ZuNaMi: Creating cohesion narratives with disintegrated urban communities.
First work in progress report

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1. Approach and Research Objectives

ZuNaMi (Creating narratives of cohesion together, in German “Zusammenhaltsnarrative miteinander erarbeiten”) is an action-research-based deliberative project initiated by the University of Muenster, the TU Dortmund University and the Foreign Institute of North Rhine-Westphalia in Germany and financed by The Federal Ministry of Education and Research within the framework of Cohesion Research track. The Project seeks to reconstruct narratives of cohesion for an inclusive society and to transform some of these narratives for citizenship education purposes in the sense of making them visible and applicable in educational settings. Due to the project partnership between two universities and an eminent organization for civic education, the project combines theoretical, empirical and practical approaches.

The project reacts to the contemporary crises, socio-economic and cultural divides within the EU and Germany, which are inevitably connected to the culturalization of intergroup conflicts and segregated identity building (Bornschier 2010). As societal dynamics, those phenomena also trigger narratives about “we-and-the-others”, which are of essential relevance for citizenship education (Kearns 2014, Zick/Küpper 2012). In German society, the limited acceptance of diversity and (as a consequence) a low orientation on living together are central factors causing disintegration, social exclusion and political polarization (Green 2004; Bertelsmann 2013; Schmitt-Beck et al. 2017). Heterogeneous urban spaces face phenomena of disintegration even more intensively than rural communities do. The area of the old industrial town of Dortmund is a well-known locus of social disintegration and socio-spatial segregation (Kurtenbach 2016, Borstel/Luzar 2012). Still, the Ruhr region is also widely known for its long history of immigration and successful integration and reciprocal assimilation (the German “melting pot”, Zank 1998) over the last centuries. Therefore,

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2 https://zusammenhalt-dortmund.de/ retrieved on 28.06.2018
with its location in the city of Dortmund, the ZuNaMi project strives to find narratives of cohesion and inclusion of diversity as of separation and segregation.

The following first research report seeks to document and to discuss methodological and design issues of the pilots of the research project, such as open up a discussion on the adaptation of the research method and recruitment of the participants within a deliberative process and to critically analyze the goal setting of the project.

2. Normative Perspective

Narratives of societal cohesion (and segregation) are phenomena, which can be (re)constructed, analyzed, and processed in a theory-based way (See e.g. Mulderrig 2011). The term „narratives of cohesion“ is, at least at the starting phase of a project, to be seen in a descriptive way as a normative collective self-representation and the construction of meaning of societies and their social practices (Taylor 2004).

Therefore, they comprise more than the pure affirmation of a common status quo or an imagined community (Anderson 2006). ZuNaMi frames societal cohesion as essential for the development of resilient social ties, efficient connectedness to the community, including an orientation towards the community welfare and the common good (Osler 2015). In the case of Germany, the prevailing narratives of cohesion are in most parts ethnically biased and therefore not adaptable for a heterogeneous 21st century society. Therefore, it is a major challenge for social sciences to explore and to reflect on these narratives in a theoretical and empirical way. Furthermore, the research is situated in the midst of the reality of contemporary urban social spaces, as we will be discussing with both, the inhabitants of Dortmund and civic education stakeholders.

Concepts of narratives of cohesion disseminated in civic education processes can contribute to resilience to crises and ruptures on the one hand and to the sustainable strengthening of societal cohesion on the other hand (Negt 2010, Mouritsen 2013). Nevertheless, there seems to lack 1.) a theoretical and empirical positive foundation of these narratives, which can be integrated in multicultural societies’ civic education, and 2.) an adaption to a practical approach, which is capable to anchor professional action in educational institutions effectively.

In more and more parts of the society, democratic promises made by actors of political education appear to be - for various reasons - implausible (Blühdorn 2013). This creates a situation of increasing helplessness and normative dilemmas for teachers and other disseminators of civic education. At the same time, guiding principles in German civic education are predominantly oriented towards institutions and procedures („Verfassungspatriotismus“, cf. Habermas 1992). Teachers hesitate referring to „Grand Narratives‘ about state and society like the French “Grand récit du commun” or the American Exceptionalism (Lange 2015, Klee 2008). The foundations of the

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3 This chapter is based on the extended abstract and presentation “Creating narratives of cohesion within citizenship education? Civic learning spaces and deliberation as an answer towards disintegration and radicalization in urban communities” held during the Sixth annual conference on citizenship education on 28 – 29 May, 2018 in University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands
citizenship concept that grounds the political cohesion imaginary in German civic education are discussed with a strong averseness to any societal or historical grand narratives.

Therefore, it is not expedient to generate new concepts of belonging and participation for an inclusive citizenship education solely from a historical or theoretical perspective. On the contrary, democratic commitment and identity-related demarcations (Williams 2007) can only be explored where they are explicated and debated at a performative level and manifest themselves in the form of narratives of cohesion or segregation (Banks 2015). By doing this, the ZuNaMi-project reacts to the perceived gap between the processes of disintegration and othering and the existing approaches of citizenship education (in Germany) which seems to be inadequate to catch up disintegration and radicalization.

3. Operationalization

Seeking to create deliberative learning spaces within the civic society of Dortmund, the ZuNaMi project calls the citizens to develop narratives of cohesion within group workshops that function as deliberative communication spaces. The participation of citizens should not be seen solely as data gathering method for research purposes within the project, but rather the deliberative practice itself shall stimulate transformative actions. The analytical effort of the project is thus not only to reconstruct the narratives themselves, but also the mechanisms of their creation (Hedström/Swedberg 1998: 24).

The design based research connects different types of group workshops will take place within three phases with different participants. The first phase consists of six workshops with Dortmund citizens who articulate and co-produce the narratives of cohesion. This process is going to be observed and analytically reconstructed. During the second phase’s workshops, the explored narratives will be discussed with citizenship educationalists with regard to the question of how they can be transferred into new concepts of civic education. Finally, participants of the first and of the second phase will discuss and evaluate the generated concepts of civic education and thus testing their applicability and acceptance. For the time being (July 2018), two piloting workshops were hold in order to precise the method and critically reflect on the material’s usage, as well as six short testing discussion groups, detecting some central narratives of “Dortmund” and “Cohesion”, which would be used in order to structure the research workshops.

3.1 The idea of the group workshops in phase 1

As it was said before, within the project the citizens of Dortmund are called to develop narratives of cohesion within group workshops that shall function as deliberative communication spaces. To guarantee a fluent discussion, each workshop is supposed to consist of eight participants. To avoid too strong influence by the researchers and to align the balance of power in favor of the group, there will be only one active moderator of the ZuNaMi team in each workshop (the second moderator controlling the recording of the results and not being active in the moderating role). Accordingly, the communication process of the workshop shall be only initiated by the researcher. Due of the openness of the method the participants will be able to structure the communication by
themselves, so the participants can put their own focusing on topics and the relevancy of the topics can be produced discursively by the participants (Helfferich 2000, 131).

The main goal of the group workshops is to bring people from heterogeneous groups together in a discussion about the mutual future and a desirable everyday practice. According to the strived heterogeneity within the groups, the group workshops will take place as “artificially composed groups” (Loos/Schäffer 2001, 43). This means that the groups are “artificially” composed of participants who do not share a common everyday life but are linked by common experiences based on a social/societal/community interest or a activity (membership of a club, active role in charity of community support organization, but also active participation in sports etc.). Therefore, the participants are recruited from different collective spaces of the urban life, i.e. from gardening and sports clubs, religious communities, music and art associations or youth oriented places systematically taking into account spatial segregation in Dortmund. This provides the opportunity to capture implicit collective knowledge of the participants in respect of experiences, processes and opinions (Nentwig-Gesemann 2009, 104). This is crucial to the project goal since ZuNaMi does not seek to invent new narratives but shall explore already existing narratives of cohesion. Furthermore, the shared range of experience enables the communication within the groups to partly resemble a normal conversation (Loos/Schäffer 2001, 13; Liebig/Nentwig-Gesemann 2009, 104).

The recruitment of participants of the workshops takes place in the city of Dortmund, where the researchers systematically seek a direct contact with citizens, although the recruitment method has been modified several times. At first, 250 e-mails were sent by the Foreign Institute of North Rhine-Westphalia to clubs, organizations, sports clubs and charity of community support organizations to clarify the ZuNaMi project and specifically invite participants to workshops. We found out that such an impersonal request did not bring the expected success, although the Foreign Institute of North Rhine-Westphalia is best connected and well known to all the relevant civic society organizations of the region. Still, the feedback was very limited, so the ZuNaMi team decided to make a personal and direct presentation via phone calls. While we talked to local citizens on the phone, we realized that many felt overwhelmed by our call and our research project, so that only few expressed their interest in the project. Lastly we decided to meet the citizens of Dortmund in their institutions and organizations in person during their opening hours – this approach is most suitable for the deliberative project, though very time consuming – to have an open conversation about the project and to invite the citizens to participate in group workshops. This approach turned out to be promising for during an open discussion we were able to emphasize the project goal and the open nature of the processes. Therefore, many citizens expressed their interest in the project and in participating in group workshops together with other citizens of Dortmund to discuss issues of social cohesion, problems and boundaries within the city of Dortmund and concepts to strengthen social cohesion.

Since the participants will not only focus on current problems and events, but mainly on the creation of forward-looking narratives of cohesion (Maier 2014, 51sf.) the group workshops will borrow some elements of the “Future Workshop”. Therefore, the group workshops will be provided with a moderated, prepared and open space to discuss the future of society/urban space and develop future-oriented ideas, values and concepts.
3.2 Warm-up with Pictures

In order to initiate the group communication, the moderator will propose the use of images. Images have always been considered symbolic and meaningful objects of human perception, thought and action and, moreover, are individual witnesses of thoughts and experiences (Dörner 2012, 291f; Rustmeyer 2003). Additionally, images comprehensively represent and constitute the individually perceived reality (Bohnsack 2004, 3). The idea to use images was adapted from ethnographic approaches of photo-elicitation (cf. Schwartz 1989) and developed deliberatively (and continuously) within the first workshops in order to strengthen the co-designing position of the workshops participants. During the testing phase, the usage of images was both, seen as a functioning discussion opener, used in order to understand the conceptions of the participants (cf. Clark-Ibáñez, 2004; Richard & Lahman 2015); further on this method was critically discussed with participants and with the groups of researchers. In the first testing workshop, accepted images of cohesion and disintegration from Dortmund were used. The pictures were partly brought by both by participants of the testing workshops (in the sense of creating their own visions of what is relevant for them (cf. Clark-Ibáñez, 2004) and partly brought by the researchers (in the sense of theory-driven approach, ibid. p. 1509; closed to application in ethnographical research, Schwartz 1989). Within the first testing workshop the participants were asked to choose one image to which they are able to find an individual connection, gain an emotional approach and talk more about the pictures from their first-person perspective and the relation to their everyday life and Dortmund. The critical reflection of this usage led to the alternation of the method, which was as well tested and again critically reflected in the second testing workshop.

In the second workshop, normatively loaded images were substituted with rather neutral symbolic images of a city; the images provided only partly claimed direct social associations, i.e. with recognizable existing places like a certain park which might be associated with a drug scene etc. Those images were more open and abstract so that each participant can choose an individual access to a particular image, connected to communities and cohesion or separation (i.e. railroad tracks, a football on a field).

Here, the critique was, that the urban human-less landscapes are still too normative and suggestive. Hence, a third set of pictures was developed, in order to increase the potential of decontextualized photos (Richard/Lahman 2015). The goal was to increase the individual interpretive openness of the images in order to constitute a safe space for the participants to speak about urban communities with or without personal attachments. At the same time, they shall contribute to a relaxed and lively conversation situation (Degele et al. 2009, 376). The third set of pictures consists of rather abstract images of nature (landscapes, plants etc.). The participants can choose now between the community pictures (normatively loaded and analytically described in their normativity with help of sequential analysis), the decontextualized urban pictures, and abstract pictures of nature in order to start a dialog about cohesion.

3.3 The Structure of a Workshop

Moderation

In their moderation role, the researchers focus mainly on time management and the instruction. Accordingly, the researchers observe the discussion from the outside and decide only on a case-by-case basis whether they intervene in the discussion process by a question in order to bring the
discussion back to the main topic. The “off topic” discussions are going to be put on a special sheet, so they are not lost.

**Preparatory stage**
In order to guarantee a fluent conversation, the number of participants of each group is a maximum of eight people. The images will be mixed in advance by the researchers and spread out on tables. Each participant takes a picture of their choice.

**First Stage: Discussion on cohesion as a term**
After the short introductory phase each participant will present their selected image to the group and will report why they have chosen it and what they associate with it personally and in connection to their specific understanding of cohesion. Therefore, the images serve as an uninhibited entry into the discussion as well as an auxiliary tool. The participants are then asked to discuss, also by using the images if they want, the following questions: “What does cohesion mean for you?”, “How do you recognize cohesion in a society?”, “Where do you experience cohesion in your life?”. The participants are asked to structure ideas about the term. Therefore, the workshop participants will put all relevant terms and categories in relation to social cohesion on sheets of paper (one term / category per sheet). On the one hand, this will encourage the group to reflect the issues of the discussion and on the other hand, it will reveal the group’s most relevant issues to the researcher. To stimulate the participants’ creativity, the group will be asked to create a mind map to structure their results. As the results are now visible to the group, the opportunity is offered to make further associations and recognize or create connections between the terms on the sheets. When the discussion about the layout has come to an end the group will be given time to examine the mind map as a whole so the participants can suggest some final amendments or additions.

**Second Stage: Discussion about cohesion within the city of Dortmund**
After a small break and after discussing characteristics of cohesion (and possibly segregation), the participants will now draw their developed concept of cohesion on the city of Dortmund. “Where do you experience cohesion in Dortmund?”, “How does cohesion in Dortmund show and where can it be observed?”, but also “Where do you see boundaries of coexistence?”, “Where do you see best practices or possibilities to eliminate these boundaries?”. They are called for developing an image of an ideal urban society. Also in this phase, the participants are asked to structure their results as in the first phase in the form of a mind map. Afterwards, the group will present their elaborated concept of cohesion and their image of an ideal urban society while each participant has the opportunity to reflect the results. The summarized results of the discussion as well as the mind maps of both phases will be part of the data analysis. This contributes to the comparability between the different workshops.

**Afterwards: Analysis**
The intended data will be collected by the documentation and a recording of the group workshops. After the transcription, a sequential analysis integrating elements of conversational analysis will be performed (Oevermann et al. 1979). Combining the mind maps and workshop results with the results of the sequential analysis is essential for two reasons. First, the narratives the people of
Dortmund have or seek to create can be demonstrated and second, the procedural character of narrative articulation and creation can be reconstructed. The procedural character helps to understand mechanisms of how cohesion narratives emerge, the reconstruction of these mechanisms is of crucial importance for creating teaching materials of civic education.

With our project, we hope to contribute to different questions, which are raised at the ISA RC03 session on “Populism and Community Research”. We want to mitigate inequalities in civic and political engagement with the deliberative approach, the transformative action element and the access for participation for everyone. We want to integrate people from different groups and different stakeholders throughout the city and social spheres in the research process. Through the bottom-up creation of knowledge about cohesion narratives we hope to find the specific situations people are dealing with and the way they are talking about it.

If we are successful, we will find elements of narratives which lead to the acceptance of diversity and an orientation to living together peacefully. This would promote an inclusive urban society where people feel that they are belonging there which might prevent them from radicalising.

3.4. First results and method revision:

First Results
The first pilot groups we made (workshops with six groups, consisting of five to seven persons, put together on a random basis out of interested citizens of Dortmund. They either had attended the kick off presentation of the ZUNAMI project or took part in one of the two seminar groups of students in teachers training at Dortmund University we did the piloting workshops with- They demonstrated a strong normative discussion on cohesion, which was accompanied by the discussion on disintegration. While speaking of cohesion, the participants were articulating “places” of cohesion (which appeared to be found on two levels, material and non-material), like local soccer teams, certain parts of the city, parks as well as language, certain groups or classes, respecting each other (see a work in progress first systematization below in Annex).

Simultaneously, the places of disintegration were articulated (this time, of physical nature, places in the city); here, cohesion in urban and rural area were contrasted against one another. Although the moderators never articulated multiculturalism or migration as central topics of cohesion, the talks in the groups were strongly focusing on refugees, migration, and multiculturalism as possible obstacles to cohesion. “Cohesion” appeared to be a difficult term, much more difficult to define than “disintegration”. Some parts of the discussion dealt with the topic of differentiating between cohesion and solidarity. Speaking about cohesion made the participants talk about “we” and “other”.

At the same time – and here the deliberation aspects of the workshops even in the stage of pilot research becomes visible – the participants were discussing their own responsibility to foster cohesion and articulated their knowledge of where the cohesion can be seen or promoted (ex. certain festivities); giving also examples how this can be done (bringing together inter-generational groups). The actors, who are supposed to promote cohesion as well as the role of education in cohesion promotion were discussed as well (partly the pilot groups consisted of the teacher’s education students, so articulating the role of education is to be seen as self-responsibility of the participants as future teachers for cohesion).
**Conclusion: Method revision and the next steps**

After the pilot phase, we have made following revisions in our approach to the workshops:

- Stronger orientation on action research, strengthening the active role of participants as narrative producers;
- Stronger self-control of the moderator with the goal of non-intervention;
- Picture material appears to be a good opener, still predefining the discussions; the picture material was completely reworked twice and secured in its normativity through performing the sequential analysis of the non-decontextualized pictures;
- After the participants in the pilot workshops immediately discussed cohesion in relation to the city of Dortmund, it often came to criticism that it was not at all clear what is meant by the term "cohesion", each participant having their own understanding of it. Therefore, we decided that in the first phase, the participants should be asked to develop their own concept of cohesion, which in retrospect will be transferred to the city of Dortmund. This approach corresponds to deliberative research idea, thus opening the workshop participants the opportunity to take part in operationalization.

To take the deliberative nature of the process seriously was the essential step in the development of the workshop design. It caused the multiple alternations in our research plan and in our framing of the communication with the participants after each phase of the testing. The research design becomes an essential part of the research results, exemplary, the first systematization of cohesion as brought about by testing, is crucial for the preparation and designing of the research workshops. The question of societal cohesion is essentially connected to the will to participate in deliberative processes, designed in order to understand cohesion narratives. The detection of this close interconnection, which, in its turn, becomes a part of the reconstruction of mechanisms of narrative production is the first and fundamental result of the ZuNaMi project.

**Literature**


Creating Cohesion Narratives with Disintegrated Urban Communities /


Annex
First reconstruction of cohesion places within ZUNAMI. Work in Progress paper for the XIX ISA World Congress of Sociology RC03 Community Research, Session “Populism and Community Research” (Zimenkova et.al)

urban spaces of social cohesion

material
  - residential areas
  - football/soccer stadium
  - parks
  - associations
  - religious communities
  - language
  - class
  - ...  
non-material

voluntary fire brigade
charitable associations
sports clubs
food bank
...

division through lacking access opportunities
social cohesion through recognition of diversity
division through ideational exclusivity