase, we build on Rappaport (1995), who was one of the first to regard narrated memories as crucial resources of collective empowerment. We illustrate how the online dynamics around the memories include three types of resources that contribute to collective levels of empowerment: resources of identity, resources for learning, and resources for networking. From these three types of resources, we derive three indicators for empowerment in the transition to the second phase: online activity, online participation and diversity in the online content. Subsequently, we scrutinise the online dynamics in terms of the number of visits, comments, memories, keywords and producers. These show that the online activity grew between 2009 – 2013 but it also reveals that the number of participants and the diversity in content were decreasing. In the third phase we describe three stages of the organisational development of the Memory of East and relate them, from an empowerment perspective, to the increasing online activity and decreasing online participation. In the conclusions we shift to the evolvment of empowerment in the online community in terms of diversity.

¹⁹ This chapter was published in the *Proceedings of the Prato Community Informatics Research Network Conference* in 2014 (de Kreek, 2014b).

5.2. Main features and basic figures of the Memory of East

The website mainly contains memories consisting of written personal stories of approximately 350 words with pictures related to their content. The website's database used for analysis covers a period from 19 June 2003 to 13 March 2014. In that period, 2662 memories were published. Figure 6 shows the main features of the digital memories that were exported from the database into a data matrix for exploratory data analysis.

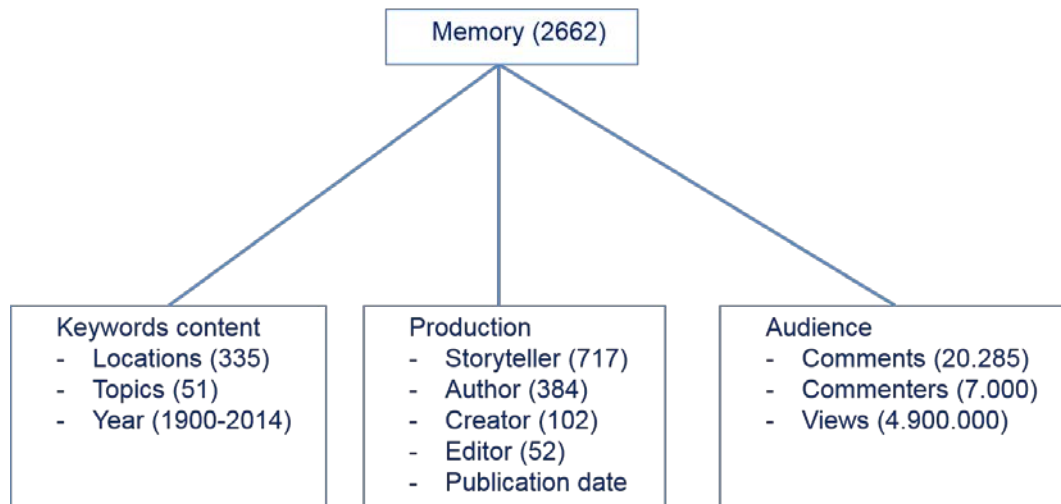


Figure 6: The main features of an online memory and their basic aggregated figures

On the website, the digital memories are labelled with an average of two location keywords like neighbourhoods or streets, with an average of five topic keywords related to the content and with one year keyword for the period the memory is about. Each memory also has various production details assigned to it: a storyteller, an author, a creator and an editor. For a memory based on an interview (1198 occurrences), the storyteller's name is different from the author's name. The storyteller and the author bear the same name if the author writes stories based on his or her own memories (1464 occurrences). A creator makes an online draft of the digital memory after which the editor checks it and publishes it for the public with a publication date. Creators can become editors after a certain number of published memories. Finally, each memory shows the number of times it has been viewed and a number of comments contributed by commenters who also leave their name. More detailed information about the online activity and participation will follow in the next sections.

5.3. The website as a complex system of narrative resources

In this section, we explore the online activity following "a narrative" turn within empowerment theory initiated by Rappaport (Mankowski & Rappaport, 2000; Rappaport, 1995, 1998). He considers narratives, including memories, to be crucial resources for empowerment, and he considers accessible narrative settings to be empowering. To explore the resourcefulness of the memories, we assume that the dynamics of the online system reflect aspects of the collective behaviour of the community of participants. With this assumption we adopt Luhman & Boje's ideas (2001) about narrative research of a complex system in organisational discourse, except that we apply their suggestions in a local, online community context. In order to arrive at appropriate analyses, we mainly rely on the approach of "story network analysis" as described by Boje (2001) according to which various characteristics of stories are modelled into story network maps. Based on these maps emerging social patterns can be identified that transcend the individual contributions. Below we relate a selection of the

collective patterns to empowerment by discussing them as narrative resources of identity, resources for learning, and resources for networking.

5.3.1. Resources of identity

We depart from Rappaport's assumption of a relation between memories told and collective identities. He suggests that "stories told and retold are indexed in memory" (1998, p. 228) and that these indexes serve "a recall function for the collective" (1998, p. 229). Based on this, we propose that anomalies in keyword use can be considered as indexes indicating collective identities. As an illustration, we map the frequencies of the topic keywords on the time dimension of the period keywords. Figure 7 illustrates not only periods being characterised by certain topics, but also the existence of more continuous topics.

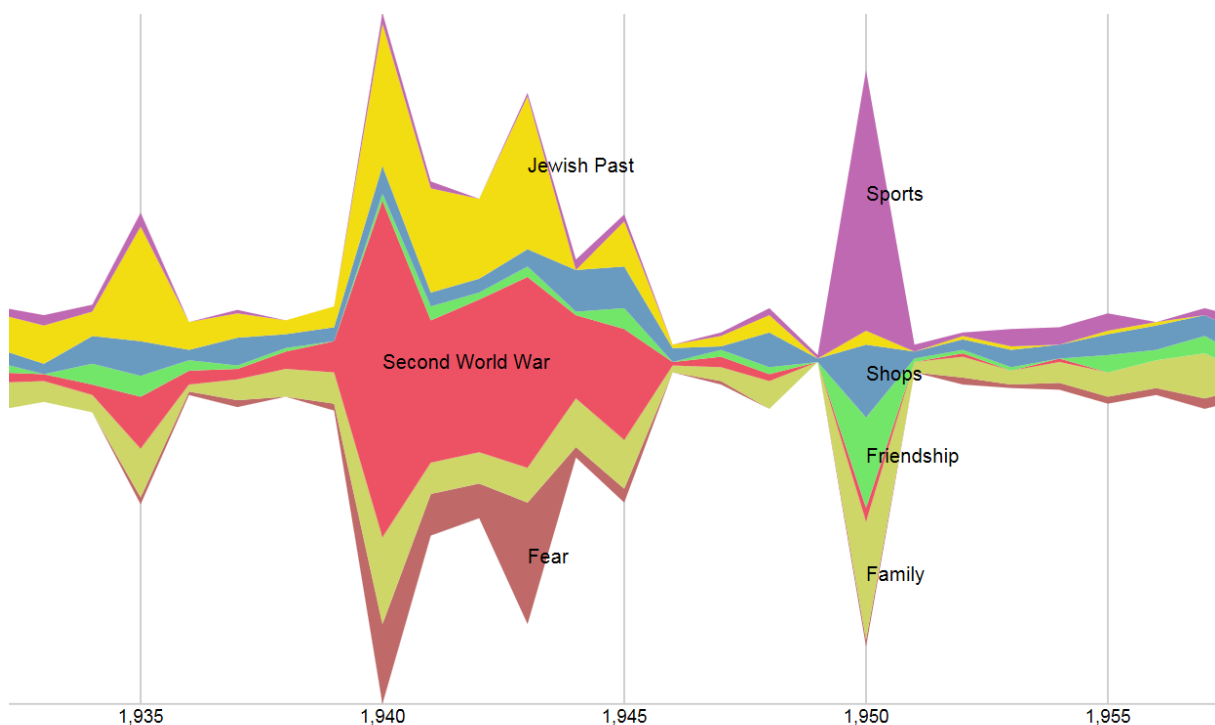


Figure 7: Distribution of seven common keywords across the period 1935–1955

An example is the "Second World War" in the period 1939–1945, which obviously, the goes together with "Jewish Past". In addition, "Fear" is more present in the war period than before or after. Another example consists of the keyword "Sport" which peaks in 1950 together with "Friendship". This period corresponded with the youth of many of the participants in the online community. Note that, except for the war period, there is a preference for assigning the beginning of a decade or a quinquennium to a memory. Consequently, the memories with "1950" cover more than one year, and possibly even the whole decade. As a final example, the keywords "Family" and "Shops" are more continuous in their presence across the whole period than the other topic keywords. They represent topics that are "of all times". An exploration of the topic keywords in space, i.e. across the location keywords, leads to comparable findings (Otjens et al., 2014).

The resulting anomalies in the data can be regarded as results of collective identification with certain topics in neighbourhoods or periods. This way, a layered patchwork of collective identities emerges, collective identities that depend on a common sense of place or social history, or a combination both. Some of these identities exist on a neighbourhood

level, while others are on the period level or both. And still others manifest themselves across nearly all neighbourhoods or periods. When identities are considered in this way, many participants can relate and contribute to some layer of collective identity with their own personal memories, which is a condition for an empowering narrative setting according to Rappaport (1995).

5.3.2. Resources for learning

Here we follow the distinction Schank & Abelson make in terms of what kinds of knowledge people transfer by sharing memories (1995). They distinguish facts, experiences and beliefs in the social learning process of remembering. In order to identify illustrations of these three kinds of knowledge sharing, we explore the comments on some memories.

The comments found on the Memory of East predominantly add pieces of factual knowledge to a memory or to other comments on it. Many of these are about individuals and locations as we can see in many of the 118 comments on the memory “Simply happy in the Pekelharingstraat” (Kunnen, 2003):

I lived on Robert Kochplantsoen 26 from 1957. I attended to Clara Feyschool on the Linnaeushof. In 1979 we moved to the Ritzema Bosstraat. Most of the names here are familiar to me, but I am from 1956. Joke and Koos Bos lived above us. I was even married to Paul Stift. (Commenter a)

This was the first comment by this particular person, contributed after approximately 89 earlier ones from other commenters. Other comments added experiential knowledge about places, periods and events to the online interaction. Here is part of the third comment from the same person on the same memory:

Last week I parked my car on the Robert Kochplantsoen to go to the dentist, Verburg, on the Middenweg. Too bad it looks so neglected there. ... I also paid a visit to Mrs Terpstra at no. 14, Corries mother. Her living room is so small! ... And the delicious slices of sausage at the butcher! (Commenter a)

A third group of comments is characterised by more critical beliefs about developments across time up to the present. For example, the memory “The escaped cow” (about the delivery of cows to the abattoir) received these comments (Penseel, 2003):

I know that many of the commenters here had some connection to the abattoir, so for them a cow was just a product instead of a living and sensitive animal that really doesn't want to die. But I saw this all happening when I was a child and it broke my heart in two. ... I don't see anyone else among the commenters who felt the same. (Commenter b)

Hi Ellen, we were not executioners; we were just doing our work. I had friends who shot sparrows out of the trees, but I did not see the fun in that, despite the fact that I had just slaughtered 600 pigs. I always say that you have to eat what you kill and otherwise you should leave it alone. (Commenter c)

Yes, Ellen, my heart also broke when I saw the situation of these animals. But I do eat meat once in a while (not much). ... I believe that if an animal has to be slaughtered it should be done in a HUMANE way. (Commenter d)

Zooming out from the level of concrete comments, Figure 8 offers us insight into which topics received the most comments on the Memory of East.

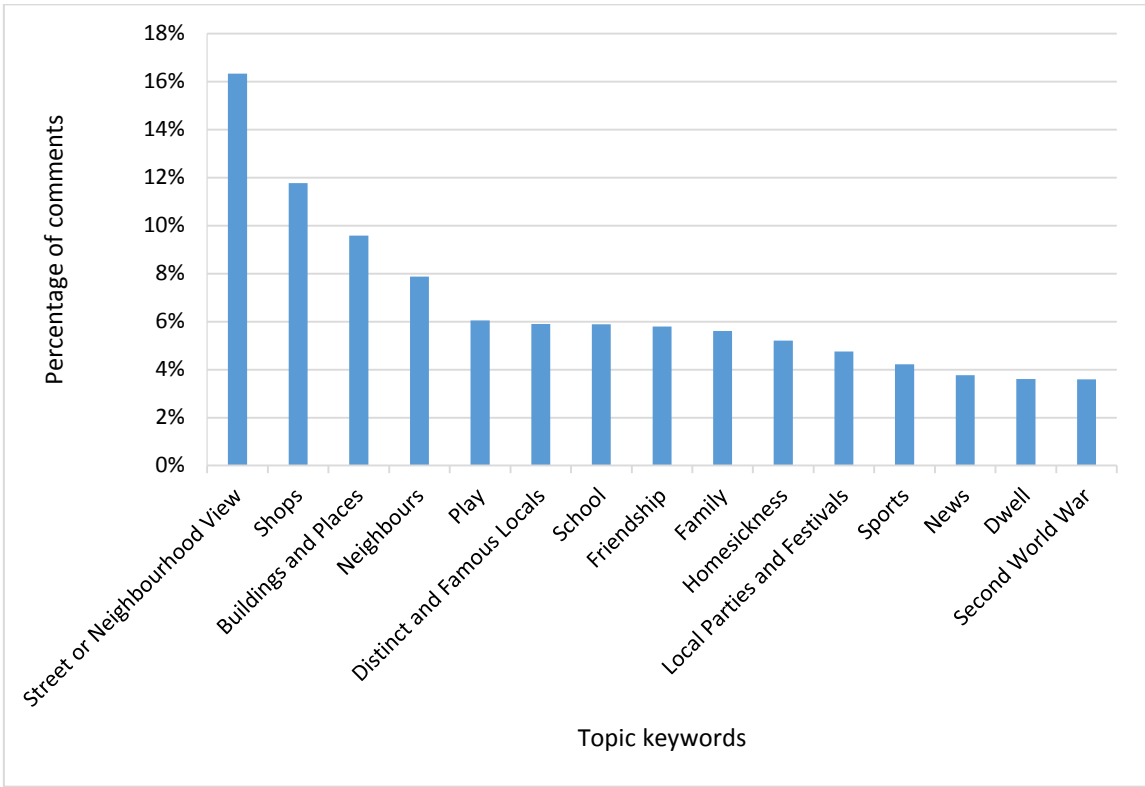


Figure 8: Top 20 topic keywords ordered by the number of comments received

The distribution in Figure 8 does not follow the distribution of the topic keywords based on occurrences in general. For example the keyword “Jewish past” (458 memories / 714 comments) is absent in Figure 8, whereas it was the third most used keyword for labelling memories. On the other hand we see the keywords “Neighbours” (231 memories) and “Play” (227 memories) are in fourth and fifth place in Figure 8, with 2648 and 2032 comments, respectively. These patterns imply that participants had their preferences in terms of which topics they wanted to share knowledge about.

The examples and patterns indicate that various kinds of knowledge are shared in the comments. Sharing the more factual elements is a process easily triggered by a memory. Participants like to complement the memory or the ongoing series of comments with the facts they know about related people and locations. Once part of the interaction, a person might also share related experiences from the present or the past. Finally, discussions might develop that transcend the memory by picking up a moral topic that is not directly related to the memory but was introduced by a commenter. Especially the exchange of and interactions about the last two kinds of local knowledge, we would claim, along with various other academics (Burgess et al., 2006; Burgess, 2006; Maton, 2008) invokes empowering, reflective practices that facilitate social learning in which cultural values are negotiated. Obviously, it has to be investigated more thoroughly which knowledge is actually shared across the memories, but it seems safe to assume that a larger number of comments on a memory increases the chances that the interaction will move towards the sharing of beliefs.

5.3.3. Resources for networking

Here we follow Wellman's ideas about how people are networked in the digital age (Wellman, 2002). From him, we derive three networking characteristics: strong networks, light networks and boundary crossing. We assume that the participants in the Memory of East are "webbing" around the content following these characteristics and as such lay the bedrock for social forms of power.

The strong networks consist of individuals who "stick together" across different memories. An example is a small group of people who call themselves the "street kids of the past" (261 comments) after a digital memory with the same name. Figure 9 gives a visual impression of the distribution of the number of comments on this memory across the various commenters. It clearly shows that four persons had done most of the commenting.

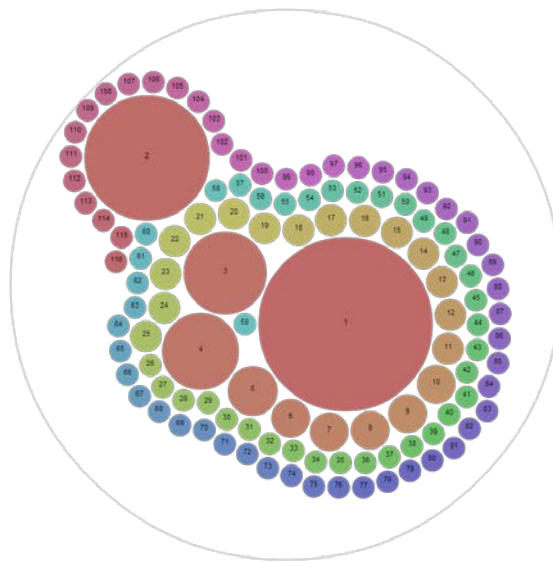


Figure 9: Commenters visualised by their comments on "Street kids of the past"

Groups like this one use the memories as digital meeting places, where the interaction kicks off with sharing memories but quickly shifts to discussing their personal life and current society. The relationships existed in the past, but judging from their comments the individuals met again through the website.

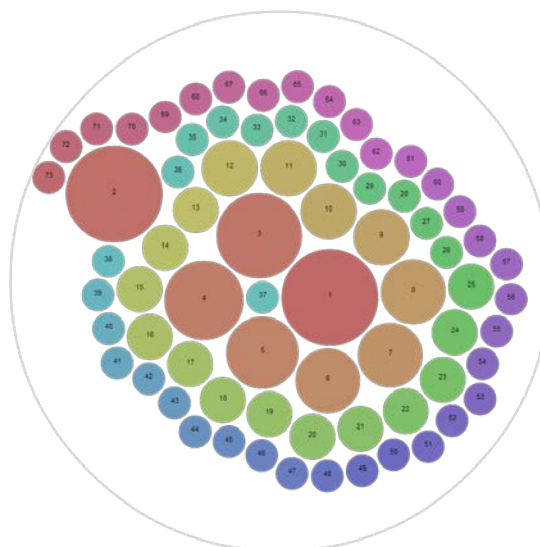


Figure 10: Commenters visualised by their comments on "Archipel as a marriage broker"

These digital meeting places of strong groups have another dynamic than the lighter networks that manifest themselves more spontaneously around certain memories. Figure 10 above shows the commenters on a korfbal club memory “Archipel as marriage broker” (134 comments). There is a more even distribution in terms of how many comments each commenter made than in Figure 9. The comments here remain more “on topic” than in the case of the street kids above and are mostly additional memories about individuals and events related to the korfbal club. The current differences between the two can be explained by the character of the original social configurations. A small group of street kids has clearer boundaries and stronger ties than the members of a sports club as a whole would. Presumably, both configurations have been revived and reproduced online in the present.

Some active commenters remain mainly within the boundaries of certain groups forming at the meeting places. For example, one member of the street kids clearly stuck to four main digital memories in terms of where he left most of his 766 comments as Figure 11 shows.

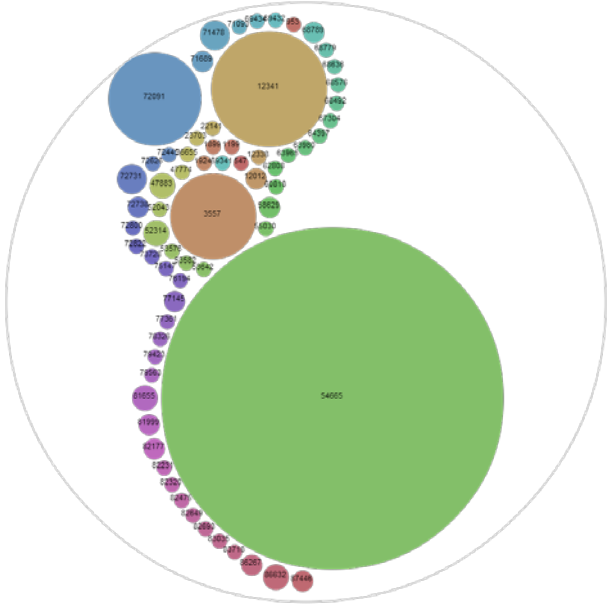


Figure 11: The distribution of the comments of one “sticky” commenter on 67 memories

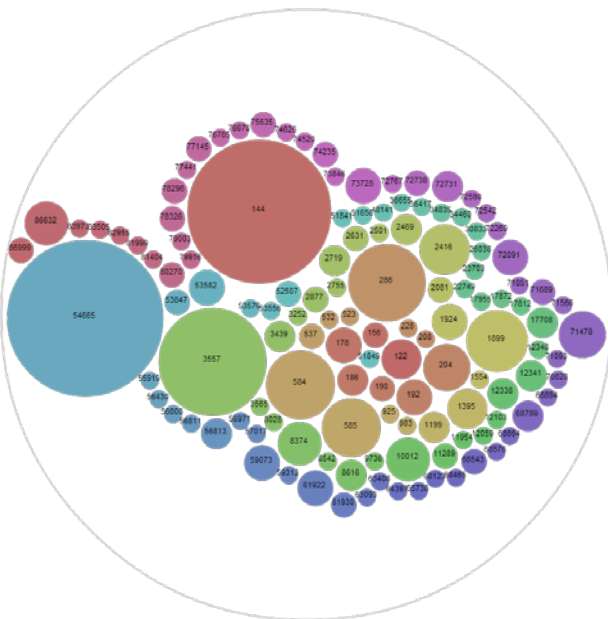


Figure 12: The distribution of the comments of a “boundary crosser” on 127 memories

Other active commenters can be considered as crossing the boundaries of various groups. Figure 12 above shows a participant with 468 comments who was likewise involved in the street kids' interaction, but at the same time active in many more commenting groups than the person in Figure 11.

Examples of social power in the various networks are best illustrated by taking into consideration social learning and collective identities. Although the street kids of the past do not have a strong identity in terms of having many memories which create a cluster, they do have a strong presence in terms of the number of comments they contributed to a few memories. Inspecting the comments on one of those memories more closely, we see that a member writes poems and semi-fiction in which he incorporates aspects of the discussions that are going on. Some of the other comments were directed against his contributions, because some visitors disliked his sometimes rough language. At a certain point one of the editors of the website removed one of his contributions, but that sparked the members of the strong street kids' network to ask for the by-laws of the Memory of East and insight into who made up the editors' group. The korfbal network, on the other hand, has a stronger identity as part of the 19 sports memories on korfbal. In addition, it has its own page where these memories are collected to memorialise the eight now-defunct clubs, but also to organise enthusiasm for the survival of the two remaining clubs. Both these forms of social power can be thought of as examples of the "pathways of influence" described by Maton (2008). With the boundary crossers linking networks together, larger parts of the Memory of East as a whole can be considered to influence its environment in various ways.

In this section we have explored three areas of collective patterns in the online dynamics and related them to empowerment aspects. However, in order to study the evolvement of empowerment in the Memory of East, we have to follow the online dynamics across the years it has been active.

5.4. The online dynamics across a decade

From the narratives-as-resources approach adopted in the previous section, three indicators for empowerment can be derived that will play a role in this section. Firstly, the level of online activity in terms of memories and comments is related to social learning processes. Secondly, the number of participants is crucial for safeguarding the variation in and across networks. And finally, the diversity in content is important to facilitate multiple collective identities. Below, we combine the first two indicators, before moving on to discuss the third.

5.4.1. Increasing activity and decreasing participation

A more nuanced picture of the online activity and participation arises if we probe beyond the aggregated level of the basic figures in Figure 6 from the first section. Data collected by Google Analytics covering the last five years – additional data is unavailable – give additional information about increasing online activity of the whole website. Table 5 below shows an increasing number of sessions, session time, pages per session and page views. However, the number of unique visitors does not change significantly, while the number of new visitors even decreases.

Table 5: Google Analytics: sessions, page views and visitors in the period 2009–2013

Year	Sessions	Session time	Pages/session	Page views	Unique visitors	% new visitors
2009	180,479	0:03:13	3.77	680,026	131,018	72.57%
2010	208,200	0:02:51	3.51	731,663	149,218	70.07%
2011	212,922	0:03:49	3.97	844,672	133,273	60.88%
2012	224,945	0:04:32	4.34	977,300	142,305	61.61%
2013	224,988	0:04:55	4.98	1,120,885	141,061	60.84%

If we look closer at certain periods in Table 5: Google Analytics details on sessions, page views and visitors in the period 2009–2013, it becomes clear that the first year and the last two years are exceptional in terms of the numbers of published memories. Note that 2014 has not been included because the data used for the analysis covered only two and a half months of that year. Figure 13 also shows that the number of memories was increasing during the last four complete years.

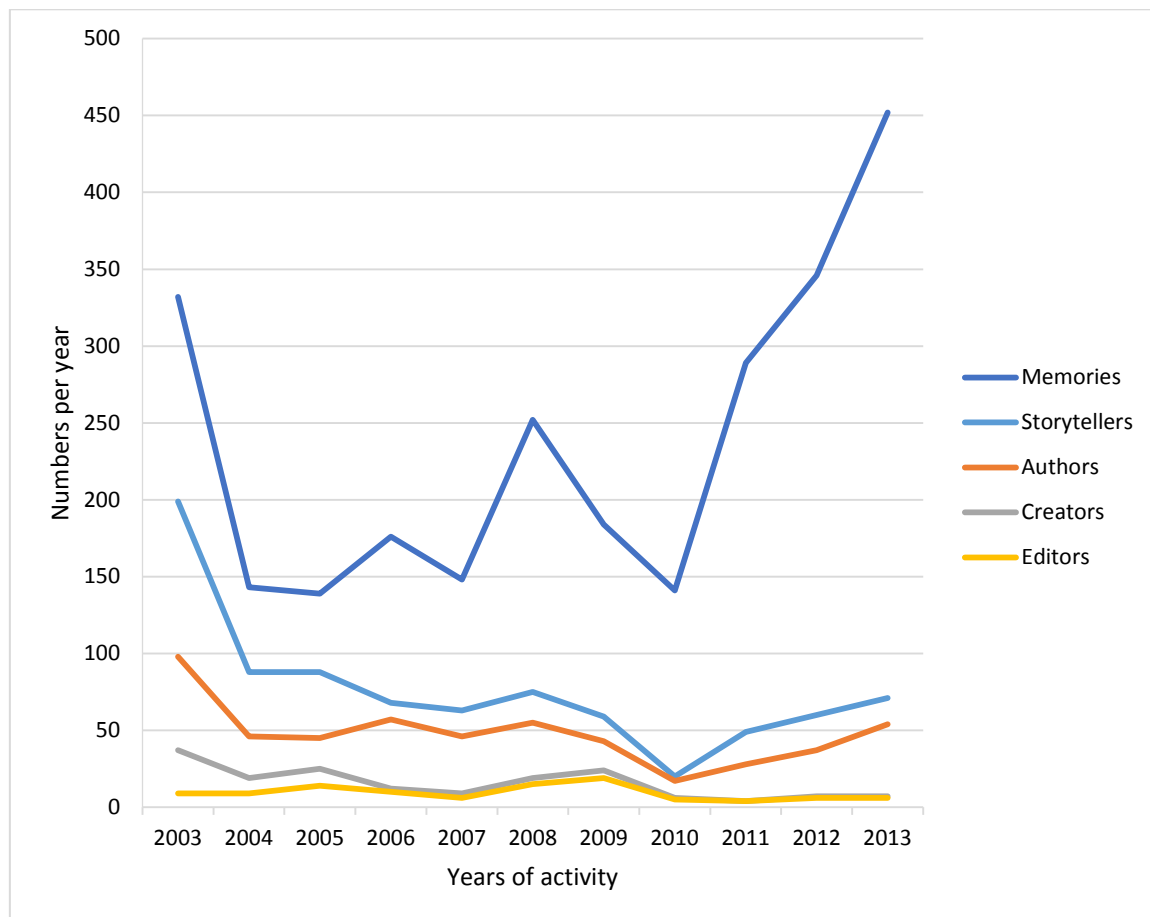


Figure 13: Numbers of memories and producers across the years of online activity

Despite the increase in activity, the total number of participating locals in various production roles decreases over time. During the last four years of the range shown, the numbers of creators and editors fluctuated around five individuals who actually fulfilled both roles, which in fact means that the role of creator had disappeared. Although the numbers of storytellers and authors had been rising since 2011, one should bear in mind that, relative to the recent high yearly numbers of memories, participation should be considered low compared to the preceding years.

With respect to comments, Figure 14 illustrates how the website’s visitors were leaving a growing number of comments. At the same time, after a period of divergent growth, the number of commenters had been decreasing since 2011.

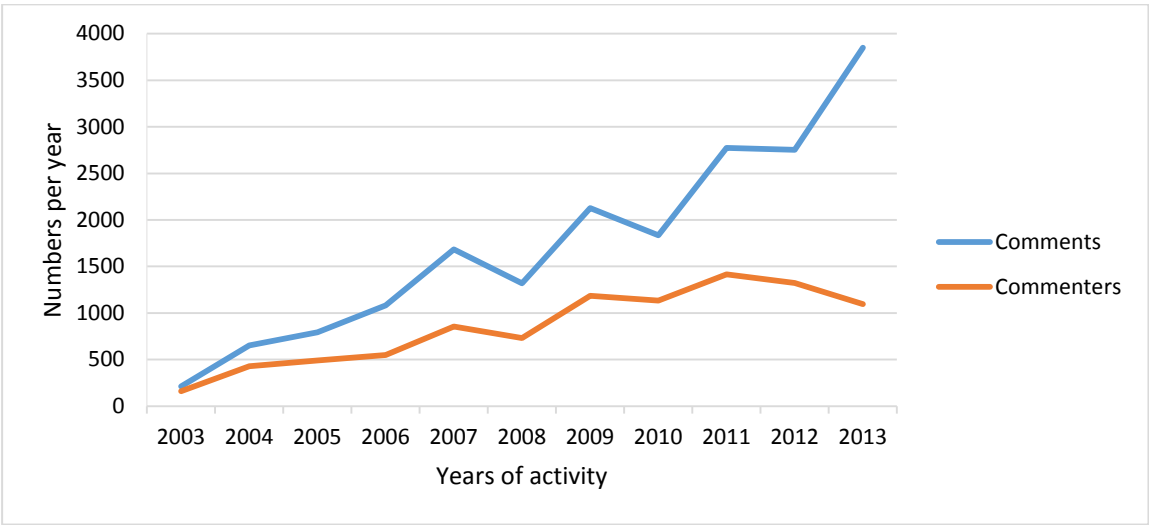


Figure 14: The number of comments and commenters over the years of online activity

Having insights into the growing online activity and the decrease in online participation, one might rightly wonder how the diversity in the online content developed.

5.4.2. Decreasing diversity in the content

The cumulative use of location keywords over time, as shown in Figure 15, reveals the relatively fast rise of five neighbourhood keywords, while most of the other neighbourhood keywords remained stable.

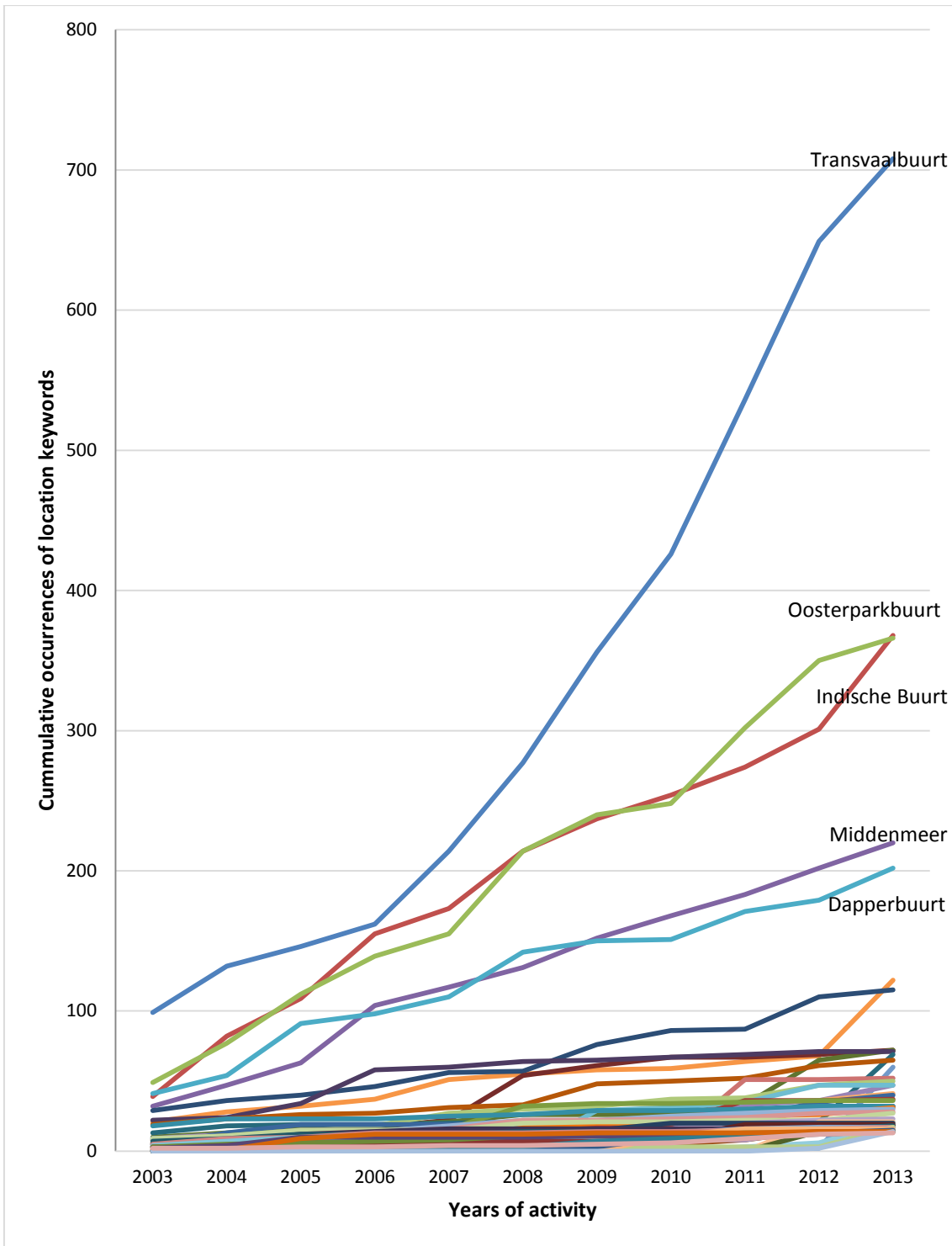


Figure 15: Development of location keywords during the years of online activity

Stability for a neighbourhood keyword means that after a certain moment no more new memories are contributed with that keyword. Most of the fast-growing keywords grew proportionally. The exception is the number of occurrences of “Transvaalbuurt” which grew disproportionately faster as time passed by.

Similarly to situation amongst the location keywords, we can see in Figure 16 how the occurrence of certain topic keywords also grew disproportionately to that of the others. Examples are “Jewish Past”, “Family”, “Second World War” and “Buildings & Places”, all of which seem to have grown in popularity amongst the participants’ memories over time.

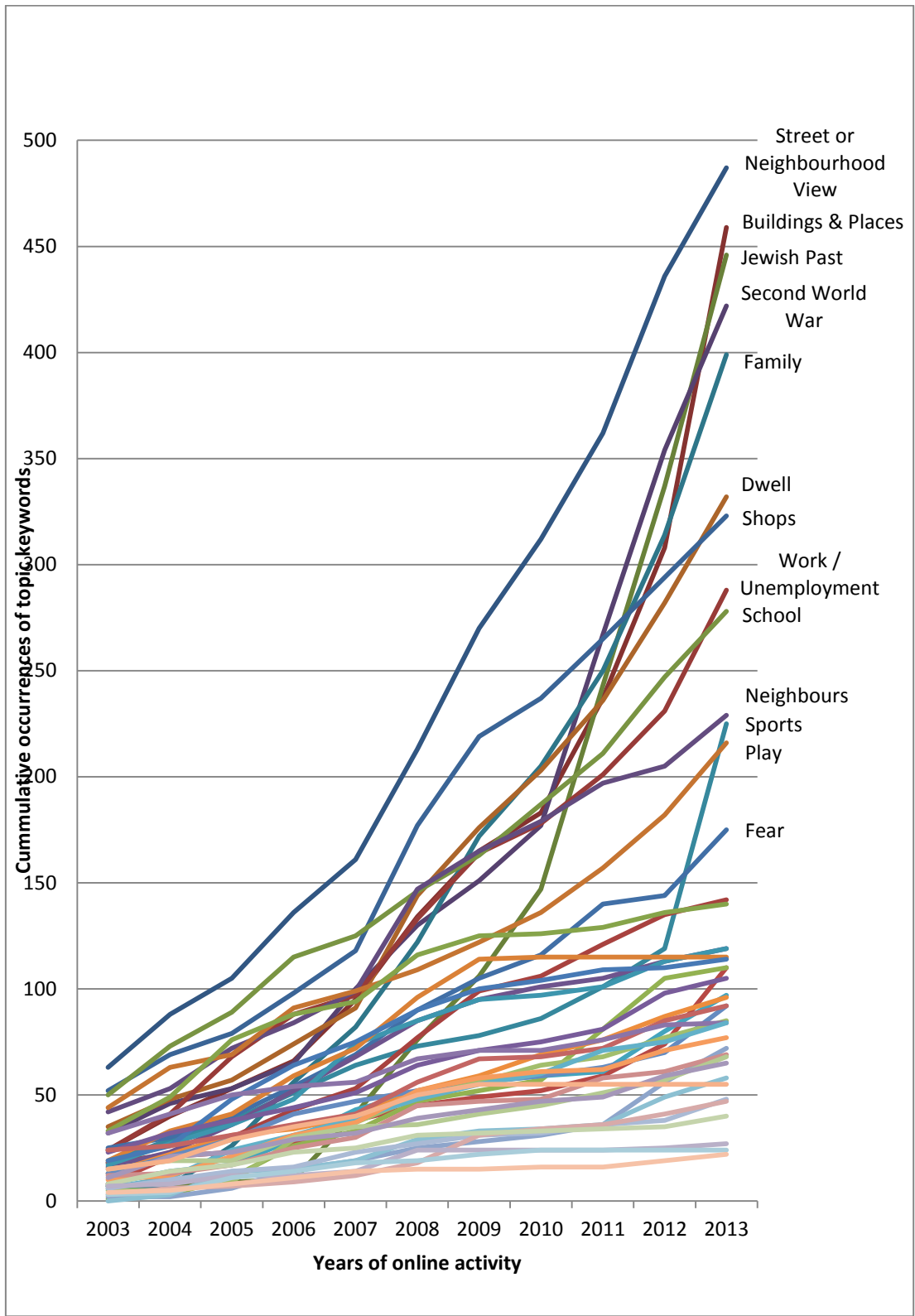


Figure 16: Development of topic keywords during the years of online activity

In Figure 17 the period keywords are grouped in 5-year periods in order to facilitate interpretation. In this case, the periods 1940–1944 and 1950–1954 grew disproportionately compared to the other period keywords.

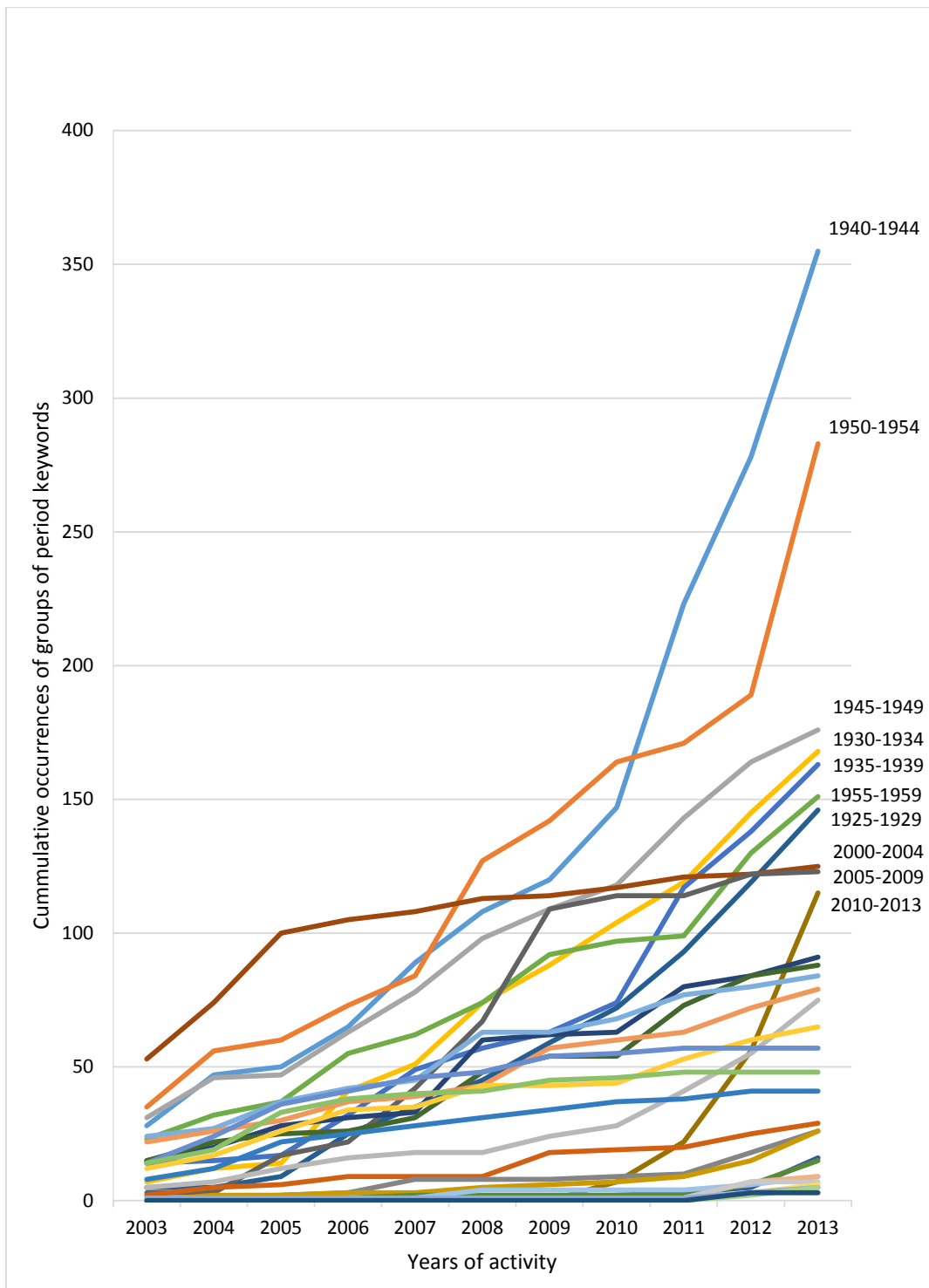


Figure 17: Development of period keywords during the years of online activity

This section illustrates how the three earlier-derived collective aspects of empowerment evolve in the online community. The online activity in terms of numbers of memories and comments increased, but that was also thanks to a decreasing group of participants. At the same time, the community's content seems to have become increasingly dominated by certain neighbourhoods, topics and periods. The possible causes of this evolvment are explored in the next section by studying the organisational context of the Memory of East.

5.5. Organisational aspects behind the online community

De Kreek & van Zoonen (2013a) related the success of a local memory website in terms of online activity and participation to some tentative organisational rules of thumb. Participants should have a high level of autonomy to contribute memories or comment on them. In addition, and partly following from this autonomy, they should have control over the content of their contributions in order for them to be authentic. This implies a combination of partners and aims, a minor role for professionals in the methods, a combination of all formats, memories up to yesterday and, finally, a reasonable set of affordances. These characteristics maximise the chances of a local memory website maturing into a longer-term phenomenon with a critical mass of memories and comments carried by many people from the local community in different roles. These guidelines will be discussed against the organisational background of the Memory of East over time, taking into consideration the development in both online activity and participation from the previous section.

5.5.1. The exhibition period: 2001–2004

As part of a longer tradition of trying to reach out to new target groups – and of succeeding in that endeavour – the Amsterdam Museum started in 2001 with the preparations for its first exhibition on a particular district of Amsterdam in 2003 “East, an Amsterdam Neighbourhood [*sic*]” (Ernst, 2006). The choice for this specific, mainly pre-World War II area called Oost-Watergraafsmeer with 60,000 inhabitants was based on the high degree of diversity among its population, which meant it had a wide range of lifestyles and social backgrounds. At the same time, some of the neighbourhoods of East had less favourable reputations, partly because of high unemployment and neglected apartment buildings where mostly ethnic minority groups were living. In other neighbourhoods of East, the houses were better maintained and inhabited more elderly people of Dutch origin.

In the district’s neighbourhoods the Amsterdam Museum was thought to be relatively unknown, which is why the museum also wanted to promote there what it had to offer. Against this background, the museum wanted to develop this exhibition in cooperation with the residents living in the various neighbourhoods. This approach was in line with the museum’s conviction that historical consciousness and knowledge about local history can improve relations between residents and, in the process, contribute to social cohesion (Oosterbroek, 2008). In this context, the museum conducted a number of outreach projects with the help of internship students from the Cultural and Social Development programme at the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences.

One of those outreach projects consisted of collecting local memories on a website called “the Memory of East”. The museum partnered with a social welfare institution in Amsterdam East, Dynamo, which ran a number of computer clubhouses under the name “Neighbourhood Online” where residents could follow computer courses. Their joint objectives were formulated as follows: “improving social cohesion and accessibility, increasing skills and helping people to become better acquainted with art and culture, as well as the history of Amsterdam” (Ernst, 2006, p. 110). The text on the website formulated its purpose towards the public as “portraying Amsterdam East from the past to the present in a lively way” with “a website where ordinary, everyday memories and stories of locals are collected and told by motivated volunteers” (Amsterdam Museum, 2003b). In addition, the home page stated that “Everybody – you too – can participate” (Amsterdam Museum, 2003a).

Ten months before the opening of the exhibition, a group of 32 volunteers began receiving training. The partnership with the local Neighbourhood Online made it easier to

attract a group of residents that mirrored the social and cultural diversity in the district. To include youngsters, a secondary school was successfully approached (Ernst, 2006). Organised by the museum, professionals trained the participants in collecting stories of maximal 350 words and related objects. Neighbourhood Online trained them in using the internet to present the stories and pictures of objects online (van Eekeren, 2012). Some of the locals wrote down their own stories, while others interviewed neighbours to collect their stories. Although the website's name has the word "memory" in it, the stories could cover the past but also the present day (Ernst, 2006) and contain both everyday as well as historical topics (van Eekeren, 2012). A set of 50 rather broad topic keywords was developed in cooperation with the story collectors, whereas the set of neighbourhoods could grow organically depending on the stories coming in. It was regarded as crucial for the success of this project that the volunteers could decide for themselves what topics, periods or places they wanted to collect stories about. This made the stories easy to identify with, and that, in turn, encouraged others to contribute new stories (Ernst, 2006; Oosterbroek, 2008; van Eekeren, 2012). The volunteers involved were also present at the exhibition at what was called the "Memory Square", with four computers where visitors could look at the website, and the 200 stories it already had at that time. The volunteers informed visitors about the use of the website and invited them to contribute their stories as well (van Eekeren, 2012).

On the website, the main features for navigation "mimicked" (just as they still do) the way humans recollect stories. Human remembering functions largely by associations in which one story makes one think of another (Oosterbroek, 2008). Analogously, each story on the website is presented in a context of related stories. The strengths of these relations are calculated based on the overlap in a number of features, including keywords, the storyteller and the author. The related stories are presented to the right of the main story on a page in decreasing order of strength. Other main navigation tools include menu items for the latest comments and the latest stories, locations such as neighbourhoods and streets, and, finally, personal profile pages. When it comes to the interactivity of the website, an important affordance was that participants with a specific login account could create a draft version of their digital memories on the website that would be published by one of the editors. Another and more accessible way to contribute is by commenting on someone else's memory; one only need leave a name and an e-mail address in order for the comment to be published.

In the 2003 – 2004 period, the organisational aspects seemed to be aligned according to the earlier-mentioned organisational rules of thumb with respect to online activity and participation. Both the more formal aims formulated in terms of cohesion and skills and the more informal purpose of bringing the distant and the recent past of Amsterdam East to life form an adequate combination. The former legitimated the actions of the museum professionals using their own jargon, and the latter was considered more likely to motivate locals to become participants. Obviously, both were inspired by the idea of contributing to an exhibition in the museum. Although the role of the professionals was considerable in starting the project and facilitating and training the participants, their involvement was absent in the actual collection or self-writing of memories. Decisions about new topic keywords and adjustments of the website's affordance were realised in co-creation between the professionals and the memory producers. The invitation to contribute everyday memories about a broad range of topics, whether from last week or from 70 years ago, attracted many to do so, because it meant that everybody was potentially positioned as an expert. In addition to the website's mimicking of the associative character of human memory, the possibility to add your own draft digital memory and the accessible way of leaving a comment, both being affordances of the website, seem to have been in "right place". All these aspects have contributed to the engagement of a high number of online participants (approximately 200) and to the high numbers that characterise the online activity in terms of new memories (approximately 330) added during this period as illustrated in the previous

section. Ultimately, the website's success was formally recognised when it was awarded a prize for the best "Digital Playground" initiated in 2003.

5.5.2. The supporting period: 2004–2009

Although the Memory of East started out as a temporary project running until the beginning of 2004, once the exhibition had finished it was extended at the request of the story producers from the various neighbourhoods, Neighbourhood Online volunteers and some museum employees. Some "experienced volunteers set up new groups and gave training sessions themselves for Turkish and Moroccan women, helping them to overcome language problems when writing for the website" (Ernst, 2006, p. 111). Such activities were in agreement with an additional aim that was added to the website in this period: "The Memory of East strives for social integration and social participation of various groups in Amsterdam East, including people for whom it is sometimes difficult to participate in social life" (Amsterdam Museum, 2008). The museum slowly drew back from the intensive role it had played during the first years of the project, partly to be able to start other outreach projects (Oosterbroek, 2008). Nevertheless, its intention was to keep supporting the community and the website at a more basic level, and it did so until 2006 by securing subsidies from the local government, among others. By that time, the group of volunteers had grown to about 100 in various roles, and a total of 600 stories had been published.

After the subsidised period, the museum supported the community mainly by facilitating internships for students. This resulted in a fluctuation in the quality of the outreach work that was available for facilitating the volunteers. Together with the wider availability of computers at home, which meant there was less reason to visit Neighbourhood Online, the weekly gatherings of the volunteers became quieter and the number of volunteers decreased from 2007 onwards. Interestingly enough, the growth of stories stayed more or less equal, about 175 stories per year, reaching a total of 1000 in 2008. In 2009 the museum started to make plans to develop the website into a completely independent community run only by volunteers, except for the hosting of the website.

In the beginning of this period some important organisational changes presumably influenced the decline in online participation in terms of memory producers. One change was that the common goal of the exhibition was now absent, which made what at first had been a project become more like a community of practice in which locals from Amsterdam East told stories about their neighbourhoods. The other aims of creating a lively portrait of Amsterdam East and improving social cohesion and skills remained the same, but a new one, concerning vulnerable citizens, was added. Another change is that volunteers began to organise their own activities, first with help of subsidised professionals and later involving internships. Looking at the online activity during the transition from the exhibition period, we see a decline in the number of memories published. It seems likely that this mainly had to do with the exhibition having finished in early 2004, because the other organisational changes arrived more gradually over time. During the period between 2004 and 2009, the online activity remained more or less stable, apart from some location keywords starting to dominate the others. This can be explained by the museum's original choice to focus on one districts with various neighbourhoods. Memories about surrounding districts and their neighbourhoods remained sparse.

5.5.3. The self-organising period: 2009–2013

The process of becoming more self-organising was finalised in 2010 during a symposium with 100 visitors. Held at the museum, it consisted of both a look back at the Memory of East

and a look ahead (Soolsma, 2010; van Eekeren, 2012). Around that time, about 1500 stories had been collected on the website (van Eekeren & Spies, 2010). Since 2010, a group of about eight volunteers had focused on a limited number of activities. The incoming stories were edited in consultation with the author (if necessary) and then published on the website with one or more pictures. The web editors also experimented with new rubrics, such as a monthly photo contest (“Spotted in East”) and short movies about the area (“Moving East”). Other new main ways of navigation were offered by clustering memories on one page (e.g. “Jewish Past” and “Former Neighbourhood Shops”). New affordances, or adjustments to those already available, were proposed and discussed with the professionals from the museum (which financed the website). It proved to be important and productive to align with Facebook and Twitter in order to draw more visitors to the website, but also to gather new content.

Various activities were organised that were within reach of the group of volunteers. Interested people could, for example, attend writing and interview workshops that are focused on producing stories for the website. Another activity consisted of the story walks organised on regular basis for schoolchildren and grown-up residents. In 2010, the administrative area of Amsterdam East was expanded to include some other, adjacent districts, together forming a “greater Amsterdam East”. Thanks to its presence at neighbourhood events such as markets and festivals across this new area, people had a chance to become acquainted with the Memory of East. In early 2013, a book commemorating its tenth anniversary was published, including more than 50 stories from the website, which at that time contained about 2400 stories and was attracting 142,000 unique visitors per year. In 2013, the core group of participants formulated a new mission:

On the Memory of East people from various ages and backgrounds tell their stories about their Amsterdam East. Individually, they consist of joyfully made personal stories, but on neighbourhood level the memory of East connects people and stimulates contacts between neighbours (including former ones and new ones). The website fosters feelings of belonging and offers locals a place where they can present their memories and share their emotions. Together they make the story of Amsterdam East (Translated from: Volunteers, 2013).

Some important changes in the organisational aspects in this period influenced online activity and participation. The core group of participants set up a new associational constitution with its own rich mission and aims. In this mission and aims, diversity was, and still is, important again, although the vulnerable citizen that was introduced in the previous period is absent. The slogan “The future starts with the past”, omnipresent on the website, fuels the inspiration of all the participants and visitors. The decisions to experiment with new rubrics, clusters or keywords were more often made solely by the core group than in the previous period, when decisions often were made with the professionals. Related to this were the specialisations that some of the core participants developed, for example in sports, former neighbourhood shops and the Jewish past. Both these observations imply a growth of autonomy of the core participants. With respect to the methods for involving new participants, the focus in this period lay on offering activities like writing or interviewing workshops. The approach used in the previous periods to target certain groups like youngsters or the Moroccan community by collaborating with other organisations had moved to the background. An important change in terms of the use of the affordances was the disappearance of the login accounts that allowed people to create a draft version of their digital memory. In 2014 there were only five individuals in the core group who possessed and used the permission to create and publish stories, so all of the memories from other participants arrived through the central e-mail address. This change implied less autonomy for those participants who were only incidentally

involved in the community, but it also created a bigger time lapse during which they had no control over the content of their memories.

5.6. Conclusion and discussion

In the previous three sections, we analysed the evolvement of empowerment in the online community of the Memory of East in three phases. From the perspective of memories as resources for empowerment, in the first phase, we arrived at illustrations of collective identities, social learning and networking. In addition, we derived three indicators for empowerment in an online community: online activity, online participation and diversity in the online content. In the second phase, an analysis of the online dynamics over time showed how the increasing online activity was delivered by a shrinking group of participants, while the diversity in the content was decreasing at the same time. The third phase, in the previous section, gave insights into the causes of the increasing online activity and the shrinking group of participants. In this section, we return to the decrease in the diversity of the content.

5.6.1. Empowered, but less empowering

Over time the Amsterdam Museum and its professionals drew back from the Memory of East in order to give the group of people who were involved the possibility to grow into an empowered and self-organising community. The participants in the Memory of East did indeed grow into a group with a considerable amount of control about where the community as a whole was going. At the end of the research period, the core group was enthusiastically producing content on special themes and making use of Twitter and Facebook to attract a high number of visitors who were leaving their comments. They were publishing the incoming memories and organising activities to attract new participants. Everything seemed to be aligned with the community's mission, but although it was doing well in terms of online activity, the group of participants was shrinking and the content was becoming less diverse. We have to look beyond the surface to draw conclusions about why this was the case.

Although the group that existed at the end of the research period invited anyone to contribute a memory about the far or recent past, not everyone reached by this invitation felt they had something interesting to tell or they felt insecure about their writing. To deal with this, people were invited to participate in workshops, which again formed a barrier for many locals. More natural collaboration with schools or self-organisations proved to be hard to organise during the last few years of the third period studied. An additional issue was that the present core group no longer mirrored the composition of the population of Amsterdam East. The result of these aspects was a natural selection of elderly participants who had grown up in Amsterdam East and enjoyed a Dutch education, a situation that was indeed mirrored by the content on the website. Consequently, elderly people who did not grow up in Amsterdam East, but also youngsters and middle aged people were among the groups underrepresented in the memories on the website. This decrease in diversity was reinforced by the specialisation of some of the very active participants in terms of specific themes such as sports or shops. Moreover, the natural selection causing the decrease was a self-enforcing process, because people can become insecure if they are unable to identify with the online content. For some of the communities or neighbourhoods in Amsterdam East, for example, the 700 memories about the Jewish past is a minor part of their past and thus might be experienced as overwhelming or unknown.

Summarising, we can conclude that the empowerment of the core group of participants succeeded in terms of the independent self-organisation. At the same time the empowering capacity towards the community had decreased through a natural selection

process which limited participation and diversity. But there was yet another risk of becoming independent, as we will discuss below.

5.6.2. Empowering the empowered individual?

The beliefs in the core group about what constitutes the success of the website steers towards individual empowerment at the expense of collective empowerment. The success of the website is more often discussed in quantitative terms than in qualitative terms. Taken to the extreme, this means that the number of visitors is more important than having a few stories from locals who are underrepresented on the website. Especially when this thinking justifies the high-speed content production of a few locals, the collective benefits move to the background. This is a variation on what both Christens and Riger warn of in the case of professionals who focus too much on “productive” individual empowerment: it fosters instrumental thinking and it neglects collective empowerment in which relationships play a central role (Christens, 2013; Riger, 1993). In other words, the challenge for this community, as Christens formulates the issue, is “to focus not only on the ... values of mastery and independence, but also on the ... values of connection and community” again (Christens, 2012a, p. 117).

As stated above, attempts were made to involve “others” with the workshops and the publicity, but the ideas about success also unintentionally excluded disempowered individuals from participating. It seems that the self-organising community of the Memory of East inherited some classic, often neglected, challenges in the field, including the accompanying professional language. For example, the earlier discussed thresholds for participation of some groups indicate the “build it and they will come” approach that professionals often grapple with (Foth & Adkins, 2006; Lambert, 2002). The core group was convinced that offering workshops and publicity was enough of an effort to get vulnerable people to come and contribute their memories. It often resulted exactly to the opposite, however, since it attracted empowered individuals and did not appeal to disempowered ones. Obviously, further comparative research of more cases is needed to discover what forces can bend back these developments in the Memory of East to a more empowering setting.

6. Evolving empowerment in the Memory of West

6.1. Introduction

In this chapter I describe the second case study, which concerns the Memory of West. To answer the research questions, we will follow the same phases and apply the same methods as in the previous chapter. After describing its main features and key figures in the following section, three successive phases of analysis will follow in the sections thereafter. We illustrate in the first phase how the online dynamics are related to resources of identity and resources for both learning and networking. Compared to the previous chapter, some visualisations are improved. In the following phase, we analyse the online dynamics in terms of three composite indicators for these resources: online activity, online participation and diversity in the online content. In the third phase we describe four stages of organisational development of the Memory of West and relate them to the development of the three indicators. In the conclusions we shift to the evolution of collective empowerment in the online community influenced by organisational developments.

6.2. Main features and key figures of the Memory of West

The website's database used for the analysis covers a period from 30 April 2004 to 13 March 2014. We studied the textual contributions of approximately 350 words with one or more pictures related to their content. Three types of texts are identified as memories: "Stories" (1576), "Stories about the present" (301) and "News items" (921). The latter consists of reportages about the past or the present. In total, the website contained 2798 published memories in the given period. Figure 18 shows the main features of the digital memories that were exported from the database into a data matrix for exploratory data analysis.

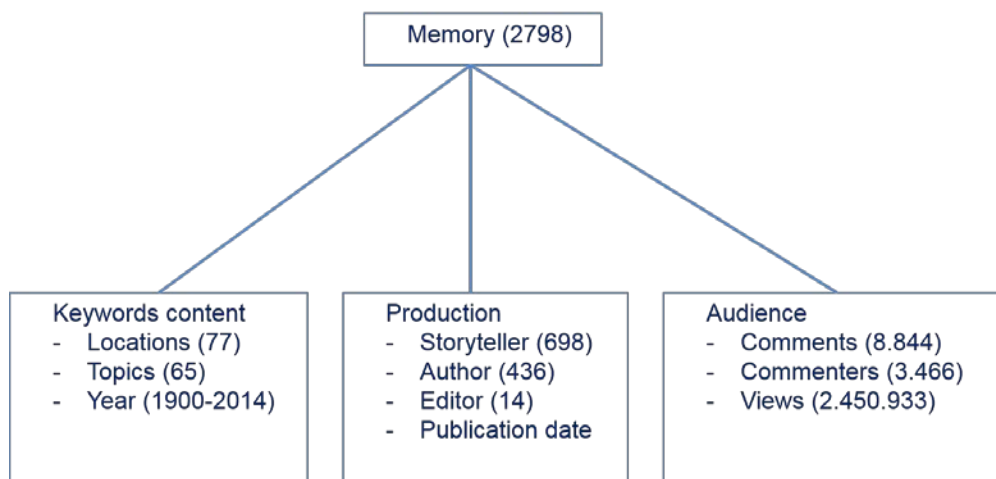


Figure 18: The main features of an online memory and their basic aggregated figures

The digital memories are labelled with an average of one location keyword, like a neighbourhood or a street. In addition they have an average of three topic keywords related to the content and an average of one year keyword for the period the memory is about. Each memory also has four production details assigned to it: a storyteller, an author, an editor and a publication date. For a digital memory based on an interview, the storyteller's name is, obviously, different from the author's name (422 occurrences). The storyteller and the author bear the same name if the author wrote stories based on his or her own memories (2376 occurrences). Among the latter, an uncertain number of cases have an implicit storyteller

who is mentioned in the text but not added to the database. However, it seems safe to conclude that less than 25% of the stories studied were written by authors based on their own memory. Once submitted, the text and pictures were checked by an editor, who may have got in contact with the author for editing, and then published the memory for the public with a publication date and other features. Finally, in terms of audience, each memory shows the number of times it has been viewed and the number of comments it has received. Any commenters also leave their name which gives insight into their number.

6.3. The website as a complex system of narrative resources

In this section, analogous to Chapter 5, we explore the relation between patterns in the online dynamics and collective aspects of empowerment by discussing them as narrative resources of identity, and resources for learning and networking (de Kreek, 2014b).

6.3.1. Resources of identity

Based on Rappaport's suggestion that "stories told and retold are indexed in memory" (1998, p. 228) and that these indexes serve "a recall function for the collective" (1998, p. 229), we assumed in Chapter 5 that anomalies in keyword use could be considered as indexes indicating collective identities. We illustrated this there by mapping the frequencies of the topic keywords on period keywords, which formed a time axis. Because of this time dimension and its ordinal character, a stream graph was a logical choice for the visualisation. This made it possible to follow the development of keyword use across the years the memories were about.

Here, however, we will illustrate the manifestation of collective identities, based on the period 2004–2013, by mapping the topic keywords on location keywords, such as neighbourhoods and former districts. Since they represent a nominal variable whose values bear no ranking relation to each other, we choose a stacked bar chart for this visualisation. Figure 19 gives an illustration of former districts (since 2010 combined into larger ones) being characterised by certain topics, but also of the existence of more evenly divided topics.

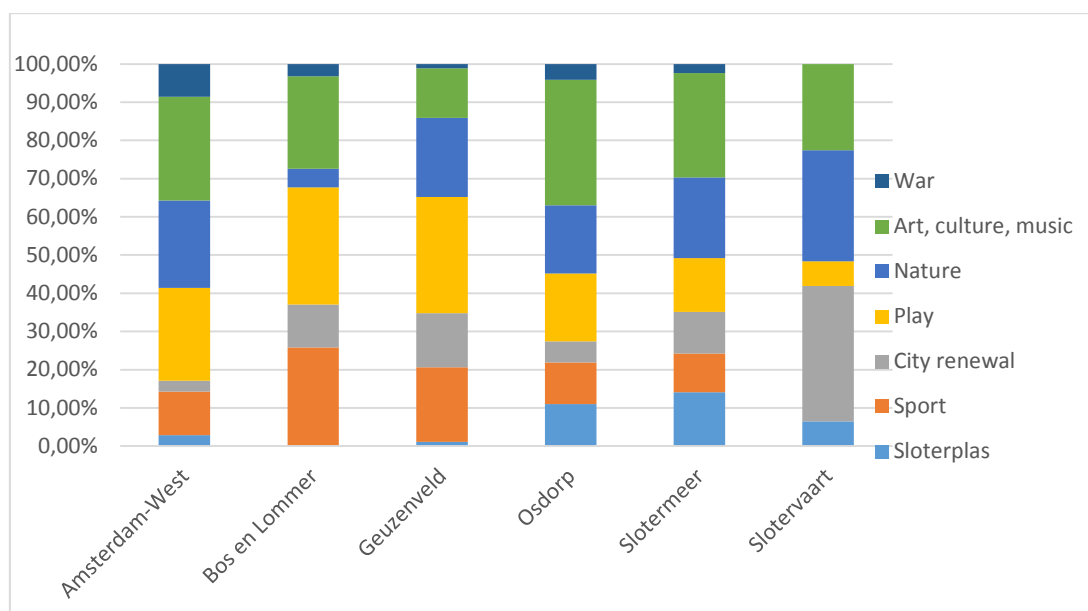


Figure 19: Distribution of seven common keywords across six neighbourhoods

An example is Slotervaart, which is much more strongly characterised by urban renewal than the other former districts in that part of Amsterdam. Bos en Lommer is remembered for experiences related to sports and play, whereas Osdorp, Slotermeer and Slotervaart call up memories about the lake Sloterpas. The district Amsterdam-West which is much older than the others, is associated with the Second World War. Memories about art, culture and music are present in more neighbourhoods. Similar findings for another local memory website, are called psycho-geographies in Otjens et al. (2014). An exploration of the topic keywords in time, i.e. across the period keywords, leads to comparable findings (de Kreek, 2014b).

The resulting anomalies in the data can be regarded as the results of collective identification with certain topics in neighbourhoods or periods. This way a layered patchwork of collective identities emerges that depends on a common sense of place or social history. Some of these identities exist on the neighbourhood level, while others exist on the period level or both. And still others manifest themselves across nearly all neighbourhoods or periods. When regarded as such a patchwork, new participants can relate and contribute to some layer of a collective identity with their own personal memories. This variation and accessibility is a condition for an empowering narrative setting, according to Rappaport (1995).

6.3.2. Resources for learning

Here, just as in Chapter 5, we distinguish facts, experiences and beliefs in the social learning process of remembering (Schank & Abelson, 1995). In order to identify illustrations of these three kinds of knowledge sharing, we explore the comments on some memories. The majority of comments on the Memory of West supply bits of factual knowledge to the text of a memory or to other comments on it. As we can see in many of the row of 90 comments on the memory “A stroll through Osdorp” (Steensma, 2006), these are predominantly about individuals and locations:

I remember that hairdresser Sijes, too. Dirk is my older brother and we lived at number 69 from 1962 until 1970, I believe on the third floor. I even met Marjolijn Kooistra last year. (Commenter e)

This is not a comment on the main story, but a comment on a comment that introduces the hairdresser Sijes. This way, small sets of comments are kept together by a topic, a location, a period or a person, or any combination of those. Once in a while, these sequences are interrupted by a new visitor’s comment on the main story which introduces new matter for the online conversations.

Besides factual knowledge, a second group of comments adds experiential knowledge about places, periods, events or people to the online interaction. The following comment is part of a series of negative statements about the quality of life in the present compared to that in the past:

Considering what it is like now and what it was like then, you could live with lots of space and greenery, but that has all changed nowadays. The greenery has given way for – often high – new housing estates with a city park here and there where people can spend their leisure time. The few local gardens still present are – as Bob mentions – badly maintained. (Commenter f)

A third group of comments consists of more critical or reflective reactions to beliefs about developments or individuals across time. For example, this chronological sequence of

comments shows how one person changed the way he had thought about a particular building caretaker since his youth:

*The caretaker was urged by several flat-dwellers to chase away the youth from the public garden. I would not like to have had that job. Sometimes he came into the garden with a large iron bar. Made quite an impression on me as a little kid.
(Commenter g)*

What a bully he was. I played soccer on the playground everyday with my friends. And every day he came to spoil our game. With an iron bar in his hand. (Commenter h)

*He used the iron bar to remove the dirt from the garbage chute. ... Much later we understood that for [the caretaker] it was all a game too and he did not mean to do any harm. Obviously, the garden and the flat had to remain reasonably clean.
(Commenter i)*

*[Commenter j], funny to read this. I have always regarded [the caretaker] as a “tyrant”, an awfully cruel person. Of course this was fuelled by the older youths in our street. There you go with how propaganda can influence a child – or a human. Good to read something positive about the caretaker. Posthumously, but never too late!
(Commenter j)*

In general, scatterplots show that the number of comments a memory receives is a matter of the length of time it has been online and the number of visits it has received. But obviously, which stories will attract many comments also depends on factors such as the social network of the storyteller, the elements in the story or other comments that visitors can identify with, and the degree to which visitors feel the urge to contribute their knowledge or opinions. If the topic keywords are considered to be an indication of the content of the stories, preferences can be identified in Figure 20 based on what content visitors frequently commented on. Figure 20 is an improved version of the visualisation for the Memory of East in the previous chapter. It shows both the number of times a keyword is used to label memories and the number of comments these memories received. Figure 8 in the previous chapter showed only the number of keyword occurrences while the comments related to it were introduced in the text.

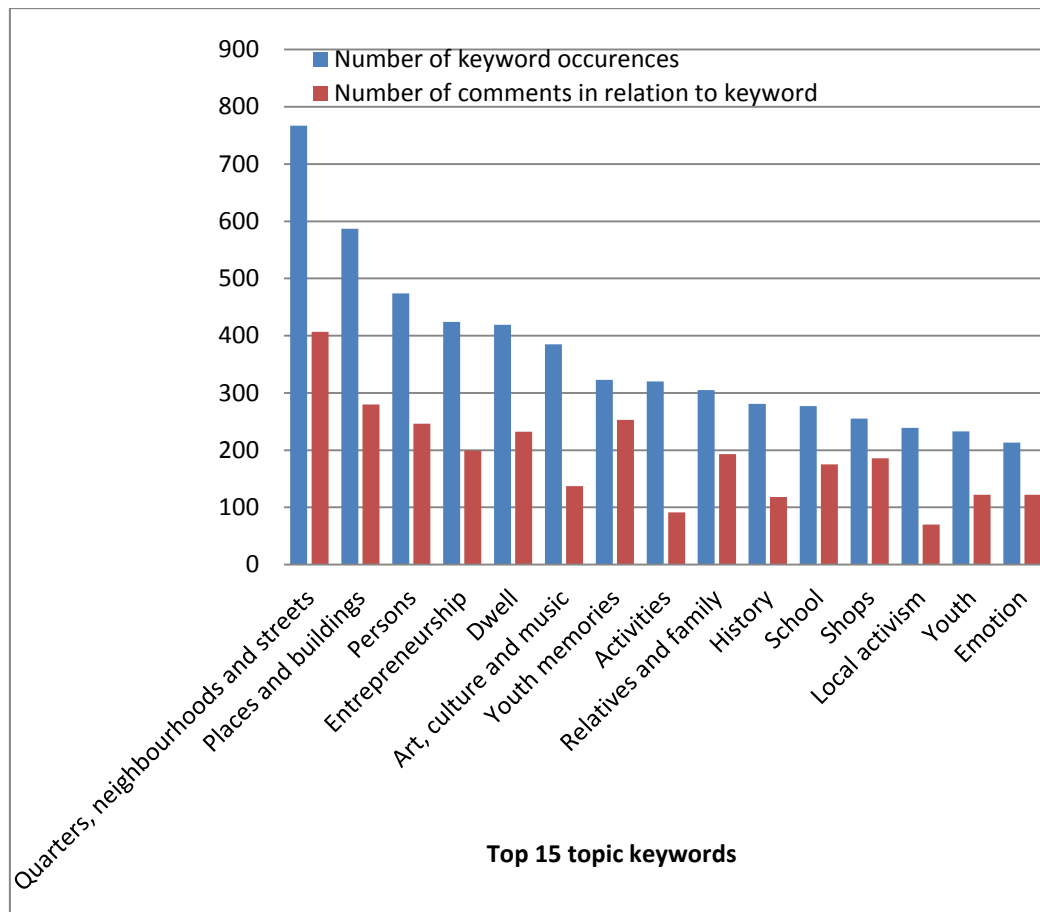


Figure 20: Top 15 topic keywords ordered by the number of comments received

The average number of comments related to a keyword is 52% of the keyword occurrences. The distribution in Figure 20 shows that the number of comments fluctuates considerably compared to the number of keyword occurrences. For example, the memories with the keywords “Youth memories” and “Shops” receive more comments than average, with 78% and 72%, respectively. On the other hand, “Art, culture and music” and “Local activism” score lower, with 28% and 29%, respectively. These patterns imply that the participants had their preferences as to which topics they wanted to share knowledge about.

The kinds of interaction that lead to discussion and reflection are important elements in empowering settings (Maton, 2008; Rappaport, 1995) and invoke reflective practices that facilitate social learning in which local cultural values are negotiated (Burgess et al., 2006; Burgess, 2006). It is plausible that this deeper kind of learning is more related to interactions about experiences and beliefs than about facts. The comments and interactions discussed above show that various kinds of knowledge are part of the playing field. From these examples, a number of commenting scenarios can be proposed. One scenario is that a website visitor will easily be triggered to add factual knowledge to complement a memory or a series of comments. Once the new participant is part of the interaction, he or she may also want to share experiences or beliefs. This way, an interaction may develop with numerous comments that transcend the original memory and bring the group of participants, or parts of that group, to a new level of understanding. Another scenario is that a website visitor will know the people who commented on a memory from the past and will not need much introduction to directly share his or her own experiences or beliefs. Regardless of the scenario followed by the commenter, we argue that deeper social learning is more likely to occur thanks to a high number of comments, than based on a few comments. Relating this to Figure 20 implies that topics that attract more comments than others are more likely to

facilitate social learning based on experiences and beliefs. Obviously, prolonged interaction between the participants in a group is more likely to be related to social learning than a larger number of “loose” comments from different people on a memory. These network aspects are part of the next section.

6.3.3. Resources for networking

Following what we did in Chapter 5, we explore three networking characteristics as resources: strong networks, light networks and boundary crossing (Wellman, 2002). The assumption is that the participants in the Memory of West gather online around specific memories according to these characteristics and in the process lay a foundation for social forms of power or collective action.

A strong network consists of individuals who “stick together” across different memories. An example is a group which clustered around the digital memory “Buddha, the story” about a 1970s DIY community centre for the youth with 75 comments (Warmerdam, 2007). Figure 21 gives a visual impression of the distribution of the number of comments on this memory across the various commenters. It shows that five persons were doing most of the commenting.

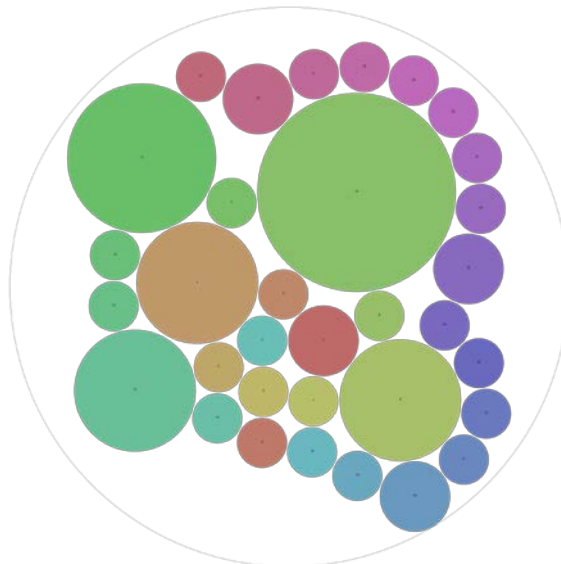


Figure 21: Commenters visualised by the number of their comments on one story

Participants like these regard the memories as digital meeting places, where the interaction might kick off about a memory, but then rapidly shifts to discussing personal life and society in the present. The relationships between the members of this particular group had existed in the past, but the individuals were able to meet again through the website.

The digital meeting places of strong groups seem to have another dynamic than the lighter networks grouped more loosely around memories. Figure 22 below shows the various commenters on a memory about a square called “A retrospect on Hoofddorppleinbuurt”, with 86 comments (Roosenschoon, 2006). It shows is a more equal distribution in terms of the number of comments each commenter posted compared to Figure 21.

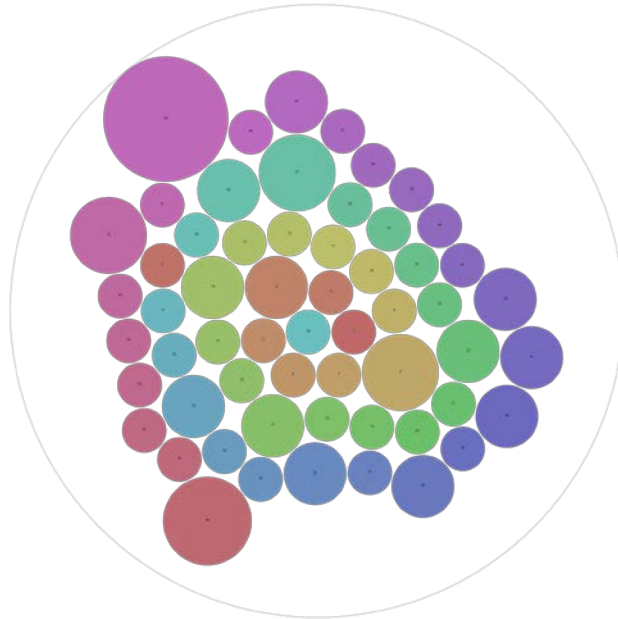


Figure 22: Commenters visualised by the number of their comments on another story

These comments remain more “on topic” than those in the case of the Buddha centre above and mostly contain additional memories about people and events related to the square. The current differences between the two can be explained by the character of the original social configurations. A small group of people who are building a youth centre will have clearer boundaries and stronger relations than the people who lived around the same square over a longer period of time. Presumably, both configurations were partially revived and reproduced online in the present.

Some commenters remain mainly within the boundaries of certain groups that formed at the digital meeting places. One of the active commenters on the Memory of West clearly stuck to four digital memories on which he left most of his 116 comments as Figure 23 shows.

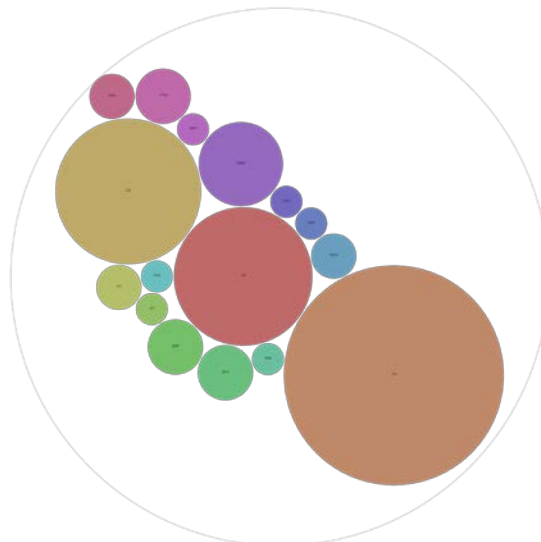


Figure 23: The distribution of the comments of a “sticky” commenter on 20 memories

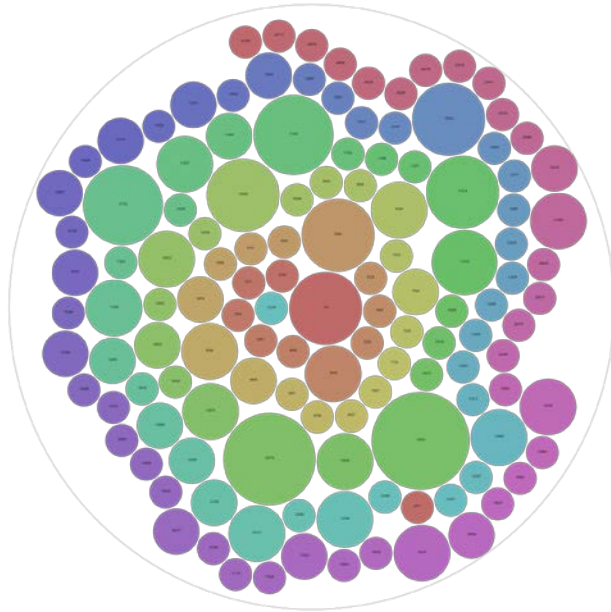


Figure 24: The distribution of the comments of a boundary crosser on 129 memories

Another kind of active commenter is not active in one group, but crosses the boundaries of various groups. Figure 24, above, reveals a participant who, with 224 comments, was involved in considerably more commenting groups than the person in Figure 23.

Collective action is usually related to social power which involves “the capability to reward (or punish) causal agents, influence public debate and policy, and shape community ideology and consciousness” (Zimmerman, 2000, p. 57). Social power in different network constellations can be illustrated by taking into consideration social learning and collective identities as well. One example is the small group of people who were continuously involved in the discussion about the Buddha youth centre, introduced above. Together they reconstructed the lost history of how it had been initiated and developed, including various threats during its existence. Information about sponsors, bands who performed there, scans of the former youth magazine and apologies to a – fictitious – complaining family about the noise the centre made, makes the collective picture quite complete. The collection of this content – including two other memories about the centre – could be considered a justification in the present of all the events, the mistakes and the successes that took place in the past.

Another example is the memory about the Hoofddorppleinbuurt, which is part of a rubric of many other memories about the same square. Together, these memories produce a large collective identity, containing youth memories about this area. However, compared to the Buddha centre, the comments in the Hoofddorppleinbuurt collection contain few discussions on beliefs, but are more focused on factual – and in some cases experiential – knowledge. In addition, they involve light networks. All these memories and comments can together be considered as a celebration of events, spaces, locations and people related to this square. Furthermore, the knowledge that can be added to the existing body is never complete, which makes visitors keep contributing to it, either in memories or in comments. Both these examples – justification and celebration – can be considered forms of social power, since they are regarded as being able to influence the community’s consciousness (Maton, 2008; Zimmerman, 2000).

In this section we have explored patterns in the online dynamics in order to illustrate collective aspects of empowerment by discussing them as narrative resources of identity, and resources for learning and networking. In order to explore the evolvement of empowerment in the Memory of West, we have to analyse the online dynamics across the period between 2004 and 2013.

6.4. The online dynamics across a decade

Just as in the previous chapter, about the Memory of East, we use three composite indicators to further explore the online dynamics in this section. The indicators are “online activity” in terms of number of memories, comments, visits, etc., “online participation” in terms of numbers of various participants, and “online diversity” in terms of the development of topic, location and period keywords. Below, we first combine online activity and participation, before moving on to online diversity.

6.4.1. Fluctuating activity and participation

A richer picture of the online activity and participation arises when we probe beyond the aggregated level of the basic figures in Figure 18 in the first section of this chapter. Visitor data collected by Google Analytics has only been available since early 2014. However, the 2007 annual report shows that the number of unique visitors per year had increased steadily from 7,000 to 52,000 in the period from 2004 to 2007 (Helbergen, 2007). Various other sources on the website indicate that this number had settled at around 95,000 per year from 2008 onwards (among others: Hilverda, 2013).

Figure 25 shows the development, over a decade, of online activity in terms of the numbers of memories and the amount of online participation in terms of the numbers of storytellers, authors and editors. Note that the figure does not include 2014 because the data used for the analysis covered only two and a half months of that year. Apart from the drop in 2005, the number of memories increased until 2008, remained considerably stable up to 2012, and then dropped in 2013. The numbers of storytellers and authors also show the drop in 2005, but the situation stabilised from 2006 until 2012, after which point their numbers dropped in 2013. In the first four years up to 2006, there had been three or four editors publishing the memories, but after that there was only one.

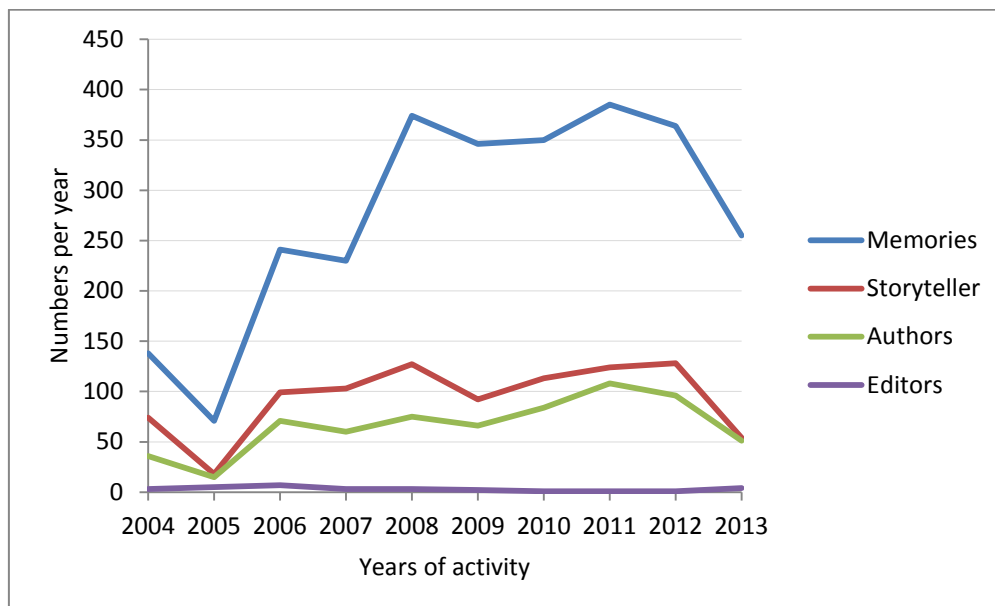


Figure 25: Numbers of memories and producers across the years of activity

With respect to online activity in terms of comments, Figure 26 illustrates that a growing number of comments on 2754 memories (excluding the 2014 ones) was left by the website’s visitors between 2005 and 2009, dropped a little in 2010 to remain stable until 2012 and then

dropped again in 2013. At the same time, also after a period of growth, the number of participating commenters remained stable after 2008.

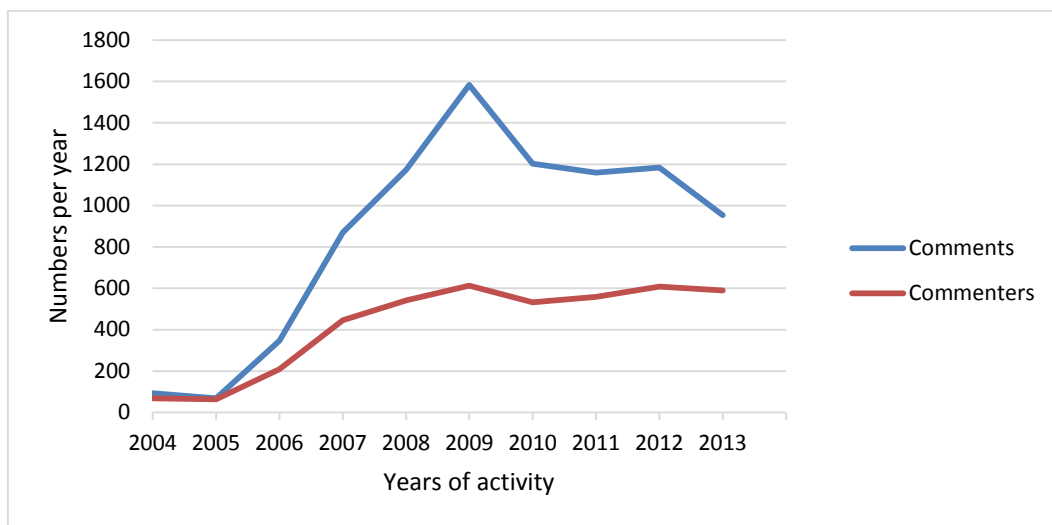


Figure 26: The number of comments and commenters over the years of activity studied

Having some insights into a proportionally more fluctuating online activity than online participation, we would like to turn to the diversity in the online content.

6.4.2. Increasing diversity in the content

The cumulative application of location keywords in Figure 27 (n = 2754) shows that in 2004 and 2005 mainly two neighbourhood keywords (“Slotermeer” and “Geuzenveld”) were applied. From 2006 onwards, the application of these two keywords grew for the most part directly proportionally to become the two highest occurrences in the chart. Other location keywords began to be applied in later years and a considerable part of them also grew directly proportionally, while some other keywords flattened out after a certain period.

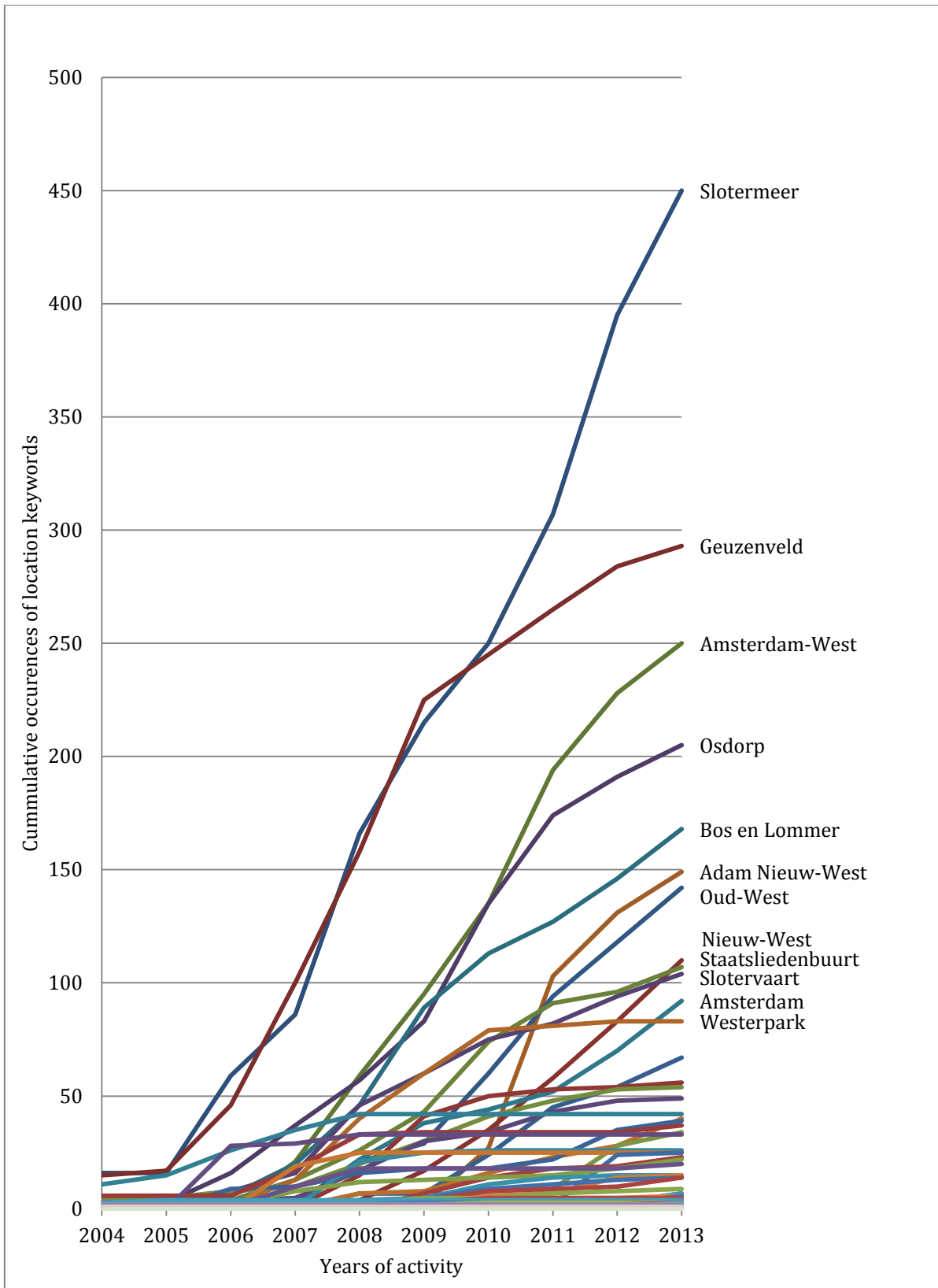


Figure 27: Development of location keywords during the years of online activity

Overall, the diversity of location keywords had been low in the first two years, compared to the situation in later years, when the diversity kept growing thanks to the introduction of new keywords which, in turn, were applied year after year. This implies that the growing collection of memories exhibited a growing diversity in terms of the locations the memories were about.

In 2013 this resulted in the neighbourhoods and former city districts being represented in high frequencies.

Similar to the situation with location keywords, we see in Figure 28 that the diversity in topic keywords was rather low during the first two years, after which point many lines show a kink to grow more steeply.

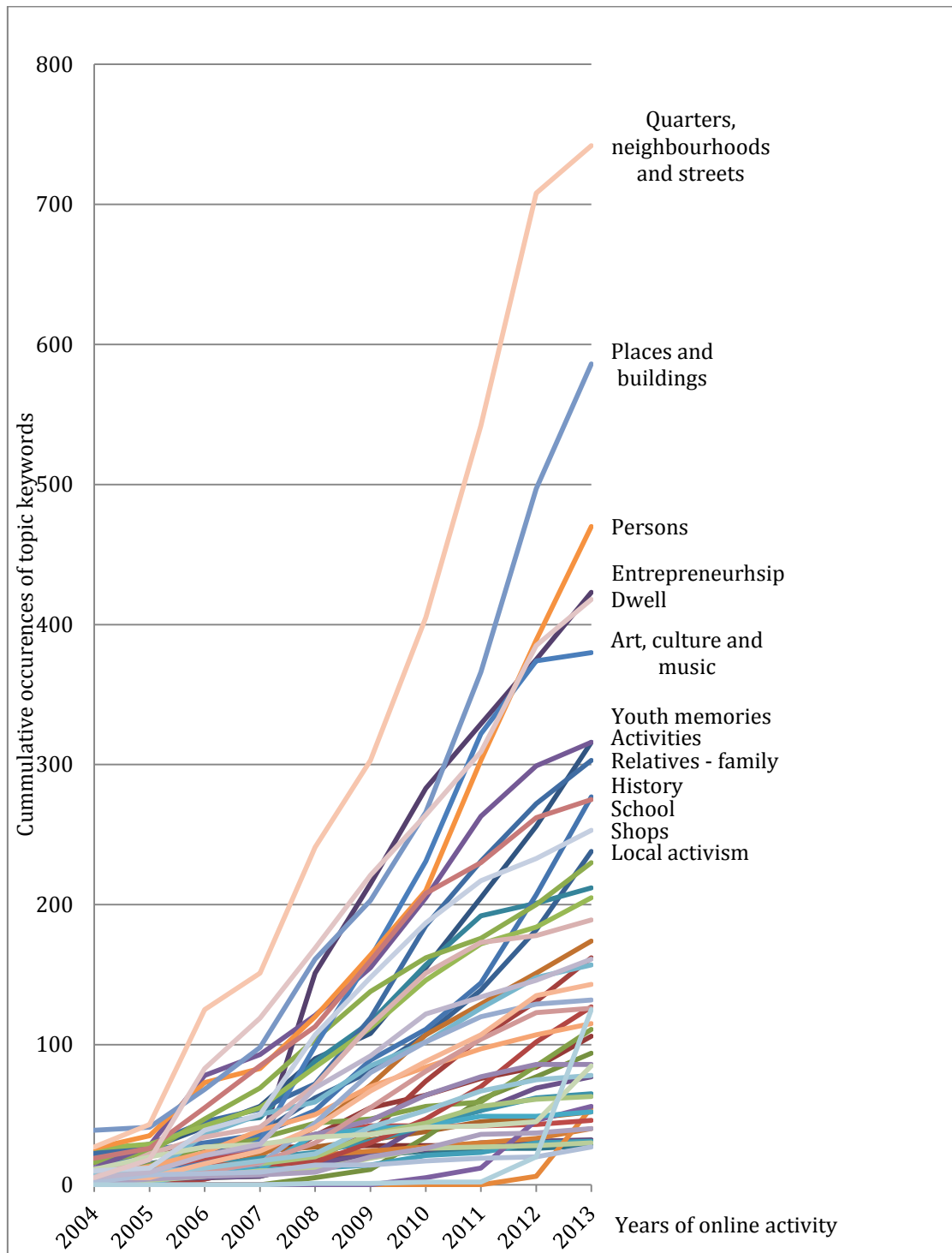


Figure 28: Development of topic keywords between 2004–2013

The application of most topic keywords then grew more or less directly proportionally, and none of them grew extremely disproportionately, i.e. becoming increasingly steeper. The topics “Quarters, neighbourhoods and streets” and “Places and buildings” turned out to be

the one most frequently applied. In 2013, 30 of the 65 keywords occurred more than 100 times. Four keywords were introduced at different moments after 2007 and were popular in use, apparently without slowing the growth of other ones. Summarising, there was a small increase in diversity in terms of the topic keywords used across the years of activity.

In Figure 29, the period keywords are grouped in five-year periods in order to facilitate interpretation.

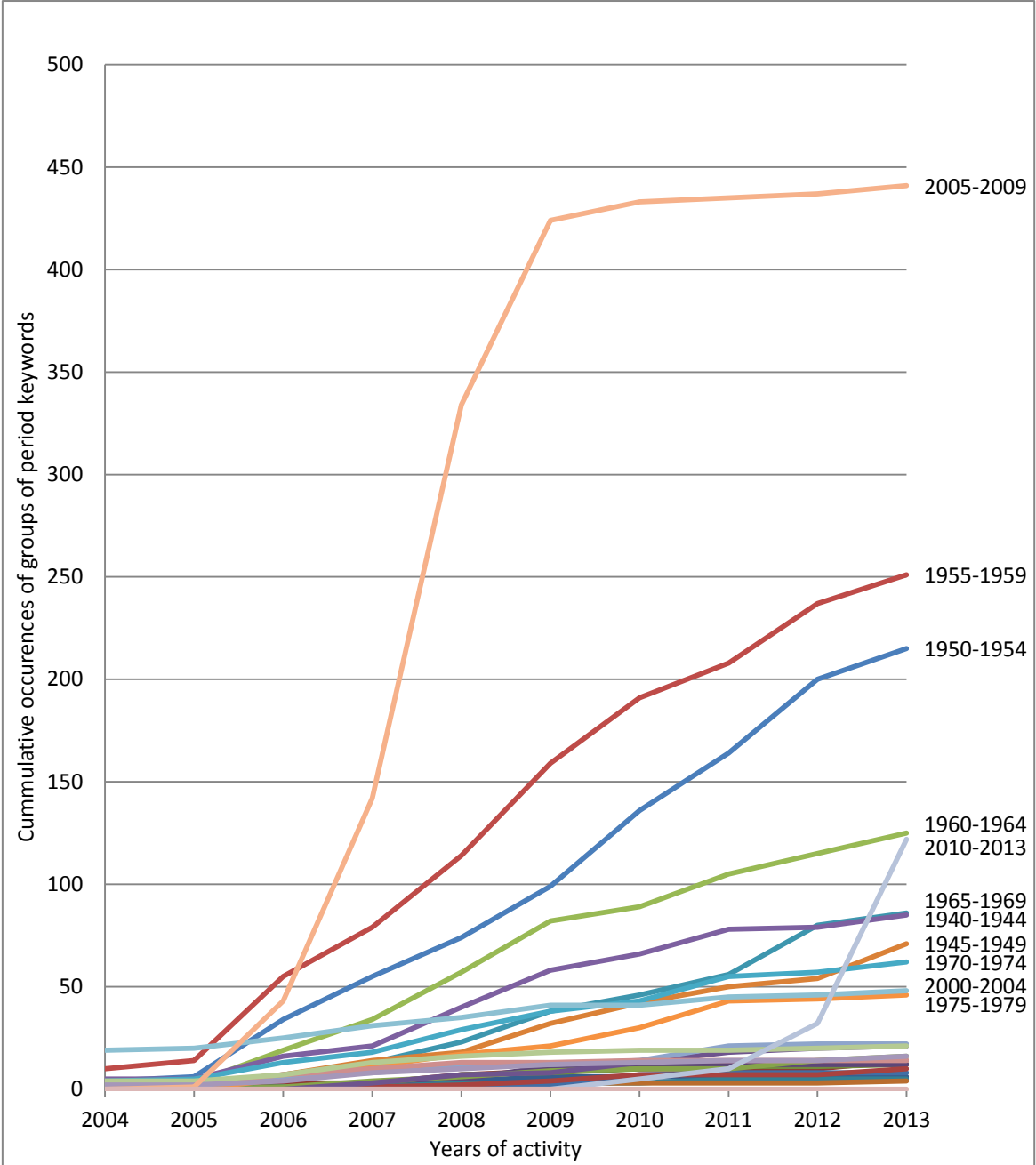


Figure 29: Development of period keywords during the years of online activity

The figure shows that during the first year mainly two periods were applied: 2000–2004 and 1955–1969. In 2006 the diversity grew, with more periods being added. The period 2005–2009 grew disproportionately during the years 2007 to 2009, after which it flattened. The periods 1950–1955 and 1950–1959 grew steadily to high numbers as well – and still do. Regarded as a decade together, they near 500 memories. From 2009 onwards the period 2010–2013 picked up and grew steeply. In 2013 the temporal status quo was that the

periods 2005–2009 and 1950–1959 were overrepresented in the collection of memories. At the same time, popular periods seem to become replaced by later ones, effectively ensuring a certain diversity. It seems likely, for example that the flattening period 2005-2009 becomes replaced by the increasing period 2010-2014 in terms of popularity.

This section illustrates how the three earlier defined indicators of collective empowerment evolve in the online community, with an intermezzo of stability. The online activity in terms of numbers of memories and comments was fluctuating over the years. The development of the number of participants followed this pattern somewhat but remained more stable than the online activity. We also note that the location keywords showed a steady increase in diversity while the topic keywords showed a modest growth in diversity. The period keywords presented a continuous diversity in terms of a far past and a recent past that was covered by the stories. Possible causes of these findings are explored in the following section by studying the organisational context of the Memory of West.

6.5. Organisational aspects behind the online community

De Kreek & van Zoonen (2013a) related the success of a local memory website in terms of numbers of contributions per year to a set of tentative organisational rules of thumb with respect to five organisational dimensions. These causal relations will be discussed against the organisational background of the Memory of West over time, taking into consideration the dynamics in online activity and online participation and the diversity in the online content from the previous section.

The Memory of West could be claimed to have gone through four stages of organisational development during its – more than – ten years of existence. Each stage is characterised by a constellation of the partners involved, the aims, the methods of story collecting, the types of stories collected and the affordances for navigation and interaction on the website. Each constellation results in a description of the collection of memories in that specific stage.

6.5.1. The project period: 2003–2006

The context in which the Memory of West was initiated was characterised by impactful urban renewal projects in the West of Amsterdam (Hellinga, 2005). After the Second World War, the Western Garden Districts were built in the 1950s and early '60s as an expansion of the city to house Amsterdam-based labourers. From the '60s onward, the city council also stimulated migration to other cities to compensate for the shortage of housing during renewal projects elsewhere in the city. This situation, in combination with high rents and small houses in the still rather new Garden Districts unexpectedly resulted in a high migration flow to other cities in the 1970s and '80s. In turn, the many available houses inspired many of working immigrants to move from inner-city houses to the Western Garden Districts. In the late '70s, the government did not have any policy that supported the immigrants' inner-city migration, because it was still felt that their stay would be temporarily. Most of the migrants thus found new housing through and close to their networks, resulting in concentrations in the West. In the '80s, the city council started to build new quarters to the west of the Garden Districts to put a stop to what was called the "white flight" and keep the middle-class people in the city.

In the '90s, an urban renewal discourse started to form, based on various arguments. One of the arguments was that the urban renewal of some of the Western Garden Districts could solve the problems of segregation and improve social cohesion by allowing a better integration of immigrants. The "problems" were not scientifically substantiated, but the conviction was that more variation in housing and inhabitants would be the solution. The

magic word was “differentiation”. After 1995 the renewal projects started under the umbrella “Parkstad” (Park city) and, during the ten years that followed, it became clear, both in practice and in research, that there was no relation between a growth of differentiation and any improvement of social cohesion. In other words, “the effect of concentration on integration could not be shown” (translated from Hellinga, 2005, p. 196). Nevertheless, without any scientific evidence, the discourse that started in the early '90s produced a fear for immigrants and possible concentrations of them. Hellinga relates this to a more hidden argument for the renewals which would spread the immigrants: “their presence, as such, is negative for the image of the neighbourhood and (thus) for the market value [of houses]” (translated from Hellinga, 2005, p. 197).

It was in this context of urban renewal and its intentional and unintentional consequences, that the administration of Geuzenveld-Slotermeer, one of the Western Garden Districts, initiated the Memory of West in 2004. One of the alderman of that district had been involved with Mediamatic, the community software developer that had helped the Amsterdam Museum realise the Memory of East a year earlier (de Kreek, 2014b). This meant that it was possible to use the experience, software and interaction design to kick-start a memory-collecting community in Geuzenveld-Slotermeer. The project started at the end of 2003 in close cooperation with a local multicultural centre, “De Brug” (The Bridge), and went live on 1 April 2004 (Otto, 2004).

While no project plan from that period is available, the aims of the online community can be derived to some extent from the Internet Archive:²⁰

The Memory of West consists of an interactive, cultural-history website where the visitor can read stories about life in the Amsterdam Garden Districts of the New West (Geuzenveld-Slotermeer). Everybody can be part of this website and we invite every visitor to comment on the published stories. (Translated from: Geuzenveld-Slotermeer, 2004)

In an old news message on a related website it becomes clear that the mentioned cultural-historical knowledge was thought to be mainly found among the group of elderly inhabitants who had often lived in Geuzenveld-Slotermeer since the '50s (De Brug, 2004b). A sub-goal, mentioned there, was to offer the elderly a chance to become acquainted with e-mail and internet while collecting, writing and publishing stories. In addition, the key people from the start of the project period later explained that the original aim was to foster a community where people could meet each other through their shared stories, both offline and online (Bosman, 2007). The personal character of the stories was thought to connect locals in Geuzenveld-Slotermeer across various experienced thresholds. This aim also fits in with the cooperation with the local community centre, De Brug, where the participants had their weekly meetings:

Association De Brug aims for the exploitation of The Multicultural Living Room, a meeting place where everyone who feels like it ... can gather. Our main principle is that visitors deserve personal attention. In addition, an exchange between cultures is stimulated, with the conservation of personal cultural identity. (Translated from: De Brug, 2004a)

This had been De Brug's aim since 2001, but in early 2004 it was expanded with “although this idea of ‘with conservation of personal cultural identity’ has been challenged by many, we

²⁰ The Internet Archive, among others, preserves websites in its databases: <https://archive.org>.

are convinced that this is the only way to arrive at a reciprocal integration” (translated from De Brug, 2004a). Another, more indirect, partner was the *Westerpost*, a local newspaper which published stories that were contributed to the Memory of West.

The recruitment of the first writers and interviewers was organised through the Memory of West, De Brug and the *Westerpost*. The intended volunteers could either be the collectors of the stories, the publishers on the website or sometimes both: “some people are more talented in searching for, finding and writing nice stories and others are more skilled in the publishing of these texts and their photos on the website” (De Brug, 2004b). People from various nationalities were targeted. In addition, students from the Nova College high school learned how to interview and collected stories for the website (Otto & Brandeis, 2004). A project leader from the district administration was very active in collecting stories, organising meetings and performing the role of webmaster. This key person left for nine months in January 2005, returning in January 2006 for nine months until September 2006.

The memories asked for were described as “everyday memories and stories of local residents ... that can be very personal but also typical of the period they are about” (translated from De Brug, 2004b). Nevertheless, many of the first contributions were journalistic reportages about the present or the past, published under the menu item “News”. This resulted in two streams of content on the website: a more factual news stream and more experiential story stream. Both streams could be about the past or the present. The participants could decide for themselves what the contributions would be about, as long as they were related to Geuzenveld-Slotermeer, its residents and the feelings they had about their neighbourhood (De Brug, 2004b). The news reporters – who also wrote stories – were skilled writers thanks to their professions, which gave the content a professional touch.

As stated earlier, the complete structure of the website had been more or less copied from the Memory of East (Bosman, 2007). The new site’s main features for navigation similarly mimicked the way humans recollect stories. The assumption was that human remembering functions largely by associations, where one story makes one think of another. Analogously, each story was presented online in a context of related stories. The strength of this relation was calculated by an algorithm based on the overlap in a number of features including keywords, the storyteller and the author. The associated stories are presented to the right of a webpage’s main story in decreasing order of strength. Other main ways of navigation are menu items for the latest news, stories and comments. Locations such as neighbourhoods and streets, personal profile pages and 50 keywords also help categorise the content. When it comes to the interactivity, an important affordance was that participants could create a draft version of their digital memories to be published by the editor. Another, more accessible way to contribute, was commenting on a memory or leaving a message in the guestbook, which only required leaving a name and an e-mail address.

Both the amount of online activity and the level of online participation fluctuated in this period (see Figure 25 and Figure 26). Only half as many memories as there had been in 2004 were added in 2005, for example, but that number was tripled in 2006. The number of participants involved – the writers and storytellers – shows a similar pattern. Looking at the organisational rules of thumb, we conclude that most of them were adhered to: a combination of partners and aims, variation in methods, accessible format, memories from the far and recent past, and adequate affordances. The only exception was the rule concerning the role of the professional as a project leader. He was very present and charismatic, but his departure for a certain period after eight months of having been in the project had major consequences. As one of the main writers for the website put it: “The recent contributions are press releases and announcements and it is only seldom that a real Memory of West-like story is published ... I want [our editor] back; I am on strike till September” (Brandeis, 2005). When the district administration re-assigned the project leader to the Memory of West, that which was welcomed by all participants who had been planning

to “try to put the Memory of West on the map and the web as never before” (Zijp, 2006). This ambition included involving other, neighbouring Garden Districts like Sloten, Osdorp, Slotervaart and Bos en Lommer, but also Westerpark (De Brug, 2005). Obviously, this enthusiasm resulted in the flow of new contributions in 2006, tripling the number from 2005.

6.5.2. The association period: 2006–2009

In September 2006, the editor left again, this time permanently. At that time, the website had been “doing well again”, as one of the writers mentioned in one of her contributions (Brandeis, 2006). The cooperation with De Brug had intensified and, towards the end of 2006, the Memory of West had become one of the main menu items on De Brug’s website. The district administration had been planning to slowly withdraw their funding. Consequently, in 2007, the Memory of West was made an independent association with its own registration at the Chamber of Commerce in order to be able to apply for subsidies from various sources. De Brug’s chairman also became the chairman of the Memory of West, forming the board together with a Turkish-born woman. The ties with the *Westerpost* remained fertile during this period, because one of the authors for the website also wrote professionally for the newspaper. This resulted in an article in the newspaper about the breakthrough to the level of 50,000 Memory of West visitors in 2007 (Brandeis, 2008). The two organisations also co-organised a photo and story contest organised in one of the cafés around Sloterplass, the local lake (Otto, 2006). The Memory of West had also been associated with Eigenwijks – a community centre in Slotermeer – since 2004, because both organisations organised computer and internet courses. In the second half of 2007, they started to cooperate more closely in a subsidised project, part of the larger “Aging Actively” programme, in which seniors contributed their memories to the Memory of West while acquiring technical skills and media literacy (Zijp, 2007). Other new partners were the city district of Osdorp for publicity and the primary school De Kikker for stories by the pupils (Otto, 2007).

The explicit aims of the Memory of West that had been on the website since 2003 were removed in the second half of 2006, and it wasn’t until mid-2008 that the website would again communicate anything explicit about its aims on its main page or in the “About” section. However, the following aim was introduced in the statutes of the new association: “[t]he ambition to preserve and keep alive the history of Amsterdam of the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and especially that of Amsterdam West” (Geheugen van West, 2007b). The main means to achieve this was described as “the collecting ... and categorising of stories about Amsterdam West by means of interviews, among other things” (Geheugen van West, 2007b). It seems safe to assume that the statutes were not very impactful because not many people had access to them. Aims that were in fact accessible could be found in items from the news stream on the Memory of West. The various news items about its project with Eigenwijks in connection with the “Aging Actively” programme, for example, mentioned as aims: social activation, participation, technical skills, media literacy and building the memory of New West. In July 2008 the following statement of aims was published on the website:

The Memory of West aims to improve the social cohesion in Amsterdam New West, to get vulnerable inhabitants out of their social isolation, to improve the memory function of the elderly by encouraging reminiscence and to foster tolerance between young and old by sharing knowledge and creating understanding about each other and each other’s past. (Translated from: Geheugen van West, 2008)

In this period, as in the previous one, there were participants who interviewed other locals and participants who wrote their own memories. The courses developed with professionals of

Eigenwijks formed a new method of collecting memories. In these courses, mostly consisting of six sessions, participants together learned aspects of the Memory of West, remembering, writing for the web, photography, searching and other related skills. Old pictures taken “from the shoebox” were often used as a departure point. The pupils from De Kikker primary school wrote stories about their experiences in Osdorp, under the supervision of their teacher.

On the home page it was made clear that “anybody can contribute stories – preferably with pictures – to this website” (Geheugen van West, 2007a). Both the news (factual) and the story stream (experiential) continued, whether they were about the far past or the more recent past. From 2008 onwards, the website mentioned that it aimed to “publish stories and pictures related to the past or the present from anybody who feels involved with Amsterdam-West and wants to contribute to the improvement its social cohesion” (Geheugen van West, 2008).

The basic affordances for navigation and interaction remained stable compared to the previous period. Apart from an update of the look and feel, one major change was a new menu item “Stories per year” that contained news and memories for each publishing year. Another change was that the number of comments on a given item was explicitly visualised in lists of stories, giving information about “hot stories”. Finally, a number of steady rubrics such as “columns”, “schools” and “memories from the shoebox” appeared, forming shortcuts to collections of memories.

Figure 25 shows that, overall, 2007 (230 stories) produced somewhat fewer stories than 2006 (241) and considerably fewer than 2008 (374). This relatively minor hesitation in the growth of online activity could be explained by the new situation in that period after the project leader had left and after the Memory of West had become an independent association (in 2007). The contributions from the story-collecting workshops in “Aging Actively” did not start to arrive until early 2008. It is interesting to observe that the number of comments doubled each year, because this implies that this aspect of the online activity did not strongly depend on the fluctuations in number of stories published. The co-occurrence of the steady increase of the visitors does seem to imply a dependence between the number of visitors and the number of comments. The numbers relating to the online participation of both story producers and commenters follow the developments in online activity, be it on a lower level. Following the aims, the diversity in terms of city districts and neighbourhoods covered clearly grew during this period, as the introduction of new location keywords shows in Figure 27. Figure 29 illustrates the website’s rising popularity in the period 2005–2009, a development that can be explained by the growing number of reportage-like news items. In 2007 a small book with 27 memories was published. Overall, this period could be characterised as an exciting but healthy stage in the development of the Memory of West, involving a constellation of many collaboration partners, greater publicity and more variety in aims, methods, story types and affordances, all of which contributed to a lively website in terms of online activity and participation.

6.5.3. The geographic expansion period: 2009–2011

In early 2007, a large, 40 million euro programme called “Koers Nieuw West” (Course for New West) followed the urban-renewal period of the Western Garden Districts, because, “although the renewal proceed[ed] as planned, the socio-economic situation of its inhabitants lag[ged] behind” (Blom, Gugten, & Dieters, 2010, p. 9). In mid-2009, the Memory of West was granted a subsidy – covering the period 2009–2011 – for the project plan it submitted in one of this programme’s subthemes: “Arts and Culture” (Hilverda & Bekker, 2009). According to this project plan, the area involved in the Memory of West was expanded to cover four Garden Districts: Geuzenveld-Slotermeer, Slotervaart, Osdorp and Bos & Lommer (Bekker, 2009). The plan also called for the Memory of West to cooperate with a number of additional

social welfare organisations and community centres from the other districts, but also libraries, district newspapers, schools, museums and educational institutions. Two project leaders were recruited for 16 hours per week to prepare and organise the cooperation with these partners and the large network that that would require (Bekker & Helbergen, 2010a). In 2010, three of the Garden Districts involved in the project plan merged to form a single city district, “New West”, with its own administration, while the Garden District of Bos & Lommer was to become part of the older city district “West” (Blom et al., 2010). On the one hand, this was a positive development, because it reinforced the ties with the older areas of the West of Amsterdam which were already mentioned in many stories on the website. On the other hand, in the second half of 2010, the new city district of New West said it would only continue to subsidise the project if the city district of West would also contribute to it. The latter rejected that idea, which meant that the project could not be fulfilled as planned. Lobbying done around the turn of the next year succeeded in securing a subsidy for 2011 that provided just enough to keep the website live and to find other financial resources (Hilverda, 2011). From a fund, a limited amount of resources were acquired to organise a series of workshops and a storytelling festival (Hilverda, 2011).

While the aims as published on the website in the previous period, in July 2008, remained untouched during this new period, the project plan included two new aims that aligned with the criteria of the Koers Nieuw West programme, formulated to contribute to the socio-economic situation of New West’s inhabitants. The first was “to improve the feeling of self-esteem among the youth, women and the elderly” and the second was “to connect various populations directly or indirectly” (Bekker, 2009, p. 2). In addition, the aim “to foster tolerance among young and old by sharing knowledge and creating understanding about each other and each other’s past” was extended to include “as it has taken place in the West” (Bekker, 2009, p. 2).

The variety in methods for collecting stories was expanded considerably during this period. For example, the “Aging actively” project, which had started in the previous period, developed into a regular module (called “The Memory of West”) in the package of services the community centre Eigenwijks offered (Zijp, 2012b). Here, participants would mostly write down their own memories in the context of a group of elderly people. Another example was the city-wide Neighbourhood Shops project that the Amsterdam Museum had initiated in 2008. Mainly during 2009 and 2010, locals attended interview workshops to collect memories about former or present neighbourhood shops. This project resulted in exhibitions in 2011 both in the Van Eesterenmuseum in New West and in the Amsterdam Museum in the city centre (Maris, 2011). A third example was a storytelling festival “It happened in the West” in January 2012, in preparation for which participants could improve their writing, interview and telling skills by attending a three-part course (Zijp, 2011).

While the various projects such as the Neighbourhood Shops project obviously focused on certain topics, the memories could generally still be about either New West or people’s experiences in New West. During this period the home page continued to invite anybody who lived Amsterdam New West or Amsterdam West, who wanted to contribute to its social cohesion to have their stories published on the site. Both the news and the story stream also proceeded with memories about the far past or the more recent past.

Again in this period, the changes in the website’s affordances were minor. The menu item “Stories per year” was changed into “All stories” with a drop down list with the publishing years 2004–2011 of all the memories. In 2010, two groups of students of the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences formulated recommendations for improving the basic navigation and the use of topic and neighbourhood keywords (Kosse, Morabit, & Susa, 2010; Stralen, Moseman, & Kors, 2010). Some of these recommendations – e.g. the possibility to add a picture to a comment – were implemented in the next period. Not only stories per publication year, but also stories per author were eliminated from the drop-down list. Another

change concerned the item “Stories about the present” that was added in 2009 and to which stories from 2007 and later were connected.

The high numbers of stories per year and of authors/ storytellers in this period (see Figure 25) can be explained by the impulse coming from the involvement in the projects Koers Nieuw West and Neighbourhood Shops. The number of comments peaked in 2009 and dropped by 400 to 1200 in 2010 and 2011, but the number of commenters remained stable at around 560 (see Figure 26). In January 2010, the 1000th online memory was celebrated by the publication of a second small book of 26 stories from the website (Zijp, 2010). The period 2009–2011 as such can be labelled as a successful one, including a variety of partners, a strong subsidy, broad aims, additional methods and improved affordances. Professionals were mainly involved at the level of organising the collaboration with other partners and not so much in terms of the methods for collecting memories.

6.5.4. The unsubsidised period: 2011–2013

Although all subsidies were stopped in the previous period, the collaboration in the Neighbourhood Shops project between the Memory of West and the Amsterdam Museum offered new possibilities for continuity. At first, the museum financed the hosting of the website, but in 2012, the Memory of West, the Memory of East and the Neighbourhood Shops websites were all updated and integrated with the museum’s community website (Zijp, 2012a). This fitted in with the museum’s master plan to facilitate online communities in Amsterdam into the future as places for collecting memories and as sources for exhibitions (de Kreek & Oosterbroek, 2013). In late 2013, the Memory of West collaborated with the Memory of East and the Amsterdam Museum in organising a symposium on the future of online memories. Two university programmes, Public History and Socio-cultural Development, were also involved in organising the symposium. The aims formulated on the website remained as they had been in the periods 2006–2009 and 2009–2011:

The Memory of West aims to improve the social cohesion in Amsterdam-West, to get vulnerable inhabitants out of their social isolation, to improve the memory function of the elderly by encouraging reminiscence and to foster tolerance among young and old by sharing knowledge and creating understanding about each other and each other’s past. (Translated from: Hilverda, 2013)

In this new period, however, the aims are no longer presented along with other general information about the website in the credits, but rather as an independent item called “Organisation of Memory of West” in a drop-down list called “Website”.

In this period a new volunteer coordinator and webmaster were recruited. Some of the earlier story producers were accompanied by new ones, and together they formed a small group who either wrote up their own memories or interviewed other locals for their memories. Apart from the storytelling festival in January 2012, the collaboration with local organisations in specific storytelling projects had decreased somewhat, as had the offline activities that could lead to publicity.

The website’s invitation to contribute memories remained similar to what it had been in the previous two periods, since July 2008. The published stories could be about the past or the present and could be contributed by anyone who felt involved with Amsterdam West and who wanted to contribute to the social cohesion there (Hilverda, 2013). The news stream started to contain more announcements of events in the neighbourhood, which meant it started to function more like a calendar of events and less like a window to the past or present through journalistic contributions.

The 2012, its integration with the Memory of East, the Neighbourhood Shops website and the Amsterdam Museum's community website also led to a restructuring of the site's navigation, especially the menu items. The main additions in the menu were the following: the item "All comments" led to all comments on all items in a chronological order; the item "Neighbourhoods and quarters" led to sub-collections of memories ordered by neighbourhood or quarter name; and the item "Rubrics" led to sub-collections ordered by projects such as the museum's Neighbourhood Shops project or themes such as the Second World War.

The first two years of this period kept pace with the level of online activity and participation of the previous period and can be considered to have been a continuation of the success of that period. The number of partners during these years was high, involving various projects with their own story-collecting methods. The aims and the invitation for contributing memories remained similar to those in the previous period, probably because the earlier ones were considered to be adequate. The website had a more professional look, with information about the website such as its organisation and rules and a list of credits. As one of the professionals involved stated at a workshop reflecting on this period: "We were still able to organise a lot of events, for example the storytelling festival in early 2012". But in 2011 the subsidies stopped, and that slowly weakened the organisational power, not least because the professionals had to leave to find other projects. In 2013 these changes led to a drop in the online activity and online participation, approximately to the levels of 2007, a period of increasing activity and participation six years earlier. In late 2013 and early 2014 new volunteers were introduced: a coordinator, a webmaster and other volunteers. Nevertheless, a check on the website for the number of memories added in 2014 – not included our data set – showed that the decrease had continued to 95. This seems to illustrate that all the changes since 2011 – subsidy stopped, professionals left, new group of volunteers introduced – had their combined effects on the online participation and online activity.

6.6. Conclusions and discussion

In the previous three sections we analysed the evolvement of empowerment in the online community of the Memory of West in three phases. In the first phase, following our first case study, we arrived at illustrations of collective identities, social learning and networking in the online dynamics. During the second phase, we further analysed the online dynamics with the composite indicators derived in the first case study: online activity, online participation and online diversity. An analysis of the online dynamics over time showed the online activity in terms of numbers of unique visitors, memories and comments rose during the first four years after a difficult second year and then stabilised before dropping at the end of the last period. The development of the number of participants followed this pattern to a certain extent, but remained more stable over a longer period compared to the online activity. We also noted that the location keywords had been extended with more districts and neighbourhoods after 2006, resulting in a growing diversity. The topic keywords showed a modest growth in diversity and the period keywords had a continuing diversity in terms of a far past and a recent past. The third phase, in the previous section, gave broad insights into the possible organisational causes of the changes in the three indicators by describing the development of the Memory of West in four periods. In the following section we arrive at overall, summarising conclusions with respect to the development in these three indicators.

6.6.1. Organisational impact on indicators

The first period explains the growth in online activity and participation – despite the difficulties in the second year– by illustrating that the continuity of participating key professionals was of great importance early in this project. The second and third period were described as successful in terms of online activity and participation mainly because that was when the professional-led collaboration with partners in collecting memories and publicity really took shape. The positive development in terms of the diversity in the content, especially during the second and third period, is claimed to be related to the expansive aims, the reportages about the recent past and the collaboration with a variety of partners. The fourth period built upon the achievements of the previous period, which explains the equal levels of online activity and participation during first two years in this period. After that, the disappearance of subsidies, the decrease of professional involvement and the new composition of the volunteer group were claimed to explain the drop in online activity and participation. Next, we return to the evolvement of collective aspects of empowerment.

6.6.2. An empowering narrative setting

Departing from a narrative perspective on memories as resources for empowerment in the third section of this chapter, we illustrated that these resources are related to concepts about the group level of analysis as described by Kreek et al. (2013b). These collective levels of empowerment are related to collective identities, social learning and networking. We showed with Rappaport (1995) that diversity in collective identities is crucial for multiple groups to be able to function as narrative resources for empowerment. The diversity in the content of the Memory of West is a result of a variety of people from various neighbourhoods who have contributed their memories about many different topics. The elderly who did not grow up in Amsterdam New West youngsters and middle-aged people, among others, are all represented on the website, as well as a broad set of neighbourhoods and variety of topics. In turn, this collection, as a whole, contains multiple collective identities that a variety of new participants can identify with, and as such helps facilitate the further formation of multiple collective identities.

With Schank et al. (1995) we related the sharing of facts, experiences and beliefs to processes of social learning. Based on the findings we claim that the number of memories, together with the number of comments, facilitates this process in a positive way. However, the average of approximately three comments per memory inclines more towards the sharing of factual knowledge than towards the sharing of experiential knowledge or beliefs. The indicator for networking that we derived from discussing network aspects based on Wellman (2002) is related to number of storytellers, authors and commenters. Although we cannot prove the networking constellation empirically, we claim that the high overall numbers (see Figure 25 and Figure 26) can ensure a variation in light and dense networks and boundary crossers.

The combination of the processes of forming multiple collective identities, of the social learning at a variety of digital meeting places and of the emergence of light and strong networks fuels some other aspects of collective empowerment as well. We briefly discussed the possible manifestation of social action, cultural values, reflective practices, a common sense of place, and social history, among others. However, the most important aspect of collective empowerment has proven to be the inclusive character of the Memory of West by the manifestation of its online diversity.

6.6.3. Organisational characteristics fostering inclusion

If the organisational aspects of the Memory of West have influenced how the collection of resources has developed with respect to collective empowerment, an important remaining question is how to explain the organisation at a deeper level than that of our rules of thumb. First of all we would need to explain how inclusion and empowerment align. Various researchers in the field of empowerment have claimed that its discourse has developed a preference for a one-sided view on empowerment (Christens, 2012b; Riger, 1993). In many settings the focus has been on individual empowerment in terms of mastery, control and independence with respect to one's life. This feeds the importance of one's individual interest at the cost of the awareness of the interests of "others" besides oneself or the group one belongs to. A remedy, according to Christens, is to focus also "on the values of connection and community" (Christens, 2012b, p. 117), which is why he advocates a relational component of individual empowerment. More concretely, among other elements, he proposes that each intervention aiming for individual empowerment also should transfer the importance of empowering others, if one can. Obviously, this is a matter of inclusion.

At an organisational level in the community of West, inclusion aspects manifest themselves in at least four of the six characteristics that Maton describes for an empowering setting (2008, p. 8). The first is the larger purpose – beyond the self – of the Memory of West in its participants' belief system. We claim that the ideological aims of the Memory of West, against the background of its recent history, function as such a larger purpose. Many participants wanted to end the discourse fuelling segregation by collecting "other" stories. The second characteristic is the relational environment in which a sense of community beyond the website is important. Obviously, participants not only feel connected to each other as members of the Memory of West, but also to the larger community of their newly formed city district: Amsterdam New West and its inhabitants. The third characteristic concerns the way the setting shows bridging mechanisms dealing with diversity. As we described, the Memory of West is located and rooted in the multicultural community centre De Brug, where bridging diversity is the core business. The fourth relevant organisational characteristic is how external linkages with partners, and possibly with their resources, develop. The Memory of West has been shown to be able to collaborate successfully with a variety of partners, leading to new stories, groups and locations. Based on these organisational details, we claim that the Memory of West fosters processes of collective empowerment that go beyond the internal organisation. The entire community is successfully invited to join to contribute to the website, build collective identities, learn together and develop networks that can lead to constructive social change.

7. Conclusions and discussion²¹

7.1. Recapitulation

The research in this dissertation concerns the social significance of local memory websites, translated into two empirical questions based on a literature review and a field study. In Chapter 2, a systematic review of the available research (36 articles) about local memory websites shows that their social significance can adequately be described by the empowerment framework (de Kreek & van Zoonen, 2013b). More specifically, the review results in an analytical model with concepts on the individual, group and community levels to which empirical findings can be related. These concepts are interrelated across the levels and together offer empowerment: “a mechanism by which people, organisations, and communities gain mastery over their affairs” (Rappaport, 1987, p. 122). In addition, the review reveals that empowerment on the individual and group levels has been empirically studied in these contexts, based on data collected among physically present participants. The available literature also mentions the online nature of local memory websites as crucial for empowerment, especially at the group and community levels. However, analyses of data representing the dynamics of these websites are missing, because the websites studied were mostly static. This is explained by a strong focus in the reviewed literature on institutional initiatives making short videos of local memories. I derive five tentative organisational dimensions by explaining how this focus leads to static websites with hardly any online activity. These dimensions are the partners and their context, their aims, the characteristics of the memories, the methods involved in collecting and producing them, and the website’s affordances for interaction and navigation.

The five organisational dimensions from Chapter 2 are further concretised in a field study covering 80 websites in Chapter 3 (de Kreek & van Zoonen, 2013a). A qualitative analysis results in various possible organisational characteristics for each dimension. An important insight, compared to the available literature, is the variation of the ways local memory websites are organised. Apart from institutional initiatives, approximately one third of the field consists of residents’ initiatives and one third of local associations’ initiatives. In addition, most contributions found on local memory websites consist of pictures and texts and are composed by residents based either on their own memories or on the memories of others as collected in interviews. The online activity in terms of the yearly number of contributions, i.e. memories and comments, varies from zero (18 cases) to more than 100 (13 cases). Based on a quantitative analysis, the field study also offers insights into the relation between organisational characteristics and online activity. For some organisational dimensions, rules of thumb are derived that optimise the development into a local memory website with a high online activity. This requires a combination of aims, a minor role for professionals in the memory production, a combination of various formats, memories up to yesterday and interactive affordances. The active websites among the 80 cases offer the empirical data representing the online dynamics that were missing in the literature reviewed, despite their importance for collective empowerment. I argue in the conclusions of Chapter 3 that organisational characteristics are crucial for the development of the online dynamics of a website, for example, the number of different online participants.

In the research design, developed in Chapter 4, the findings of Chapter 2 and 3 lead to a conceptual model with two empirical questions for a double case study. The relation

²¹ This chapter is largely based on a chapter in the book *Negotiating Digital Citizenship – Control, Contest and Culture: “Collective Digital Citizenship through Local Memory Websites”* (de Kreek & van Zoonen, 2016).

between the organisational development and online dynamics of two local memory websites is studied through the lens of collective empowerment. The empirical questions are:

1. What collective empowerment do the online dynamics express?
2. How does the organisational development influence the online dynamics?

The two cases are the Memory of West and the Memory of East, both active websites in Amsterdam neighbourhoods since 2003 and 2004, respectively. To bridge the gap between online dynamics and collective levels of empowerment, narrative methods for the study of organisational discourse are introduced. This leads to methods for a design of an exploratory data analysis of two data sets covering more than ten years of online dynamics and sensitising concepts on collective levels of the analytical model. At this stage, the online dynamics are loosely designed as various analyses of developments in content, production and audience. The relation between organisational development and patterns in online dynamics is described as a qualitative analysis of the former explaining relevant quantitative patterns in the latter. Finally, the cross-case analysis and quality control are described.

In Chapter 5, I iteratively explore possible relations between patterns in the online data and concepts from the analytical model (Question 1). This process results in the elaboration of three concepts: the variety in collective identity formation, the degree of social learning processes and the diversity in social network configurations. These concepts are related to three composite indicators in the online dynamics: online diversity (keywords), online activity (contributions and visits) and online participation (different participants), respectively. Next, the patterns in the indicators are analysed and related to the development of the Memory of East along the five organisational dimensions (Question 2). Finally, in the conclusions of Chapter 5, the social significance of the relation between the organisational development and collective empowerment is described, which brings in a fourth concept, that of inclusion. Having established the relevant concepts, indicators and relations in Chapter 5, I also apply them in a similar design for the analysis of the Memory of West in Chapter 6.

In the next two sections, following the analytical approach described in section 4.6, I revisit the two empirical questions by comparing the findings of the single case studies in Chapter 5 and 6. Then I recapture the social significance of the two studied local memory websites. After that I zoom out and describes the social significance of local memory websites in general. In the final section, I discuss ethical aspects of my research and the impact that the participatory elements can have on the practice wisdom underlying the Memory of East and the Memory of West.

7.2. Collective empowerment expressed in online dynamics

In this section, I describe what aspects of collective empowerment the online dynamics express (Question 1). With respect to online dynamics, the explorations in chapters 5 and 6 resulted in three indicators of collective empowerment: online diversity, online activity and online participation. The developments of these indicators for each case are depicted in Figure 30, which gives a heuristic summary of the findings. Over time, the online diversity in the Memory of West increased in terms of the keywords (topics, locations and periods) whereas that diversity decreased in the Memory of East. On both websites, the online activity (number of stories and comments) and participation (number of different participants) fluctuated, but the development of these indicators was more parallel in the Memory of West than it was in the Memory of East. This implies that the ratio between the number of contributions and the number of participants who deliver them remained stable in the Memory of West. However, in the Memory of East, especially during the final five years of the

research period, the level of online activity remained relatively high and grew steeply compared to the number of individuals participating online. This means that the number of contributions per participant increased. For the Memory of West, both the participation and the online activity dropped somewhat in 2013 to level lowers than where they had been in the previous five years.

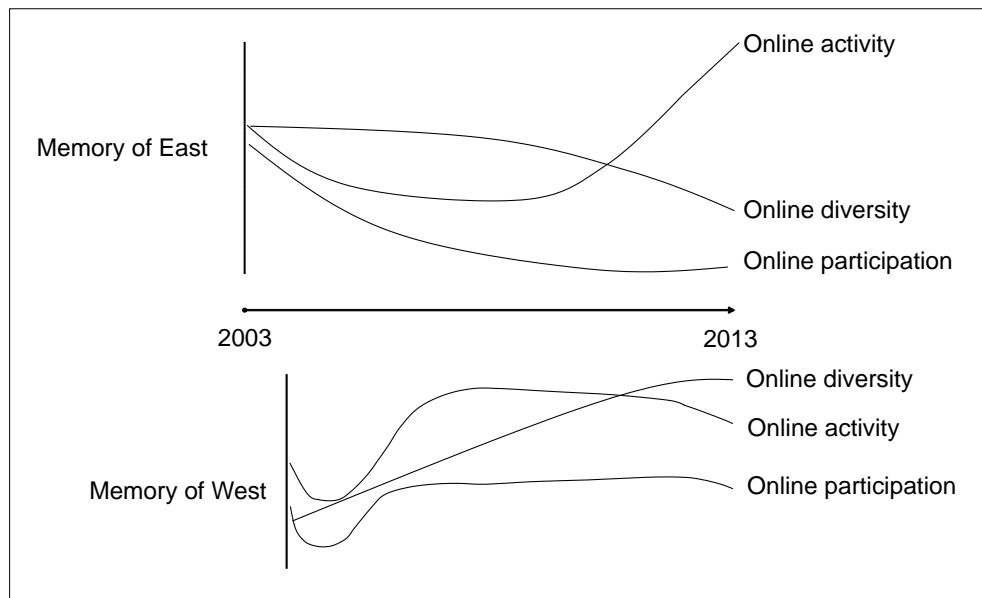


Figure 30: Heuristics of the development of three indicators in the online dynamics

Each of the indicator's heuristics in Figure 30 can be interpreted in terms of a concept on the level of group empowerment in Figure 31: forming collective identities (A), social learning (B) and social networking (C).

I assume that being part of a collective identity, as an individual with personal memories, is constrained by what that collective defines as worthwhile to remember (Rappaport, 1998). This implies that online diversity in terms of the topics and periods remembered is directly related to the variation of identities that different people can identify with. Consequently, with an eye to its increasing level of online diversity, the Memory of West can be claimed to have been empowering in terms of the collective identities that were available for its highly diverse population to connect with. Vice versa, the Memory of East disempowered certain groups, because the decrease in its level of online diversity reduced the set of available collective identities for these groups to relate to.

If “[v]irtually all human knowledge is based on stories constructed around past experiences” (Schank & Abelson, 1995, p. 1), then the online activities of remembering constitute an important social learning process. This means that online activities, especially comments on stories, reflect the degree to which participants exchange and discuss facts, experiences and beliefs and learn from doing so. Although the total number of online memories was highly similar in the two cases, the number of comments added to the Memory of East (about 20,000) was much higher than that in the Memory of West (about 9,000). This indicates that empowerment in terms of social learning was more fruitful on the website of East than on the one in West.

Gilchrist claims that in “strong and sustainable communities” (Gilchrist, 2009, p. 12) the community network consists of a balanced variation in bonding capital (strong ties), bridging capital (weak ties) and linking capital (links beyond peer boundaries). I assume that the online participation of many different residents, rather than of just a few, offers better

preconditions for such a balance. The preconditions for the network variation in the Memory of East became less good following the decrease in online participation. The Memory of West was more stable, both in online participation and, thus also, in the preconditions for social networking. Consequently, looking solely at the developments of online participation, the heuristics imply that the social networking configuration was more empowering in the Memory of West than in the Memory of East.

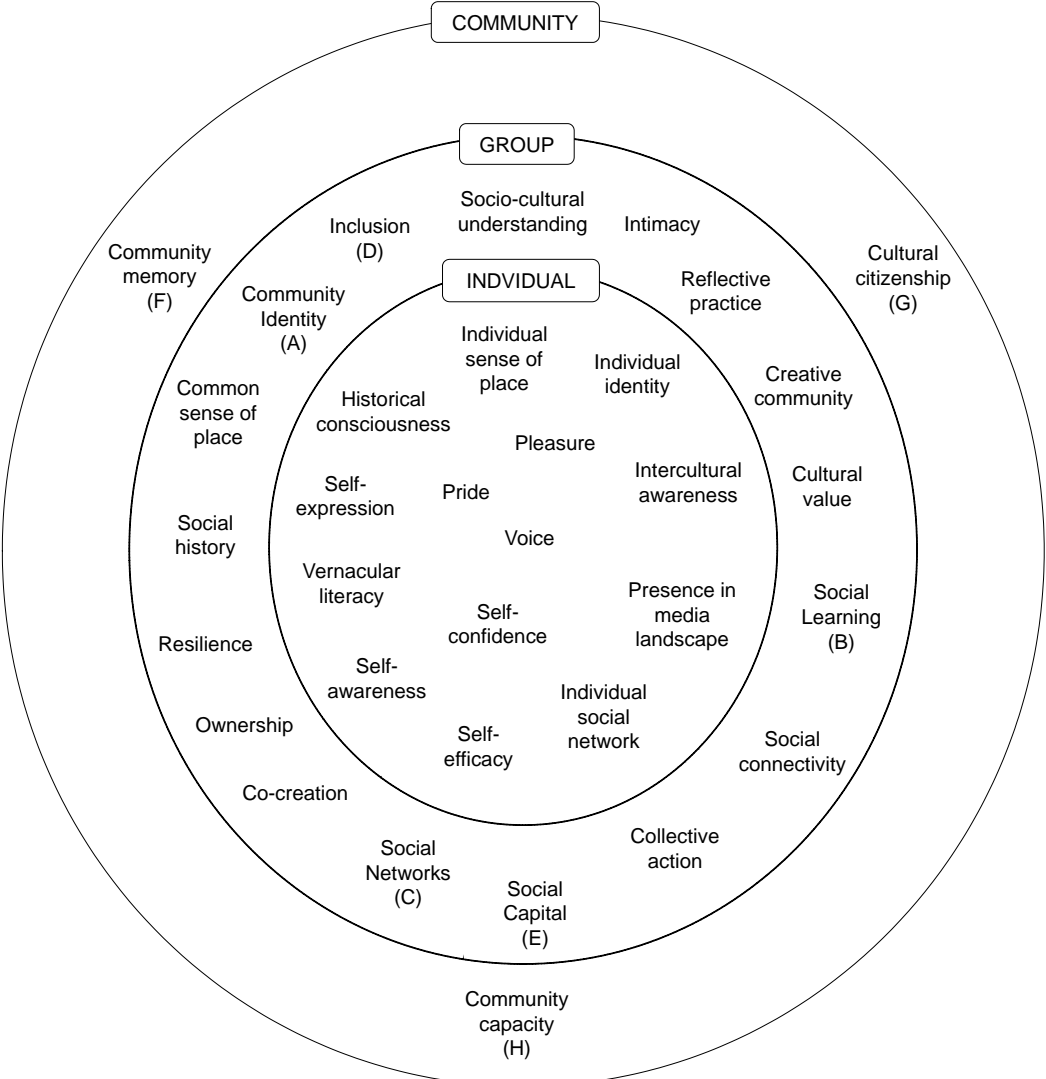


Figure 31: Analytical model for the social significance of a local memory website

A closer look at the interdependencies among the three concepts described for each case sheds light on two more: inclusion and social capital (D and E in Figure 31). The online community of East can be characterised as having had stronger social capital and having been more exclusive than the one in West in terms of collective empowerment. Despite the promise of social learning related to the increasing online activity of the Memory of East, the insights into the two other resources show that this increase could have a shadow side. The relatively small number of participants involved suggests that the social learning processes were restricted to that small group and, thus, a dense network. At the same time, the decreasing variation in collective identities, as shown in the online diversity, was produced by this group and attracted only new participants that could identify with them. Many neighbourhood inhabitants with other preferences supposedly could not identify with them. Thus, the growth of exclusivity seems to have been embedded in self-enforcing social

capital, because the developments in the three resources had a grip on each other. A dense network with a strong collective identity and satisfying interactions between the participants presumably had no immediate, intrinsic reason to change.

In the Memory of West, on the other hand, the balance between social learning, collective identities and social networking suggests there was an inclusive online community with weaker social capital than in East. Compared to the Memory of East, there were multiple collective identities with which many locals from various neighbourhoods and backgrounds could identify with. In addition, the network configuration of West was likely to have more variation than East, but also had more focus on weak ties and boundary crossing. Although the social learning processes in terms of comments per online memory seem to have been less developed in West than in East, their number remained rather stable after the second year. The combination of the developments in these three resources led to a more inclusive character of the Memory of West, involving a weaker social capital than the Memory of East. Moreover, the developments kept each other in balance. That is, the multiple collective identities and variegated networks fuelled each other's characteristics through the online activity in which new memories were added and new people met each other in comments.

7.3. The influence of organisational development on online dynamics

The main topic in this section is how organisational developments influence the heuristics of the online dynamics in both cases as depicted in Figure 30 (Question 2). Although this was explored for each independent case in chapters 5 and 6, the comparison of those findings has delivered further insights, resulting in the two descriptions below.

The Memory of East

In the period leading up to the exhibition in the Amsterdam Museum at the end of 2003, the online activity, online diversity and online participation started out relatively high. Once the exhibition had finished in 2004 and no longer served as a common goal, especially the online activity and online participation started to decrease. From 2004 to 2009, this decrease was paralleled by the slow withdrawal of museum professionals in order to let the volunteers experiment with organising activities themselves, with some supervision in the beginning. The involvement of the social welfare institution also decreased, the support consisting mainly of providing office space for various meetings and workshops. The withdrawal of professionals was a delicate process which, from 2006 onwards, put further pressure on the participation of the group that had begun as volunteers in the period of the exhibition, as shown in the further decrease in online participation. However, the cautious start to the self-organisation of volunteers can also be considered successful, because the online activity stopped decreasing and stabilised.

The online diversity started to go down around 2006 in terms of neighbourhood and period keywords. More specifically, the keywords for the two neighbourhoods that the museum had selected for the exhibition started to dominate other ones and the period keywords about the distant past increased compared to memories about the recent past. At this time, the remaining group of participants was closely related to these two nineteenth - century neighbourhoods where they had grown up in the period from 1940 to 1970. Moreover, they experienced the movement against the gentrification-driven urban renewal during the '70s and '80s. The long-lasting resistance to these projects was a direct reaction to the replacement of houses by large office buildings and the demolition of classic buildings for expensive new houses. At the end of the '80s the protests led to the administration's decision that "preservation and restoration [were] the main aims of urban renewal" (Heijdra &

Popma, 2001, p. 116). It seems likely that this background of the group of remaining participants explains the focus on certain neighbourhoods and periods.

Once the responsibility had been completely handed over to the volunteers early 2010, an even smaller group of citizens remained involved, which quickly grew into a strong, self-organising core group. It should be noted that this transfer was not chosen by the volunteers themselves, but organised by the museum in order to focus on other projects. Not all former participants wanted to continue, but a few gave it a try. This succeeded in the sense that the group took control over the community's future steps and generated high online activity in terms of published memories, comments and visitors. At the same time the online dynamics showed a further decrease in online participation and diversity.

Various partly related organisational factors explain why the online participation and diversity did not improve, despite the booming activity on the website and Amsterdam East's diverse inhabitants. To prove that the Memory of East deserved the new independence, the core group developed a definition of success in quantitative terms, i.e. based merely on online activity. This legitimisation was especially directed towards the museum, on which the community was still partly dependent because it was paying for the hosting of the website. At the same time, the process towards independence triggered a selection process among the participants, obviously leaving a group of enthusiasts. Some of these participants were interested in a particular theme in the original district and had easy access to the content about these themes. Together with the ideas about success, this resulted in a high production of memories related to these themes, which in turn lowered the online diversity. In addition, the involvement of new districts, which also became part of the larger city district administration in 2010, was only attempted by publicity efforts, due to the lack of a workforce for projects or collaborations in these areas. Similarly, there were not enough participants to establish activities with underrepresented groups. For the same reason, the involvement of vulnerable citizens was removed from the aims. Both the diversity in terms of neighbourhoods and topics, but also the online participation further suffered from these organisational developments.

The Memory of West

One year after the start of the Memory of West, it became clear to what extent the professional project leader had played an inspiring role and had had a positive influence on online participation and online activity. His subsequent absence resulted in a drop in both indicators, but when he returned they increased. After two years, the online activity and online participation had stabilised and the online diversity had increased. Although the role of the district administration decreased, the role of professionals continued to be important up to 2012. Especially self-employed heritage professionals played a successful role in applying for subsidised projects but also in leading workshops with various groups. These projects aimed for collaboration with partners from other local neighbourhoods in the collection and production of digital memories. Professionals also organised the necessary networks in the realisation of various projects, leading both the collaboration and the workshops. In this way the level of online participation and online activity was maintained from 2006 onwards and the online diversity started to increase in terms of location and topic keywords.

The increase in online diversity had to do with two contextual developments in the Memory of West. The area that came to be known as New West had been developed on former farmlands mainly after the Second World War. This gave many of its first inhabitants a feeling of being pioneers. Various policy decisions led rather large groups of people to move out of older parts of the city and into these new areas. A high cultural diversity developed from the '60s onwards, but ultimately resulted in concentrations of a few ethnic groups. Such concentrations were considered to inhibit integration and degrade the image and market value of certain neighbourhoods (Hellinga, 2005). A fear of ghetto forming was nurtured by

the local media and administrations, supposedly, in order to both continue gentrification processes and dissolve the concentrations. Many inhabitants of New West disapproved of what they considered to be the unnecessary urban renewal of housing that was only 50 years old. Especially the reasons they were given were received with suspicion, because many considered every resident in New West still to be a kind of pioneer. The core group of the Memory of West was also characterised by this sentiment. Contributing to this was the intensifying collaboration with the multicultural community centre (De Brug) in the process of its becoming an independent association. The result was a high investment in collecting stories among various residents in different neighbourhoods.

In 2009 the general aims from the earlier years were developed into more concrete ones. They were no longer limited to social cohesion and the social participation of vulnerable people, but also came to include improving the self-esteem of youth, women and the elderly. For the elderly, this was extended with the enhancement of their memory function. In addition, tolerance among people of various ages and backgrounds became an aim, with an explicit role for sharing memories based on the claim that that would improve reciprocal knowledge and understanding. The presence of clear aims partly explains the successful collaboration with a variety of partners, because the added value was relatively easy to identify. In this way, the aims played a considerable role in further increasing the online diversity in terms of topic keywords and to some extent also period keywords.

Another aspect that influenced the online diversity was the collection of journalistic reportages. This category existed from the start of the Memory of West and also had a dedicated header on the website as “latest news”, next to “latest stories”. What was special about this category was that it tended to contain texts about more recent years. This led to the introduction of the menu item “Stories about the present” on the website in 2009. A broadening of the group of participants, in terms of both ages and backgrounds, was the result. The collaboration with schools and their pupils intensified, for example. Another example is that professional writers, including a journalist and a copywriter, were writing stories for this category. Obviously, the presence of the reportages contributed to the online diversity in terms of the period keywords, which showed an even balance between the past and the present or recent past. After 2011 there was a small decrease in online activity and participation due to the disappearance of subsidies, the low professional involvement and the new composition of the volunteer group.

In summary, the organisational characteristics that arose from the growing independence of the Memory of East explain its high level of online activity despite a small group of people and a relatively low online diversity. Those characteristics were a quantitative conception of success, a lack of workforce for special projects and a small group of specialised enthusiasts. Another influential characteristic was the development towards a discourse of preservation in the historical context of Amsterdam East. For the Memory of West, the online diversity with a relatively large group in light networks was a result of three characteristics that each fostered a broad coverage of neighbourhoods and its inhabitants. In this case the presence of professionals ensured collaboration with a range of partners, the reportages included topics from the recent past and the aims showed an awareness of the local multicultural society. The latter aspect was related to the anti-gentrification discourse in the '90s, including the idea of everybody being pioneers in the context of Amsterdam New West. Note that the websites' affordances played no role in the comparison above, because the differences between them were minimal.

7.4. The social significance of the two local memory websites studied

In what follows, I turn to the social significance of the two local memory websites studied. I first illustrate how the different positions of each case on five organisational dimensions explain the differences in their social significance in terms of collective empowerment on group levels. Then I will relate this to both websites' social significance for the community as a whole.

Context: from preserving to pioneering

In terms of context, the main differences between the Memory of East and the Memory of West can be found in the age of their neighbourhoods, and in the way they dealt with gentrification processes.

The main parts of Amsterdam East were developed in the 60 years before the Second World War. In this sense, this area had long been a traditional residential area of the city of Amsterdam. Once gentrification processes started in the '70s, many residents rejected the process of urban renewal and the government's facilitation of it. Around 1990, this led to the decision of the district administration to concentrate urban renewal projects on preserving and restoring buildings. It seems likely that this wish to preserve was present among the participants who remained active after the exhibition finished in 2004. Collecting stories and pictures gave them a chance to focus on preserving the past, before it got lost. This resulted in collective identities that residents who had childhood memories of the neighbourhood could identify with. Other people, for example young people or older people who grew up somewhere else, could not relate to these identities very well.

Amsterdam New West came into being for the most part in the 25 years following the War. People who moved there were considered to be – and considered themselves to be – pioneers. Gentrification-driven urban renewal started to play a role there in the '90s, offering a solution to two supposedly intertwined problems. There were so-called concentrations of ethnic groups that, according to the local media, threatened integration and tarnished the image of their neighbourhoods. Restructuring certain neighbourhoods was supposed to dissolve the concentrations and increase the market value of the homes there. Although many projects were effectuated, this chain of arguments met with a growing amount of criticism and eventually did not hold. What did hold, and was probably stimulated by these events, was the idea of the residents being pioneers and newcomers in New West, be it 5 or 30 years ago. The people who participated in the Memory of West wanted to collect stories that celebrated this pioneering character by expressing the incentives and experiences of these adventurers. Instead of age and length of residence determining the validity of a person's memories, a person's first experiences after their arrival in New West offered the content for the online memories. This way, in contrast to the website in East, the highly diverse population in New West produced a variety of collective identities that its residents could identify with.

Partners: from self-organisation to collaboration

The ways in which the collecting memories had been organised differed between the two cases in terms of how projects were set up with partners and how the core teams were composed.

The Memory of East was supported by institutional professionals until 2007. Workshops were provided for target groups of other organisations, without collaborating at an organisational level (Hieltjes, 2009). The cultural entrepreneurs of the Memory of West, on the other hand, were able to set up subsidised collaborations and events into 2012. In these collaborations, win-win situations were created in which the aims of the Memory of

West and those of a partner would overlap or complement each other (Bekker & Helbergen, 2010b). Consequently, the memory-collecting activities were strongly embedded in the partners' regular core business, and in their physical environment. Methodological differences also had an impact, with the workshop-based approach in East and collaboration-steered process in New West both having their pros and cons. On the one hand, a workshop programme is easier to organise than a collaboration in terms of alignment and negotiations. On the other hand, collaborations are likely to be more sustainable than a sequence of workshops if the aim is a steady stream of memories. More importantly, in New West, collaboration with partners in other locations contributed to diversity in the collective identities that participants could identify with. This did not apply to the Memory of East.

The Memory of East had a mixed core team in terms of residents and professionals until the end of 2007. After that, a single cultural entrepreneur, hired by the museum since 2003, had been both the webmaster and the key figure in the story collecting workshops. Despite her central role, her involvement was not funded during the year before the transfer of responsibility to the residents, which occurred in 2010. This resulted in disappointment among the people directly involved. From that moment, the team that collected memories consisted only of residents who strongly identified with the more distant past of Amsterdam East and had time to invest. The core team of the Memory of West had always consisted of a tight group of cultural entrepreneurs, volunteering professionals and active residents. The entrepreneurs were closely connected to the core processes of collecting memories and organising the conditions necessary for that. The Memory of West also had a number of volunteering professionals. One person was professionally linked to the local newspaper, for example, but also wrote reportages for the Memory of West and sometimes the same stories for both. Another example was a copywriter who also liked to write attractive, short stories about everyday topics for the Memory of West.

In summary, the Memory East developed into a self-organising group of residents doing all the collecting activities themselves. The Memory of West, on the contrary, could be considered to be a collaborative setting with a natural balance between various organisations, professionals and residents. It seems likely that this variation stimulated the presence of several perspectives in the organisation of the Memory of West, and the creation of multiple collective identities that people could relate to. Consequently, it evolved into a more inclusive community than the Memory of East, which had fewer perspectives present in the core group.

Aims: from abstract to concrete

Two important differences between the websites, in terms of their communicated aims, concern their attention to vulnerable citizens and their local embeddedness.

On a rather abstract level, both cases aimed for social cohesion, social participation and belonging in the neighbourhood. Both cases also elaborated on these aims such as stimulating contact across ages and backgrounds, sharing stories and emotions related to the neighbourhood and improving knowledge about the socio-cultural history. The first difference is that the social participation aims of the Memory of West become more concrete and applicable than those of the Memory of East. In the context of the participation of potentially vulnerable citizens, the Memory of West mentions improving the self-esteem of young people, women and seniors, increasing computer skills and enhancing the memory function of the elderly, whereas the Memory of East limited the concrete aims to computer skills. The second noteworthy difference is that in relation to social cohesion, the Memory of West wanted to improve tolerance. Tolerance, according to the website, is the growth of reciprocal knowledge and understanding which is attributed to the sharing of memories. This elaboration of the way tolerance might be improved reflects the knowledge and experience of the multicultural community centre (De Brug) in which the Memory of West has been

embedded during its entire existence. In addition, it gives more urgency to the involvement of a variety of groups or neighbourhoods. Both the concrete attention for certain groups and the connection with the multicultural centre contributed to the continuous presence and inclusion of a variety of participants, which in turn ensured multiple identities that many people could relate to.

Digital memories: from distant past to recent past

The main difference in the characteristics of the memories between the two cases concerns the news-like items of the Memory of West.

These items had always been part of the “News” category on the website, but for a number of years they were also categorised under the header “Stories about the present”. Most of these contributions, as the name indicates, accounted for issues, experiences and events that were embedded in the present or the recent past. Some of them explicitly reported on changes in certain neighbourhoods or openings and events of various sorts. Others concerned more personal reports around a certain experience like a visit to a museum or a park. A third example consisted of photo reports in which participants represented themselves or their neighbourhood. With “Stories about the present”, the Memory of West initiated projects with groups of participants ranging from the youth to the elderly. Individual writers also contributed to this category on their own behalf. The resulting combination of content about the more distant past (around 2000 items) and the recent past (around 1000 items) related to the high online diversity and multiple identities that people in New West could identify with. The Memory of East used to have a “News” category, but it was used only occasionally for announcements. Moreover, spreading announcements was not regarded as a core activity, which is why it ended up in disuse. Consequently, the Memory of East predominantly invited people to contribute memories about the distant past, which tended to attract people over the age of 60 who liked to share their childhood memories. This explains the general tendency of the Memory of East to primarily contain memories about the distant past which many of the present residents in 2013 could not easily identify with.

Collecting memories: from number to variety

Two final differences between the two cases can be found in the actual ways in which memories were collected and publicised.

The Memory of East remained under the wings of the museum until 2010, although the role of professionals in supporting the project decreased after 2006. In 2010 the responsibility of the website was handed over to a small group of volunteer enthusiasts, who, having time available, wanted to take up that challenge. The independence was partial, however, because the hosting of the website was still financed by the museum. The core group of participants developed the idea that being successful in terms of having high numbers of published stories and website visitors would convince the museum to continue financing the hosting. Moreover, success in these terms was feasible, because there were some specialists in a limited set of topics who also had easy access to content. In addition, spreading new memories through Twitter and Facebook also reached a rather steady group of visitors and elicited comments. In terms of social learning based on the high level of online activity, these developments were promising, with the network becoming smaller and denser and gathering around dominant topics. These topics fitted the sentiment of preserving the distant past, since they covered, among others, the Jewish past, former neighbourhood shops, and former soccer clubs.

After the Memory of West had become an independent association, three years after the project had begun, entrepreneurial heritage professionals became involved. These professionals were able to translate the adventurous character of the community to other

organisations in New West. They not only applied successfully for subsidies, but they also organised the networks and collaborations explicitly with partners from neighbourhoods in other districts. In these projects, digital memories about various other locations in New West were collected and intentionally produced by different participants. This kept the variety of the social network configuration high in terms of strong and weak ties, and it also enabled boundary crossing. More importantly, it increased the number of identities that the inhabitants of the various neighbourhoods felt they could relate to.

The foregoing leads to five continuums, each related to one organisational dimension on which the cases can be positioned (Figure 32).

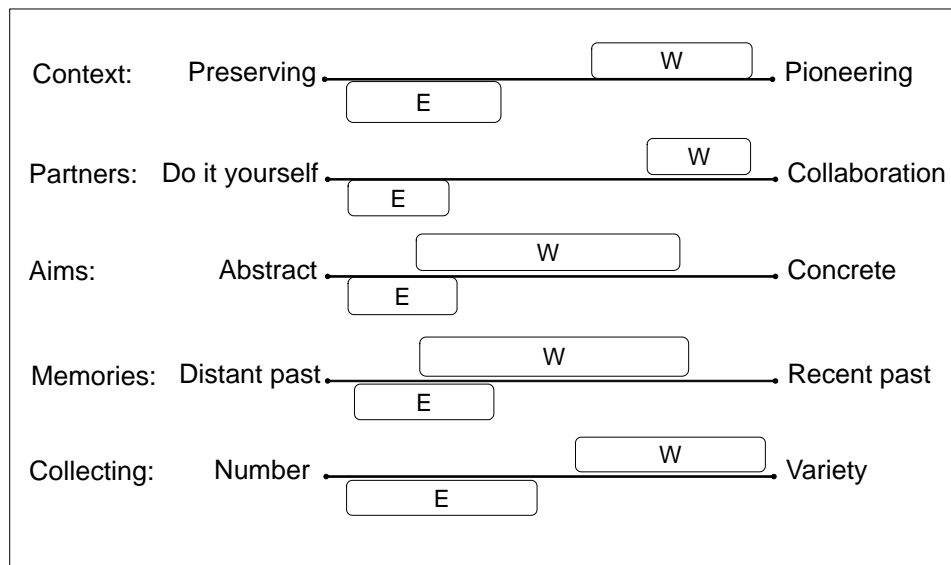


Figure 32: Five continuums based on the organisational dimensions

The continuums' extremes are neither mutually exclusive nor dichotomous, which makes positioning on a larger zone between two extremes possible. For example, the Memory of West contains memories of both the recent past and the distant past.

From group levels to community levels of empowerment

The literature review in Chapter 2 shows that community memory, cultural citizenship and community capacity are community-level concepts to which local memory websites can contribute (de Kreek & van Zoonen, 2013b). In terms of community memory (F), residents are able to create a shared view of how their neighbourhood should be presented online for future use. With respect to cultural citizenship (G), the existing literature claims that these online environments can offer a heterogeneous public sphere where meanings and cultural values are negotiated. Finally, community capacity (H) is attributed to emerging online social networks, where members create discourses in favour of awareness and ability for collective action. Both websites can be claimed to foster the construction of community memory, the practice of cultural citizenship and the growth of community capacity. However, they did so in fundamentally different ways, influenced by outcomes on group levels of empowerment.

The Memory of West had a weak online reputation consisting of an inclusive variation of collective identities representing sparsely knit networks which had a number of scattered online social-learning places. This corresponds with the argument that “[c]ommunity-level empowerment outcomes ... include evidence of pluralism, and existence of organisational coalitions, and accessible community resources” (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995, p. 570). With its more inclusive character, the community memory in West was more representative of the

broad cultural backgrounds of its inhabitants than the Memory of East. Many people were involved in the creation of the community memory, but community capacity among this wide group was diffuse due to the predominantly weak connections between its members. The participants in the practice of cultural citizenship were diverse, but the intensity of their interactions was limited compared to the Memory of East. The Memory of East had a strong online reputation in the sense that it had a few exclusive collective identities representing some tightly knit groups of participants each having their own active social learning environment. This matches with collective empowerment comprising the “capability to reward (or punish) causal agents, influence public debate and policy, and shape community ideology and consciousness” (Zimmerman, 2000, p. 57). With its stronger social capital, the Memory of East had the community capacity to resist official memory intuitions, commercial popular culture and local politics. In terms of cultural citizenship, a densely networked group of people had intense interactions where values and meanings were negotiated. However, the community memory was only representative for a subgroup of the whole community in Amsterdam East. This way, both the Memory of East and the Memory of West had their specific contextual social significance and underlying mechanisms.

7.5. The social significance in a broader perspective

In order to elaborate on the social significance of local memory websites in general, I discuss the conclusions of the previous section against the background of the literature review and the field study. This also leads to methodological suggestions for further research and theory development about local memory websites.

The reviewed literature treats the social significance of local memory websites with a fragmented set of concepts that concern various levels of society (de Kreek & van Zoonen, 2013b). In Chapter 2, I have systemised these concepts into an analytical model with concepts on the individual, group and community levels and related this to the empowerment framework. When this model is re-applied to the articles reviewed, it becomes clear that they empirically show the social significance of local memory websites for individual and group empowerment. They do so predominantly for the participants who are physically present during activities and much less so for people who participate through internet. When it comes to the online nature of local memory websites, the literature claims the importance for group and community empowerment, but without empirical substantiation. Nevertheless, the social significance on these collective levels is defined in terms of nurturing the independence of official memory institutions, commercial popular culture and local politics. In terms of community memory (F in Figure 31), the reviewed literature claims that residents are able to create their independent view on how their neighbourhood should be presented for future use. With respect to cultural citizenship (G in Figure 31), the existing literature claims that these online environments offer an independent public sphere where meanings and cultural values are negotiated. Finally, community capacity (H in Figure 31) is attributed to these online social networks, where members create their own discourse in favour of future collective action.

The research in this dissertation empirically confirms but also nuances these claims about the social significance of local memory websites. With the double case study I have shown that the social significance of the local memory websites studied up to 2014 does indeed manifest itself on the group and community levels beyond physical presence. However, each of the websites studied does so in a unique way, influenced by its particular organisational characteristics and context. On the one hand, the Memory of East was shown to have a few collective identities embedded in a dense network with a deep level of social learning. This was claimed to represent a strong social capital which could indeed be

regarded as an independent collective voice against dominant powers. This capacity of the Memory of East is of social significance, although it was not representative for the diverse population of Amsterdam East at the time of the research. In other words the organisational characteristics led to an empowered core group which was, by means of its website's emergent properties, able to make a statement, but incapable of empowering many others. On the other hand, the insights into the Memory of West consisted of having many collective identities embedded in light networks with superficial social learning. This was framed as being an inclusive online community because it was evidence of pluralism and accessibility. Also here, this inclusive capacity of the Memory of West is of crucial social significance, although the ability to develop a strong collective voice seems distant. In this case the organisational developments produced an empowering group of participants which, through its website, was able to empower many other residents but unable to be a countermovement. In this way, the double case study has revealed that the social significance of local memory websites on collective levels of empowerment is more varied than the focus on "the power to resist" as found in the literature. An important alternative has proven to be "the strength to include".

The social significance of local memory websites also depends on their wider presence and to what extent they have an active online existence. The literature review uncovered a preference in the articles for institutional initiatives characterised by digital storytelling. This preference has to do with the positive reputation of professional-led workshops in which participants make short movies based on personal material with a voice-over (Lambert, 2002). The Centre for Digital Storytelling started in 1993 with this method, which later became a worldwide movement (Hartley & McWilliam, 2009). The articles also acknowledged that the initiatives studied did not result in active websites in terms of online interaction and a long-term flow of new contributed videos. One of the reasons was that making videos required highly technical skills that most ordinary people did not have. This explains why the empirical studies in the articles reviewed mainly addressed data of situations in which participants were physically present in the making or reception of videos. The field study conducted for this dissertation (Chapter 3) showed among other things that of 80 local memory websites only a few contained videos, whereas most digital memories consist of text and pictures. Although this is promising in terms of accessible methods for whoever wants to participate in the making of digital memories, it does not always lead to active websites. The online activity in terms of the yearly number of contributions (memories and comments) varied from zero (18 cases) to more than 100 (13 cases). Nevertheless, based on my research, it can be concluded that the social significance on collective levels of empowerment is larger for dedicated local memory websites with texts and pictures than for websites with videos. The likelihood of an active website is greater for the former than for the latter. On the other hand, the general social significance of local memory websites on these levels should not be overrated, because a considerable number of them end up being static.

Since the current literature mostly is concerned with digital storytelling which co-occurs with not so active websites, I would like to plea for broadening the research agenda about local memory websites. The 80 websites I have collected include a large variety of initiatives by institutions, but just as many by residents and associations. The set covered everything from individual websites for the memories about a particular street to multi-partnered initiatives about an entire city district. For the former, a total of 15 contributions per year might serve its aims, whereas for the latter that might be 150. My research, however, focused on the highly active websites, steered by the claims about the significance for groups and communities these could involve. In doing so, I ignored the smaller and less active local memory websites which also had a social significance for the people involved and thus deserve further study. If a neighbourhood is "the community" for a large initiative, then a street can be "the community" for a smaller initiative. Furthermore, 15 contributions

about a street might proportionally be equal to 150 for a neighbourhood. Following this logic, I assume that less active, smaller websites can offer similar opportunities and dilemmas in terms of social significance compared to a highly active one covering a larger geographical area. Another aspect related to smaller initiatives being worth studying, is how they relate to larger ones that cover their neighbourhoods or districts and vice versa. In Amsterdam, there are about 30 smaller and larger local memory websites (de Kreek, 2014a), which overlap in terms of the geographical areas they pertain to. An important question is to what extent they interfere in each other's empowerment processes and outcomes. Finally, apart from dedicated local memory websites, many local memories end up on various social media like Facebook, YouTube and Flickr. In these contexts, the digital memories are much less apt to form a coherent collection about a certain locality, but they will nevertheless have social significance for the participants. Apart from a study about a group on Flickr, that collected photos about Brisbane, this is largely untouched terrain (Burgess, 2007).

I would also like to advocate a deepening of the study about collective empowerment through local memory websites. Empirical research into empowerment has only recently started to shift to the group and community levels (Maton, 2008; Perkins et al., 2007). It has been suffering from what is called "the individual bias", that is "the tendency to reduce complex person-in-environment phenomena to individual dynamics, which has dominated fields such as psychology ... and social work" (Peterson & Zimmerman, 2004, p. 129). This is partly because "[o]rganizational and community empowerment ... are not simply the aggregate of many empowered individuals" (Zimmerman, 2000, p. 44), which makes researching these levels a methodological challenge. Moreover, empowerment is a multilevel construct with interdependencies between concepts across levels and between concepts on the same level (Zimmerman, 2000). To further the research on the social significance of local memory websites on collective levels of empowerment, I discuss a number of methodological issues.

In my case studies I adopted narrative methods from organisational storytelling. Based on this, I iteratively looked for patterns in the online dynamics and matched them on possibly relevant concepts from the analytical model. This way, I matched, for example, social learning to the number of memories and, especially, to the number of comments on those memories. I assumed that a high number of memories and comments indicated a higher level of social learning, because this would increase the chances of people interacting beyond the mere sharing of facts. Specifically, in the case of an increasing number of comments and a decreasing number of participants, I assumed that the interactions would involve sharing and discussing beliefs. With respect to collective identities, a dominant set of keywords on a website was presented as being related to a sub-group of all participants. When an increasing dominance was paralleled by a decreasing number of participants, the keywords were assumed to be part of the identity of that group. In terms of the social networks in our case studies, the lack of personal data forced me to deduce information from the number of different participants across time. A low number of participants was assumed to indicate dense networks, especially when the number of comments went up. These assumptions incorporate the interdependencies between concepts on the same level, but both the concepts and interdependencies need further study. A qualitative study of the content of memories, the comments on those and the reception of both by various audiences could give additional insights into social learning. With respect to dominant sets of keywords and their relation to collective identities, it would be interesting to know how many and which different participants are connected to them, either as authors or as commenters. Finally, a network analysis across time of, for example, all commenters based on the stories they commented on, could give more information about the network constellation on a website.

Further pursuing the interdependencies between concepts, I also related my findings to inclusion and social capital, two other concepts on the group level of empowerment. What

is important in determining the social significance of local memory websites is how inclusion and social capital are interdependent. Like many social-capital academics, Oxendine argues that the relationship between bridging ties (characteristic of the former) and bonding ties (characteristic of the latter) “need not to be zero-sum” (2012, p. 12). Contrary to my findings, this would imply that local memory websites could have an inclusive character and social power at the same time. If this implication is confirmed, the question arises what can be undertaken to change an imbalance between these two. How can a local memory website containing strong social capital become more inclusive? Or, how can an inclusive local memory website build stronger social capital? I will elaborate this topic in the final section about the relation between my research and the communities of the Memory of East and the Memory of West.

7.6. Shifting practice wisdom through participatory research

In this section I reflect on my role as a researcher operating from within the communities of the Memory of East and the Memory of West. This position made it possible for me to have an impact on them in terms of shifting practice wisdom, which is why I advocate participatory research in these contexts.

My own engagement, and later that of my colleagues, with both mentioned local memory websites went on for close to ten years. I first became involved in 2007 as a supervisor of students of social work who were working on assignments as part of a collaboration between the Amsterdam Museum and the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences. In their projects for the Memory of East and the Memory of West, the students either supported residents in collecting memories or looked for new networks that were willing to become involved. The involvement in these projects led to curiosity in our social work research group about the background of both local memory websites. Consequently, from 2008 to 2010, a research team carefully described the organisational development of these websites in a project about the social strength of information and communication technologies in the Amsterdam region. In 2010, students in a minor programme in social work studied the websites’ affordances and the possibilities for engaging new groups such as residents of a home for the elderly and secondary school pupils.

In the meantime, participants in both local memory websites had already started to consider me as being part of their communities. This feeling intensified when I started this PhD project the end of 2010, when the communities began seeing me as “their researcher”. As such, I was able to be present and participate in various kinds of meetings and workshops, some of which even inspired me to give a workshop on “drawing with the camera”. This close relationship with the participants provided me with access to various data and their consent to analyse them on the condition that I would share my findings. All in all, I contributed 1 digital memory and 17 comments to the Memory of East, and 6 comments to the Memory of West, so in fact my influence on the online dynamics was negligible. Nevertheless, my nearness to the organisational aspects requires a critical reflection with respect to my role and influence as a researcher.

Before I turn to this reflection, I briefly return to the context in which the motivations for this research developed. In a growing number of texts about the future focus of Dutch city museums, the term “empowerment” has been used to denote both a practical approach and the result of that approach (Ernst, 2006; Kessel, Kistemaker, & Meijer-van Mensch, 2012; Knevel, 2010, 2011; Maris, 2011). At the same time, however, practice research into local memory websites from this perspective was missing. The various parties involved in this research each had their reasons to support my study on the social significance and organisational aspects of local memory websites. The community of the Memory of East had

received the responsibility for that website in 2010. The Memory of West had experienced difficulties in successfully applying for subsidies in 2010. And in 2010 the E-Culture Department of the Amsterdam Museum was making plans for an infrastructure that could keep the websites running in the future and possibly extend their number.

Consequently, in my perception, there were three areas of fairness within the scope of my research in terms of the representation of viewpoints and interests among the various stakeholders. One area is on what I call the “practitioner level”: the residents and the professionals. The second is on organisational level: the partner organisations involved, especially the Amsterdam Museum and the local memory websites. The third is on the level of the communities of the Memory of East and the Memory of West. On these three levels, the greatest challenge I experienced during my research was to prevent myself from depicting one party to be morally better than another. For example, I could have put more negative emphasis on the fact that the Memory of East is “more exclusive” than the Memory of West. I also could have said that it was wrong of the museum professionals to transfer the responsibility of the Memory of East to the residents, because that “forced” them into thinking about success in quantitative terms. Or, I could have framed the “low” number of comments on the Memory of West as rather meaningless for social learning processes and an unnecessary consequence of the collaboration with too many partners.

I did not, and still do not, want to suggest these kinds of propositions, because, it does not matter what I personally think or what theory claims to be right or wrong. Of course, certain developments might in retrospect be regarded as less sensible than they looked at the time, being in the middle of them. However, having various stakeholders also implies the presence of multiple perspectives on what went right or wrong. This departure point grew stronger during my research writing and helped me to be reflexive while choosing words for certain arguments and descriptions I wanted to get across. Just as important, it prevented me from thinking too strongly in dichotomies and instead steered me into defining organisational continuums. These continuums and their relation to empowerment have made it possible to reconsider the developments before and after 2014 of both websites with the relevant stakeholders. Ideas about how to redirect certain developments towards the future have emerged. This is an ongoing conversation that has already started on various occasions where preliminary insights from my research were discussed directly or indirectly. With “directly” I mean at dedicated events, such as a focus group, where I presented insights that were validated and discussed in terms of what they implied would be desirable or not. More “indirectly”, I followed up on certain topics in conversations during less orchestrated meetings, in this way amplifying the opportunity to collectively shape our thoughts.

My approach, as described above, was inspired by the thoughts about “making social science matter” as elaborated by Bent Flyvbjerg in his book of the same title (2001). In this context “phronetic social research” is described as being “about producing knowledge that can challenge power not in theory but in ways that inform real efforts to produce change” (Schram, 2012, p. 20). This kind of research is not concerned with generalisable, predictive models but focuses on answering four questions related to enhancing practice wisdom in a certain context (Flyvbjerg et al., 2012, p. 5):

1. Where are we going [with this practice]?
2. Who gains, and who loses, by which mechanisms of power?
3. Is this development desirable?
4. What, if anything, should we do about it?

These four questions parallel the four criteria for the authenticity of qualitative research as described by Bryman (2012) and discussed in Chapter 4: 1) arriving at a better understanding of own practice, 2) appreciating perspectives of others in the context, 3)

developing the willingness to change based on these perspectives, and 4) taking actual action to change.

The best way to illustrate how the insights produced in my research partly fuelled the conversations and discussions about the four questions above is to turn to an example of a recent development in one of the communities. In the Memory of East there has been an ongoing discussion during the monthly meetings about the tension between success in terms of numbers and success in terms of variety. This proves to be hard to resolve due to the difference in the language involved in these two perspectives. One person may say how impressive it is that an online memory was visited 350 times during two days, because it was spread through Twitter and Facebook. Another person may say that a shy and vulnerable workshop participant has just published a very personal story after working on it for months and being hesitant to put it online. For many, when it comes to ensuring the future of the website, the number of visitors will seem like a stronger argument than that one, single digital memory.

During a focus-group meeting, I used the metaphor of an anthill to explain that our website as whole has emergent properties we are not always aware of. Following that, I showed how the online diversity had decreased since 2010 and how the increasing online activity corresponded to a decreasing group of participants. Interestingly enough, this was immediately recognised and interpreted in terms of various organisational aspects. But what is more important, I think, is that it also fuelled the discussion about the different faces of success. The numerical character of the graphs visualising the decrease of diversity made the urgency for involving “other” residents, topics and neighbourhoods as real as the importance of having large numbers of website visitors. This way, two of what Eubanks calls “situated knowledges” (2012) about what constitutes success were brought into conversation with each other on a more equal level. One result of this was that it stimulated appreciation for efforts that involved new groups, new neighbourhoods and new collaborations. In the wake of this, more stories of the recent past have been contributed to the website. This means that the Memory of East is consciously moving itself along the organisational continuums (Figure 32) in an attempt to find the zone which keeps the group interests in balance with the public good on the community level.

It is an important insight for the core groups in both New West and East that such quests are not an either-or choice, but rather both can exist at the same time without one’s improvement implying the other’s decline. This is often called the “zero-sum game” with the central idea that one’s increase of power implies the other’s decrease in power (Narayan, 2005). In most empowerment literature sharing social power is not considered to be such a “win-lose” choice. On the contrary, it is a “win-win” phenomenon whereby providers gain as well as recipients” (Staples, 2004, p. 214). That means that “it can actually strengthen while being shared with others” (Hur, 2006, p. 524). The participatory elements in this kind of research support the dialogues in which meaning is attributed to the emergent properties of the websites while overcoming zero-sum assumptions. If we, as academics, want our research to make a difference, we have to involve and empower groups such as these to be able to take responsibility for balancing their individual, group and community well-being.

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Appendix A: Articles used to reach saturation in the review

	Project	Key article
A	Melbourne	(Davis, 2011)
B	Memory Line	(Ferri et al., 2010))
C	Charlestown	(Shewbridge, 2007)
D	Yorkshire Dales	(Copeland & Miskelly, 2010)
E	Amsterdam New History	(Vos & Ketelaar, 2007)
F	Champaign Urbana	(Lenstra & Alkalimat, 2012)
G	Finding a voice	(Watkins & Tacchi, 2008)
H	Massachusetts	(Freidus & Hlubinka, 2002)
I	Dordrecht/ Brussels	(Carpentier, 2009)
J	London Voices	(Thumim, 2009)
K	CLIO	(Ringas et al., 2011)

Appendix B: List of websites analysed

- Case 01 <http://www.geheugenvanoost.nl> *
- Case 02 <http://www.goudanet.nl>
- Case 03 <http://www.geheugenvanplanzuid.nl> *
- Case 04 <http://themuseumonline.com/westminsterstories>
- Case 05 <http://www.verhalenbankbrugge.be>
- Case 06 <http://www.memoriavirtual.org>
- Case 07 <http://www.geheugenvangemert.nl>
- Case 08 <http://www.geheugenvanheemskerk.nl>
- Case 09 <http://heiloo.geheugenvan.com>
- Case 10 <http://www.geheugenvangieter.nl>
- Case 11 <http://milehighstories.com>
- Case 12 <http://www.geheugenvantilburg.nl>
- Case 13 <http://www.geheugenvanalmere.nl>
- Case 14 <http://www.geheugenvanwest.nl> *
- Case 15 <http://www.kgurbanvillage.com.au/sharing>
- Case 16 <http://fremantlestories.com>
- Case 17 <http://www.selstonia.org.uk>
- Case 18 <http://www.jacksdale.org.uk>
- Case 19 <http://www.achteruitkijkspiegel.nl/>
- Case 20 <http://www.ourportlandstory.com/>
- Case 21 <http://www.nieuwsenmedia.nl/kleuren/>
- Case 22 <http://www.heiloo.dvonline.net/startscherm.htm>
- Case 23 <http://www.oudcastricum.com/index.html>
- Case 24 http://www.oudakersloot.nl/jaarboek_2011.html
- Case 25 <http://www.driebergen.org/jdesqparent.htm>
- Case 26 <http://www.fledderkerspel.nl/W/Tekst/Hp/Totaal.htm>
- Case 27 <http://www.uceestation.nl/>
- Case 28 <http://www.buurtboeken.nl/>
- Case 29 <http://www.onsamsterdam.nl>
- Case 30 <http://www.stichtingstraat.nl>
- Case 31 <http://www.la-floresta.com.ar/historia.htm>
- Case 32 <http://www.dideldom.com>
- Case 33 <http://blog.kroniekvanenhuizen.nl>
- Case 34 <http://www.jordaaninfo.nl>
- Case 35 <http://www.buurtverhalen.be>
- Case 36 <http://www.oranjeboompleinbuurt.nl>
- Case 37 <http://www.buurtmuseumkamperpoort.nl>
- Case 38 <http://www.welkomincrooswijk.nl>
- Case 39 <http://www.ede-west.nl/node/50>
- Case 40 <http://www.flevolandsgeheugen.nl>
- Case 41 <http://www.barriada.com.ar>
- Case 42 <http://luganonuestro.wikispaces>
- Case 43 <http://www.von-zeit-zu-zeit.de>
- Case 44 <http://buurtwinkels.amsterdammuseum.nl/>
- Case 45 <http://neighbourhoodstories.net.au/>
- Case 46 <http://www.columbusneighborhoods.org>
- Case 47 <http://www.thestoryproject.org.au/>
- Case 48 <http://westparkhistory.com/>
- Case 49 <http://www.deridderbuurt.nl>

- Case 50 <http://www.boisevoices.com/>
Case 51 <http://www.memoriesnorthtyne.org.uk/about.php>
Case 52 <http://www.oldewythehistory.com/>
Case 53 <http://www.hoodturkey.com/>
Case 54 <http://www.verhalenvandordrecht.nl/>
Case 55 <http://www.bna-bbot.be>
Case 56 <http://www.cityofmemory.org/>
Case 57 <http://highfields.dmu.ac.uk/>
Case 58 <http://www.bottesfordhistory.org.uk/>
Case 59 <http://www.chaddesdenhistoricalgroup.co.uk>
Case 60 <http://newhamstory.com/> *
Case 61 <http://www2.lewisham.gov.uk/lbl/LewishamVoices/introPage.htm>
Case 62 <http://www.heliermemories.org.uk/> *
Case 63 <http://www.rodbournehistory.org/> *
Case 64 <http://www.peoples-story.co.uk/>
Case 65 <http://www.wildrosearts.net/>
Case 66 <http://www.morleyarchives.org.uk/>
Case 67 <http://www.stillingtoncommunityarchive.org/>
Case 68 <http://www.mybrightonandhove.org.uk> *
Case 69 <http://www.canveyisland.org/> *
Case 70 <http://www.ournewhaven.org.uk/> *
Case 71 <http://www.churchstreetmemories.org.uk/>
Case 72 <http://www.ourgreatyarmouth.org.uk/> *
Case 73 <http://www.ourmansfieldandarea.org.uk/> *
Case 74 <http://www.livinghere.org.uk/>
Case 75 <http://www.erinnerungen-im-netz.de>
Case 76 <http://www.heerlenvertelt.nl> *
Case 77 <http://www.placesforall.co.uk/>
Case 78 <http://www.zandvoortvroeger.nl/>
Case 79 <http://www.stjohnswoodmemories.org.uk/>
Case 80 <http://strandlines.net/> *

(* = more than 100 contributions in the last complete year before data collection)

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Nederlandse samenvatting (Dutch summary)

Collectief empowerment via online buurtgeheugens

In hoofdstuk 1 wordt het onderzoek van dit proefschrift geïntroduceerd: de sociale betekenis van online buurtgeheugens. Dit is een onderdeel van een hedendaagse ‘geheugenexplosie’ die gerelateerd is aan de opkomst van het World Wide Web en de daaruit voortgekomen voortgekomen sociale media (Hoskins, 2011). Via specifiek daarvoor ingerichte websites en bredere sociale netwerksites verzamelen en delen een toenemend aantal mensen hun herinneringen. Een aanzienlijk deel van deze online platforms bevatten herinneringen aan en ervaringen in buurten van steden of dorpen. Zo is aan het begin van de 21^{ste} eeuw een nieuw sociaal fenomeen ontstaan wat in dit onderzoek met ‘online buurtgeheugens’ wordt aangeduid. De online herinneringen bestaan uit video, audio, foto’s of tekst, of combinaties daarvan, en worden voornamelijk door buurtbewoners gemaakt. Meestal kunnen bezoekers van een dergelijke website reageren op een herinnering van iemand anders, waardoor er online interactie mogelijk wordt. Mensen van alle leeftijden zijn betrokken bij dit soort initiatieven en starten regelmatig hun eigen online straat- of buurtgeheugen. De doelen lopen uiteen van het behouden van indrukken uit het verleden tot het verbinden van buurtbewoners in het heden.

Met een voorbeeld in de introductie laat ik zien dat er aan de sociale betekenis van online buurtgeheugens zowel theoretische als praktische aspecten verbonden zijn. Het Amsterdam Museum startte begin 2003 de website ‘Geheugen van Oost’ wat een onderdeel was van een tentoonstelling met de titel ‘Oost – Amsterdamse buurt’ (10-10-2003 – 29-02-2014). Onder begeleiding van zogenaamde ‘outreach’ medewerkers van het museum verzamelden buurtbewoners herinneringen in de vorm van verhalen met foto’s. Na afloop van de tentoonstelling zijn zowel de buurtbewoners als de museumprofessionals daar actief mee doorgegaan. Hoewel de sociale waarde van de website voor de buurt door het museum hoog werd geacht, bleef de historische waarde van de verhalen voor het museum een punt van discussie (van Eekeren, 2012). Deze situatie leidde in 2010 tot de beslissing om de hosting van de website te blijven continueren, maar ook om de verantwoordelijkheid voor de website over te dragen aan de groep betrokkenen. Een kleine groep buurtbewoners bleef over die enthousiast meer herinneringen en reacties genereerde dan ooit daarvoor. Doordat een paar deelnemers zich ieder specialiseerde in een eigen thema, liep de hoeveelheid onderwerpen van de herinneringen terug. Het doel van de website was echter om bij *iedereen* in Oost bij te dragen aan gevoel van verbondenheid met de buurt. Een deel van de groep betrokkenen maakte zich daarom zorgen over wat de sociale waarde van de website was als veel bewoners niet bereikt werden en hun herinneringen geen plek kregen. Een daaruit voortvloeiende vraag was hoe daar verandering in gebracht zou kunnen worden.

De ontwikkelingen rondom het Geheugen van Oost laten naast praktische uitdagingen ook twee theoretische kwesties zien. Ten eerste wordt de hoge online activiteit rondom een beperkt aantal onderwerpen voor de groep directe deelnemers als succesvol en voor de gemeenschap als problematisch ervaren. Het is waarschijnlijk dat deze spanning in sociale betekenis tussen groeps- en gemeenschapsbelangen in algemene zin aanwezig is binnen online buurtgeheugens. Ten tweede is het aannemelijk dat het terugtrekken van de museumprofessionals en de overname door de buurtbewoners invloed heeft gehad op het aantal online betrokkenen en het aantal herinnerde onderwerpen op de website. Dit suggereert een relatie tussen de organisatieontwikkeling en de online dynamiek binnen online buurtgeheugens.

In hoofdstuk 2 wordt in het kader van de sociale betekenis van online buurtgeheugens een systematisch literatuuronderzoek uitgevoerd (de Kreek & van Zoonen, 2013b). Op basis van

een aantal zoektermen en selectiecriteria ontstaat er een verzameling van 36 Engelstalige, wetenschappelijke artikelen over online buurtgeheugens. Deze bevat 16 artikelen over één casus: het 'Sharing Stories' project in 'Kelvin Grove Urban Village' in Brisbane en 20 over 11 andere casussen vooral in de Verenigde Staten en Groot-Brittannië. De analyse van deze artikelen bestaat uit drie opeenvolgende fasen waarin ik concepten steeds scherper codeer die de opbrengsten van deze websites voor de betrokkenen beschrijven. Dat leidt tot een model met opbrengsten op individueel, groeps- en gemeenschapsniveau. Het individuele niveau bevat 14 concepten, zoals plezier, trots, historisch besef, zelfvertrouwen en zelfexpressie. Op groepsniveau zijn er 17 concepten waaronder groepsidentiteit, culturele waarde, collectieve actie, sociaal kapitaal, veerkracht en inclusie. Het gemeenschapsniveau heeft drie concepten die 'gemeenschapsgeheugen', 'cultureel burgerschap' en 'gemeenschapskracht' genoemd worden. Uitkomsten van processen binnen het ene niveau worden in de literatuur gekoppeld aan ontwikkelingen op een ander niveau. Individuele trots en zelfvertrouwen worden bijvoorbeeld via een groeiend netwerk en sociaal kapitaal gekoppeld aan gemeenschapskracht. De drie niveaus met hun concepten lijken sterk op die van het zogenaamde empowerment model, waarvan bekend is dat empowerment processen op de ene laag die op een andere laag beïnvloeden (Zimmerman, 2000). Zo kom ik tot de conclusie dat het model dat uit de literatuurstudie naar voren komt (zie Figuur 2, p. 8) een specifieke invulling is van het empowerment model en toegepast kan worden voor de analyse van de sociale betekenis van online buurtgeheugens.

Naast een toepasbaar model levert de literatuuranalyse nog belangrijke andere resultaten op die het promotieonderzoek sterk sturen. Hoewel er in de literatuur beweerd wordt dat een positieve werking van online buurtgeheugens op groeps- en gemeenschapsniveau groot kan zijn, juist doordat het internetplatforms zijn, is er bijna geen empirisch onderzoek wat dat kan onderbouwen. Dit heeft volgens een van de auteurs van de geanalyseerde artikelen te maken met het feit dat in veel onderzoeksliteratuur 'Digital Storytelling' de dominante werkwijze is die vooral door instituten wordt ingezet (Burgess, 2006). Het gaat om korte persoonlijke video's met een 'voice over' gebaseerd op fotomateriaal. Burgess beschrijft hoe de afhankelijkheid van een video-expert de beperkingen van instituutwebsites en de doelgerichtheid in dergelijke contexten ervoor zorgen dat de websites niet veel activiteit kennen en er dus ook geen online empirie voorhanden is. Op basis van dit soort kenmerken identificeer ik vijf voorlopige organisatorische dimensies die het wel en wee van een online buurtgeheugen bepalen: de initiërende partners, de doelen met het initiatief, de werkwijze om verhalen te verzamelen, de beoogde kenmerken van de verhalen en de gebruiksmogelijkheden van de website.

In hoofdstuk 3 wordt er op basis van het literatuuronderzoek een aantal redenen aangevoerd om het veld van online buurtgeheugens in kaart te brengen (de Kreek & van Zoonen, 2013a). Ten eerste mist er inzicht in de bredere diversiteit van online buurtgeheugens, hoe ze ontstaan en hoe ze worden georganiseerd. Ten tweede werpt de inactiviteit op de reeds onderzochte websites de vraag op of er ook actievere websites zijn en welke organisatorische factoren daar aan bijdragen. Het belang van de vijf voorlopige organisatorische dimensies uit hoofdstuk 2 wordt eerst bekrachtigd door ze naast literatuur te leggen waarin online activiteit en online participatie wordt onderzocht. Via de beschikbare literatuur, internet en collega's zijn er vervolgens 80 online buurtgeheugens gevonden (overwegend Europese, waaronder 34 Nederlandse en 24 Britse) die geanalyseerd worden langs de vijf dimensies. Een zesde element is toegevoegd om een indicatie van de activiteit op de website te hebben: het aantal contributies (verhalen of reacties) in het laatste, voorgaande hele jaar. In fase 1 van de analyse zijn de verschillende dimensies inductief ingevuld met concrete kenmerken van online buurtgeheugens, zoals 'museum', 'burger', 'kennisinstituut' en 'welzijnsinstelling' bij de dimensie van initiërende partners. Datzelfde is

gedaan voor de doelen met het initiatief, de werkwijzen om verhalen te verzamelen, de beoogde kenmerken van verhalen en de gebruiksmogelijkheden van de website. De vijf dimensies bevatten tezamen circa 60 kenmerken. Voor fase 2 is de data van fase 1 omgezet naar een dichotome datamatrix, dat wil zeggen voor elke casus is een 0 (afwezig) of een 1 (aanwezig) voor elk kenmerk onder alle dimensies. De daarop volgende analyse is gebaseerd op frequentietabellen voor alle kenmerken in individuele dimensies, kruistabellen voor de samenhang tussen de kenmerken van twee dimensies en hiërarchische clusters over alle dimensies heen.

Een belangrijke conclusie is dat het veld van online buurtgeheugens zeker niet alleen uit institutionele initiatieven bestaat. Er zijn, naast enkele uitzonderingen, drie ongeveer gelijke clusters met specifieke kenmerken te onderscheiden in de verzameling van 80 casussen. Het eerste cluster bestaat uit burgerinitiatieven voor het behouden van lokale persoonlijke herinneringen van vroeger tot het recente verleden. Zonder veel verdere uitleg zijn ze gericht op het versterken van de gemeenschap. Het tweede cluster bestaat uit institutionele initiatieven gericht op de gemeenschap, expliciet door het versterken van gemeenschapsgeheugen en cultureel burgerschap. Daarnaast zijn er hier doelstellingen op het gebied van individuele vaardigheden en inclusie van kwetsbare groepen. Professionals spelen regelmatig een rol in het helpen van buurtbewoners met het verzamelen van persoonlijke en meer feitelijke herinneringen. Binnen het derde cluster zijn lokale verenigingen de initiërende partners die gericht zijn op behoud en archivering van meer feitelijke gegevens die door betrokken buurtbewoners uit verschillende archieven bijeen worden gezocht. Dit leidt tot websites met overwegend historische bijdragen over het verre verleden met minder mogelijkheden tot interactie dan de websites in de andere clusters.

Een tweede conclusie is dat het bredere veld intussen wel degelijk actieve websites bevat, want 13 casussen hebben meer dan 100 contributies in het laatste hele jaar. Daarvan komen er drie uit het cluster burgerinitiatieven, drie uit het institutionele cluster en geen uit het verenigingscluster. Wel zijn er zes samenwerkingsverbanden: drie burger-instituut en drie instituut-vereniging. De zevende is geïnitieerd door een communicatiebureau. Gebaseerd op de andere kenmerken van deze 13 casussen, kom ik tot een voorlopige vuistregel met betrekking tot kenmerken die bijdragen aan een actieve website. Idealiter verzamelen buurtbewoners, met lichte ondersteuning van professionals, verhalen over het verre en recente verleden op een interactieve website gestuurd door combinatie van doelstellingen op individueel -, groeps- en gemeenschapsniveau. Een kanttekening is dat het lage aantal actieve websites (van de 80) betekent dat deze initiatieven, in algemene zin, niet zomaar als wondermiddel gezien kunnen worden als het gaat om empowerment op groeps- en gemeenschapsniveau.

In hoofdstuk 4 wordt, op basis van de voorgaande hoofdstukken, de zoektocht naar de sociale betekenis van online buurtgeheugens verder aangescherpt tot twee empirische onderzoeksvragen voor een tweevoudige casestudy. De twee nader bestudeerde casussen bestaan uit het eerder genoemde Geheugen van Oost en het Geheugen van West, beiden in Amsterdam. Ze komen grotendeels overeen in hun ontwerp en gebruiksmogelijkheden omdat ze door hetzelfde bureau ontwikkeld zijn en het Geheugen van West nog geen jaar later gestart werd (2004) op basis van de eerste ervaringen met het Geheugen van Oost (2003). Ze verschillen op details in de kenmerken binnen hun organisatorische dimensies, online dynamiek en sociale betekenis, zoals in de latere hoofdstukken zal blijken.

De sociale betekenis van deze online buurtgeheugens wordt geformuleerd in termen van empowerment omdat dit een geschikt analytisch model is gebleken in hoofdstuk 2. Bovendien is daar geïllustreerd dat de literatuur, zonder empirische onderbouwing, claimt dat empowerment op groeps- en gemeenschapsniveau (collectief empowerment) gerelateerd is aan de online aard van buurtgeheugens. De eerste vraag luidt daarom: *Wat voor collectief*

empowerment weerspiegelt de online dynamiek? Aan het einde van hoofdstuk 2 en vooral hoofdstuk 3 is aangetoond dat organisatorische kenmerken het gebruik van een online buurtgeheugen beïnvloeden. Dit leidt tot de tweede vraag: *Hoe wordt de online dynamiek door de organisatieontwikkeling beïnvloed?* De antwoorden op deze vragen kunnen vervolgens vertaald worden naar de sociale betekenis van de twee online buurtgeheugens.

Voor vraag 1 is het van belang om eerst te bepalen welke concepten op het collectief niveau van empowerment überhaupt te relateren zijn aan aspecten van de online dynamiek. Vervolgens kan gekeken worden hoe patronen in die aspecten van de online dynamiek empowerment processen weerspiegelen door de tijd heen. Om tot een analyseaanpak te komen, verken ik aan de hand van literatuur de relatie tussen herinneringen in de vorm van verhalen en empowerment. Verhalen weerspiegelen niet alleen de realiteit, maar construeren het tegelijkertijd ook. Insluiting en uitsluiting met betrekking tot een bepaalde groep wordt bepaald door wat informeel is toegestaan om herinnerd te worden (Rappaport, 1998). Deze invloed manifesteert zich in de collectieve verhalen van een groep die al dan niet functioneren als hulpbron voor een individu om zijn of haar persoonlijke verhalen mee te verbinden. Als iemand daarmee kan verbinden hoort hij of zij erbij, anders niet. Herinneringen in de vorm van verhalen kunnen dus als hulpbron voor empowerment processen op verschillende niveaus gezien worden.

Een van de weinige bruikbare analytische uitwerkingen van dit perspectief komt uit narratief onderzoek binnen organisaties. Uitgangspunt daar is dat verhalen niet alleen onderdeel zijn van iemands persoonlijke narratief, maar ook onderdeel zijn van een collectief geconstrueerd narratief over de realiteit van de organisatie (Luhman & Boje, 2001). Deze realiteit kan, door de tijd heen, verschuiven door veranderingen in de organisatiecontext of door dominantie van een individueel verhaal of een groepsverhaal. Ik heb deze benadering toegepast in de tweevoudig casestudy waarin het niet gaat om organisatieverhalen maar om buurtverhalen en niet de realiteit van een organisatie maar van een buurt. Meer specifiek heb ik de methode van 'story network analysis' (Boje, 2001) geadopteerd om de online dynamiek te bestuderen. Met deze methode kunnen de kenmerken van verhalen (onderwerp, locatie, jaartal, auteur, etc.) gebruikt worden om door de tijd heen patronen in de online dynamiek te verkennen die mogelijk een relatie hebben met concepten op collectief niveau van empowerment. Op basis van een 'scrapper' en een export van de databases van beide online buurtgeheugens is er een datamatrix samengesteld waar diverse visualisaties van individuele kenmerken, combinaties van twee kenmerken en meerdere kenmerken mee zijn verkend.

Om antwoorden te vinden op vraag 2 bestudeer ik de ontwikkelingen binnen de organisatorische dimensies van beide casussen. Hiervoor heb ik verschillende aanwezige bronnen gebruikt, zoals externe publicaties, interne documenten, de 'over deze website'-pagina's en nieuwsberichten op beide websites. De invloed van deze ontwikkelingen op de online dynamiek is vaak expliciet aanwezig in de bronnen en soms maak ik die aannemelijk op basis van een opvallende match tussen ontwikkeling en patroon in de online dynamiek.

De tweevoudige casestudy bestaat eerst uit twee individuele casestudies (hoofdstuk 5 en 6) waarin de empirische vragen beantwoord worden. De verkenning uit de eerste casestudy levert relevante concepten en patronen op die ook bestudeerd worden in de tweede casestudy. De bevindingen van beide studies worden vervolgens vergeleken in hoofdstuk 7 om uit te kunnen zoomen naar de sociale betekenis van online buurtgeheugens in theoretische zin. Daar vindt ook een reflectie plaats op de waarde van het onderzoek voor de onderzochte websites en achterliggende organisaties, wat inzichten oplevert in de praktische vragen die opgeworpen werden in hoofdstuk 1.

In hoofdstuk 5 wordt het Geheugen van Oost onder de loep genomen (de Kreek, 2014b). De ruim 10 jaar aan data (2003-2014) van de website bevat 2662 herinneringen die vooral uit

geschreven verhalen van rond de 350 woorden bestaan, aangevuld met foto's. De trefwoorden bestaan uit 51 onderwerpen, 335 plekken en jaartallen tussen voornamelijk 1900-2014. Daarnaast zijn er in het totaal 717 verhalenvertellers en 384 schrijvers van eigen verhalen of verhalen gebaseerd op interviews. Van alle bezoekers hebben ongeveer 7000 verschillende mensen ruim 20.000 reacties achtergelaten bij een totaal van bijna 5 miljoen paginaweergaven.

Door een proces van constante vergelijking tussen concepten van collectief empowerment en patronen in de online dynamiek, worden er drie concepten en drie indicatoren aan elkaar gekoppeld. Collectieve identiteiten worden gekoppeld aan online diversiteit, sociale leerprocessen aan online activiteit en sociale netwerken aan online participatie. Het onderdeel zijn van een collectieve identiteit op groeps- of gemeenschapsniveau wordt bepaald door wat het collectief definieert als interessant genoeg om te herinneren (Rappaport, 1998). Dit betekent dat de online diversiteit in termen van herinnerde onderwerpen, plekken en jaartallen direct gerelateerd is aan de variatie in identiteiten waar verschillende mensen en groepen zich mee kunnen identificeren. Sociale leerprocessen en kennis die daaruit voortkomt zijn grotendeels gebaseerd op verhalen die mensen construeren rondom ervaringen uit het verleden en delen met anderen (Schank & Abelson, 1995). Dit impliceert dat online activiteit in termen van bezoeken, herinneringen en reacties een indicatie geeft van de mate waarin buurtbewoners feiten, ervaringen en overtuigingen uitwisselen en daarvan leren. In een sterke en duurzame gemeenschap bestaat het sociale netwerk uit een balans van sterke (o.a. vrienden) en zwakke sociale banden (o.a. bekenden), maar ook uit verbindende banden ('netwerkoverstijgers') (Gilchrist, 2009). Een van de factoren die samenhangt met een dergelijke variatie in het sociale netwerk achter een online buurtgeheugen is het aantal verschillende buurtbewoners wat online participeert in de rol van verhalenverteller, schrijver of reageerder.

De patronen in de indicatoren laten onder andere zien dat er vanaf 2010 een steil groeiende online activiteit (aantallen bezoeken, verhalen en reacties) van een krimpende groep online participanten (aantallen verschillende vertellers, schrijvers en reageerders) is, die gepaard gaat met een dalende online diversiteit (variatie in en gebruik van onderwerpen, plekken en jaartallen). Vertaald naar collectief empowerment betekent dit dat er intensieve sociale leerprocessen plaatsvinden binnen overwegend sterke sociale netwerken met weinig variatie in de aanwezige collectieve identiteiten.

De ontwikkeling naar een zelfstandig, dus zonder ondersteunende professionals, opererende groep van buurtbewoners is de drijvende kracht in het ontstaan van deze situatie. Na de overdracht in 2010 van de verantwoordelijkheid voor de website aan een groep buurtbewoners, is een kleine overgebleven groep enthousiast een grote hoeveelheid verhalen en reacties gaan plaatsen. De organisatiekracht voor samenwerking met partijen als scholen, zelforganisaties of verenigingen is vanaf die tijd achteruitgegaan door het kleiner worden van de groep betrokkenen. Veel mensen die via de website of workshops uitgenodigd worden om een verhaal bij te dragen, hebben er twijfels over of ze wel iets interessants te vertellen hebben. Een natuurlijk selectieproces heeft er zo voor gezorgd dat vooral oudere deelnemers met een Nederlandse opleiding en een jeugd in Amsterdam Oost actief zijn gebleven, wat ook terug is te zien in de content van de website. Ouderen zonder jeugd in Amsterdam Oost, jongeren en mensen van middelbare leeftijd, maar ook kwetsbare buurtbewoners zijn ondervertegenwoordigd geraakt op de website. De afname in online diversiteit wordt onbedoeld versterkt door de specialisatie in en makkelijke toegang tot een beperkt aantal onderwerpen uit het verdere verleden waar een aantal betrokkenen zeer actief mee bezig is. De overtuiging over wat succes van het Geheugen van Oost inhoudt neigt dan ook meer naar individueel empowerment dan naar empowerment van het collectief. Het succes van de website wordt in de periode na 2010 namelijk vaker in kwantitatieve termen besproken dan in kwalitatieve. Dit betekent, praktisch gezien, dat de

hoge productie van verhalen van één persoon meer gevierd wordt dan een paar nieuwe verhalen van buurtbewoners die ondervertegenwoordigd zijn op de website. Het nastreven van succes in deze termen plaatst mensen die al empowered of weerbaar zijn op de voorgrond en sluit mensen die niet empowered of kwetsbaar zijn op de achtergrond. Concluderend is tussen 2010 en 2014 de groep direct betrokkenen een empowerde groep geworden, terwijl de website als geheel minder empowerend geworden is naar andere groepen en de omringende gemeenschap als geheel (het collectieve niveau).

Het Geheugen van West wordt in hoofdstuk 6 volgens dezelfde systematiek als het Geheugen van Oost geanalyseerd. De data van ongeveer 10 jaar (2004-2014) van deze website bestrijkt 2798 herinneringen, die ook vooral bestaan uit teksten met foto's. De trefwoorden bestaan uit 65 onderwerpen, 77 plekken en jaartallen van vooral 1900 tot 2014. Daarnaast zijn er 698 verhalenvertellers en 436 schrijvers die een verhaal van zich zelf of een andere verteller hebben opgetekend. Bij een aantal paginaviews van 2,5 miljoen hebben ongeveer 3500 verschillende mensen bijna 9000 reacties achtergelaten.

De patronen in de indicatoren in de online dynamiek laten het volgende zien. Na een moeilijk tweede jaar stijgt vanaf 2005 de online activiteit (aantallen bezoeken, verhalen en reacties) en blijft vanaf 2008 redelijk stabiel om na 2012 iets te dalen. De online participatie (aantallen verschillende vertellers, schrijvers en reageerders) volgt dit patroon. De online diversiteit neemt in zijn geheel toe, doordat nieuw toegevoegde buurtrefwoorden in toenemende mate gebruikt worden, de onderwerpen in toenemende mate gelijkmatig gebruikt worden en de jaartallen in toenemende mate zowel het verre als het recente verleden bestrijken. In termen van collectief empowerment biedt de online diversiteit in toenemende mate een variatie in collectieve identiteiten waar verschillende groepen in het westen van Amsterdam zich mee kunnen identificeren. De sociale leerprocessen gerelateerd aan de online activiteit neigen, als we kijken naar de reacties (gemiddeld circa 3 per verhaal), vooral naar het delen van wat feitelijke kennis, maar minder naar diepgaande online discussies. De stabiele en redelijk hoge aantallen vertellers, schrijvers en reageerders lijken een gezonde variatie in sterke en lichte gemeenschappen te garanderen en netwerkovertijgers te bevatten.

De positieve ontwikkeling en stabilisatie in termen van online activiteit en online participatie na de eerste twee jaar wordt vooral gekoppeld aan de door professionals begeleidde samenwerking met een groeiend aantal partners. Na 2012 zijn de subsidies voorbij waardoor de samenwerking wat afneemt en daardoor de online activiteit en participatie ook. De stijgende online diversiteit over de hele periode heeft hoofdzakelijk te maken met 'gebiedsuitbreidende' doelstellingen, een toename aan reportages over het recente verleden en samenwerking met een variatie aan lokale partners in andere buurten.

De analyse levert daarnaast een inzicht op in een van de andere concepten voor groepsempowerment dat in hoofdstuk 5 rondom het Geheugen van Oost nog niet aan de orde kwam. Het gaat hier om het inclusieve karakter van het Geheugen van West dat zich manifesteert in de online diversiteit, waarmee verschillende groepen bewoners zich kunnen identificeren. Die inclusiekant wordt hieronder nog uitgediept aan de hand een aantal aspecten van de organisatie en context. Voor het Geheugen van Oost wordt dat gedaan in hoofdstuk 7 in de conclusies van het proefschrift.

In de doelstellingen van het Geheugen van West wordt het verbeteren van sociale cohesie geconcretiseerd via het bevorderen van verdraagzaamheid op basis van kennis van en begrip voor elkaar en elkaars verleden. Met een recent verleden in Nieuw West met negatieve beeldvorming over bepaalde groepen, wilden de deelnemers de dreigende segregatie een halt toe roepen door verhalen van 'de ander' te verzamelen. Gekoppeld hieraan heeft het Geheugen van West vanaf het begin zijn thuisbasis in De Brug, een multiculturele huiskamer in Geuzenveld. De doelstellingen van De Brug resoneren sterk in

die van het Geheugen van West, net als de dagelijkse bezigheden om bruggen tussen verschillen groepen te slaan. Het goed kunnen leggen van verbindingen zien we ook terug in de succesvolle samenwerkingsverbanden die het Geheugen van West lang heeft kunnen opbouwen. Dat leverde verbindingen op met nieuwe verhalen, groepen en buurten. Concluderend bevordert het Geheugen van West collectief empowerment voorbij de groep direct betrokkenen. Een breed deel van de hele gemeenschap wordt succesvol uitgenodigd om bij te dragen aan de website en zo meerdere collectieve identiteiten te vormen.

In de conclusies in hoofdstuk 7 worden eerst de cases vergeleken op de patronen in hun online dynamiek en op de aspecten van collectief empowerment die daarin weerspiegeld worden. De patronen in de online dynamiek worden heuristisch weergegeven in Figuur 30 op pagina 82. Als je alleen kijkt naar online diversiteit dan wordt het Geheugen van West door een hoge variatie aan collectieve identiteiten als meer empowerend gezien dan het Geheugen van Oost waar die variatie in mindere mate aanwezig is. Als het gaat om online activiteit, dan zijn de sociale leerprocessen binnen het Geheugen van Oost meer empowerend te noemen dan die van het Geheugen van West. Bij de online participatie scoort het Geheugen van West weer beter dan Oost doordat er, afgezet tegen de hoeveelheid verhalen en reacties, meer variatie in deelnemers zit wat de kans op gevarieerde sociale netwerken vergroot. Bij deze laatste vergelijking wordt duidelijk dat de patronen vooral in verband met elkaar gebracht moeten worden. Dat levert inzichten op in nog twee concepten op groepsniveau van empowerment: inclusie en sociaal kapitaal. In hoofdstuk 6 werd al duidelijk dat het inclusieve karakter van het Geheugen van West sterker is dan die van Oost door de meervoudige collectieve identiteiten die geworteld zijn in lichte netwerken waarin in redelijke mate sociale leerprocessen plaatsvinden. Het Geheugen van Oost bevat echter een sterker sociaal kapitaal door de combinatie van de sterke en relatief kleine sociale netwerken samen met de hoge mate van sociale leerprocessen en een aantal dominante collectieve identiteiten.

De vergelijking van de organisatorische ontwikkelingen van beide online buurtgeheugens die de bovenstaande patronen veroorzaken, bekrachtigen de bevindingen van de aparte studies. Bij het Geheugen van Oost hebben we gezien dat de toenemende online activiteit door een kleine groep deelnemers rondom een krimpend aantal onderwerpen verklaard kan worden door drie ontstane organisatorische eigenschappen. Die bestaan uit een overwegend kwantitatieve opvatting van succes, een tekort aan mankracht voor speciale projecten en een kleine overgebleven groep enthousiaste deelnemers. In het geval van het Geheugen van West wordt de toenemende online diversiteit vanuit een vrij grote groep deelnemers in lichte netwerken eveneens verklaard door drie organisatorische ontwikkelingen. Hier gaat het om de professionals die een scala van partners weten te binden, de reportages over het recente verleden en de doelen met een sterk besef ten aanzien van de multiculturele gemeenschap. De vergelijking van de organisatorische ontwikkelingen van beide online buurtgeheugens levert echter nog twee nieuwe inzichten op die met de context van beiden heeft te maken en de online dynamiek beïnvloeden. In Amsterdam Oost is dat een traditie waarin het behoud van bijvoorbeeld gebouwen en buurtfuncties centraal staat, terwijl Amsterdam Nieuw West lang pioniersgebied is geweest waar nieuwe ontwikkelingen en bewoners dagelijkse kost waren. Deze twee inzichten komen hieronder terug.

De besproken organisatieaspecten van de twee online buurtgeheugens abstraheer ik vervolgens tot vijf organisatorische continuïms die samenhangen met beider sociale betekenis: context, samenwerking, doelen, herinnerde periodes en het verzamelen van verhalen (de Kreek & van Zoonen, 2016). Beide websites worden op die assen geplaatst om aan te geven welke eigenschappen de laatste jaren kenmerkend voor ze zijn geweest (zie Figuur 32, p. 90).

In de *context* van Amsterdam Oost heeft stadsvernieuwing vanuit bewoners veel weerstand gekregen, vooral in de delen die gebouwd zijn rond 1900. Dit leidde in de jaren 90 bij de gemeente tot het besluit om niet meer te slopen voor nieuwbouw maar gebouwen te behouden en te renoveren. De Westelijke Tuinsteden in Nieuw West kwamen tot stand in de 30 jaar na de Tweede Wereldoorlog. Mensen die daar heen verhuisden beschouwden zichzelf, en werden beschouwd, als pioniers. Stadsvernieuwing kreeg hier gedurende de jaren 90 ook weerstand, maar vooral omdat het, volgens oude nieuwkomers onterecht, werd ingezet om concentraties van recente nieuwkomers meer te spreiden. Op basis van deze contexten beargumenteer ik dat er binnen het Geheugen van West een pioniersgeest heerst en binnen het Geheugen van Oost een streven tot behoud is. Het eerste trekt in verhouding meer herinneringen van nieuwe bewoners aan en het tweede meer die van oudere bewoners. Het Geheugen van West heeft langer balans gehouden in de *samenwerking* tussen bewoners, professionals en organisaties dan het Geheugen van Oost, waar een kleine groep bewoners al het verzamelen op zich nam. Dit leverde verhoudingsgewijs bij het Geheugen van West meer diversiteit op in de verhalen dan bij het Geheugen van Oost, terwijl bij de laatste een sterker netwerk ontstond. De concrete *doelen* van het Geheugen van West, bijvoorbeeld op het gebied van tolerantie, lijken op het gebied van diversiteit beter te hebben uitgewerkt dan de wat abstractere doelen van het Geheugen van Oost, bijvoorbeeld rondom sociale cohesie of thuisgevoel. Als het gaat om de *periode* waar de herinneringen over gaan heeft het Geheugen van Oost de categorie 'Nieuws' verlaten omdat die te veel een agendafunctie kreeg, terwijl het Geheugen van West die categorie veranderde in 'Verhalen van nu'. Bij de eerste resulteerde dit in meer focus op oudere verhalen en bij de laatste ontstond er een mix tussen het recente en het verre verleden. In het *verzamelen* van content op de website lag bij het Geheugen van Oost de nadruk wat meer op de kwantiteit dan bij het Geheugen van West. Daar is variatie in verhalen lang de drijfveer gebleven achter het verzamelen. De content en het netwerk ontwikkelde zich daardoor bij het Geheugen van West meer richting diversiteit dan bij het Geheugen van Oost.

Als we nu de beide websites op het snijvlak tussen groeps- en gemeenschapsniveau van empowerment bekijken zien we dat ze ieder op eigen wijze een sociale betekenis hebben ontwikkeld. Door haar inclusievere karakter is het Geheugen van West representatiever voor het gemeenschapsgeheugen van de verschillende bewoners van Nieuw West. Relatief veel bewoners zijn op de een of andere manier verbonden aan de website, hoewel de gemeenschapskracht diffuus is binnen deze grote groep door de overwegend lichte netwerken waarin dit gebeurt. Als een plek waar cultureel burgerschap vorm krijgt, zijn de deelnemers van het Geheugen van West divers, maar is de intensiteit van de interacties beperkt. De situatie bij het Geheugen van West sluit aan op de opvatting dat "empowerment uitkomsten op gemeenschapsniveau ... tekenen bevatten van pluralisme, coalities en toegankelijke hulpbronnen" (vertaling van Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995, p. 570). Het Geheugen van Oost heeft met haar sterkere sociaal kapitaal de gemeenschapskracht om weerstand te bieden aan erfgoedinstututen, commerciële populaire cultuur en lokale politiek. In termen van cultureel burgerschap zijn er een aantal sterke netwerken met intensieve interacties, waar betekenissen en waarden worden besproken. Het gemeenschapsgeheugen gevormd door het Geheugen van Oost is echter representatief voor een verhoudingsgewijs beperkte groep bewoners van Amsterdam Oost. De situatie bij het Geheugen van Oost past bij het idee over empowerment op gemeenschapsniveau die zich manifesteert als een sociale macht "om belangrijke actoren te belonen of te straffen, lokaal beleid en debat te beïnvloeden en gemeenschapsideologie en –bewustzijn te vormen" (vertaling van Zimmerman, 2000, p. 57).

De tweevoudige casestudy bevestigt, op empirische wijze, de claim uit de bestudeerde literatuur dat de sociale betekenis van online buurtgeheugens aanzienlijk kan

zijn in termen van collectief empowerment. Een kanttekening op basis van de veldstudie is wel dat de sociale betekenis van online buurtgeheugens in algemene zin niet overgewaardeerd moet worden, omdat veel websites relatief snel in ongebruik raken. Het onderzoek laat ook zien dat de sociale betekenis in termen van collectief empowerment gevarieerder is dan de sociale macht die vooral genoemd wordt in de literatuur over online buurtgeheugens. Een belangrijk alternatief bleek hierboven te bestaan uit de kracht van online buurtgeheugens om een inclusieve gemeenschap te vormen. Veel empowermentonderzoekers claimen echter dat empowerment een bron is die in principe niet op kan gaan, waarmee ze bedoelen dat empowerment van de een niet ten koste hoeft te gaan van empowerment van de ander (Woodall, Warwick-Booth, & Cross, 2012). Aannemende dat dit ook op collectief niveau geldt, impliceert dit dat online buurtgeheugens tegelijkertijd een inclusieve gemeenschap en een sociale macht zouden kunnen vormen. Met betrekking tot de vijf genoemde organisatorische continuïms zou dit betekenen dat de focus bij elk van hen niet op één kant van een continuüm ligt, maar een breed deel daarvan bedekt. Een voorbeeld daarvan zien we in de dekking die het Geheugen van West laat zien op het continuüm van de periodes die herinnerd worden. De verhalen dekken daar zowel het verre als het recente verleden. Dit houdt in dat ouderen betrokken zijn om hun verhalen van het bijna verloren verleden te kunnen bewaren en, tegelijkertijd, nieuwere buurtbewoners meedoen om hun recente herinneringen te delen.

De mogelijkheid tot een dergelijke win-win situatie op het gebied van collectief empowerment roept uitdagingen voor de praktijk van online buurtgeheugens op. Het Geheugen van Oost zou meer inclusief kunnen proberen te worden en het Geheugen van West zou meer sociale macht kunnen proberen te ontwikkelen. Door de betrokkenheid van de verschillende stakeholders gedurende het onderzoek is er een proces ontstaan dat de kennis in de praktijk rondom deze uitdagingen heeft beïnvloed. Met mensen van onder andere de beide online buurtgeheugens, van het Amsterdam Museum, van de Universiteit van Amsterdam en van de Hogeschool van Amsterdam hebben we ons steeds een aantal vragen gesteld. Deze vragen waren (in verschillende hoedanigheden) afkomstig van Bengt Flyvbjerg et al. (2012): Waar gaan we heen? Wie wint er en wie verliest er? Is dit wenselijk? Wat kunnen we eraan doen? De vragen waren gerelateerd aan het kwaliteitscriterium van authenticiteit van het onderzoek: de gebruikswaarde ervan voor de onderzochte gemeenschappen. Een voorbeeld illustreert het beste hoe deze vragen fungeerden als katalysator voor kennisontwikkeling in de praktijk. Bij het Geheugen van Oost passeerde tijdens een bijeenkomst de term 'mierenhoop' om te beschrijven dat de website eigenschappen heeft waar we ons niet altijd bewust van zijn. De visualisaties, waarin de dalende diversiteit via grafieken duidelijk werd, initieerden een gesprek over het verschil in opvattingen over wat succes van het Geheugen van Oost is. Aan de ene kant werden 'kijkcijfers' belangrijk gevonden en aan de andere kant bijzondere verhalen die bij konden dragen aan de diversiteit. Dit gesprek wordt nog steeds gevoerd, maar nu gelijkwaardiger dan voorheen, toen vooral kijkcijfers als bewijzen voor succes werden gezien. Op basis van deze ervaring eindig ik met een pleidooi voor dit soort participatieve elementen in onderzoek van online buurtgeheugens. Als we willen dat onderzoek een verschil kan maken in de praktijk moeten de betrokkenen in de onderzochte context betrokken zijn om in staat te zijn de verantwoordelijkheid te nemen voor het vinden van een balans in individueel, groeps- en gemeenschapsempowerment.

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Mike de Kreek
Amsterdam
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About the author

Who am I?

Mike de Kreek

During my master studies (1994 – 2003) in computational linguistics at the University of Amsterdam, I became interested in learning as a social process. In my master thesis Language Acquisition and Virtual Grammars, I explored how toddlers develop their first



linguistic constructions from pre-linguistic cognitive structures. The latter structures come about by processing of and generalization over the combination of audible input from people nearby and visual input from physical surroundings.

In my work since 1999 for an educational research and development centre at the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, this focus shifted to online learning environments where students and teachers could interact. Later in my career at the same University, I arrived at what is now called the Amsterdam Research Institute for Societal Innovation. In this context, I was able to further develop myself as a lecturer and a researcher.

Since 2008, I coordinate and teach the research courses in the Master Social Work program we offer. The students are experienced professionals from the field of social work. The mix of all their experiences result in the formation of a professional learning community in which both teachers and students are participants. I really enjoy supervising their – often participatory – research projects which are aimed to develop the practices where they work.

Still interested in social learning, now in combination with internet, I developed a research program in 2008 called the social use of information and communication technologies. From this moment onwards, I have been oriented towards collectives of people living in Amsterdam. One of the research opportunities that crossed my way consisted of two local memory websites, already active since 2003. I was very interested in why so many people went through the effort to contribute memories about their neighbourhoods and to leave comments on the website. This is where the ideas about this dissertation started.

Since two years I am one of the steady members of a research group on cultural and social dynamics. Among other things, we focus on the relation between cultural interventions and collaborative learning processes in contexts where stakeholders (e.g. professionals and citizens) face the challenge of taking up new roles. You could say that I am still going strong on the topic of learning as a social process.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.hva.nl/akmi>

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