

## Mapping an Emerging Field: Local Memory Websites

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Power of online sharing stories  
For example ...

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## ... I became involved in the Memory of East ...



The screenshot shows the homepage of the 'Geheugen van Oost' website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'Home', 'Laatste toevoegingen GvO', 'Verhalen', 'Rubrieken', 'Doe mee!', 'Wie weet...', 'Over de site', and 'Volg ons'. A search bar is on the right. Below the navigation, a green banner reads 'De toekomst begint bij het verleden.' followed by the title 'GEHEUGEN VAN OOST' in large green letters. A welcome message says 'Welkom op het Geheugen van Oost. Hier vertellen bewoners van Amsterdam Oost over hun buurt. Doe je mee? Of doe mee aan het verhalenverzamelproject Wonen en Gewoontes.' Below this, there are several featured articles with green headers: 'Lees verhalen over: Amsteldorp/Wetbuurt, Betondorp, Dapperbuurt, Don Boscobuurt, Indische Buurt, Jeruzalem, Julianapark, Middenmeer, Omval & Groene Staart, Oostelijk Havengebied, Oosterparkbuurt, Park de Meer, Polderweggebied/ Oostpoort, Sciencepark (WTCW), Transvaalbuurt, Weesperzijde & Van der Kunbuurt, IJburg, Zeeburgereiland & Diemerzeedijk', 'Hanneke van Buuren, Wilma Smid-van Buuren door Hanneke van Buuren, Wilma Smid-van Buuren 14', 'KOFFIEHUIS DE MEER.', 'De Wetbuurters spraken van het Koffiehuis op de dijk.', and a photo of a family in a cafe. On the right side, there are more featured articles: 'Direct naar: Boreemchaden, Buurwinkels, Dappermarkt, Dieren, Geloof, Kraken, Nostalgie, Overlast & criminaliteit, Tweede Wereldoorlog, Verdwenen plekken & gebouwen, Sport algemeen, Ziekenhuizen', 'Uitgelicht: De toekomst begint bij het verleden.', '10 JAAR IJBURG - AAN TAFEL OP ZONDAG 9 JUNI. Ook het Geheugen van Oost eet en doet mee.', '2074 - VERHALENWANDELING DAPPERBUURT OP ZONDAG 23 JUNI A.S. De toekomst begint bij het verleden. Op zondag 23 juni...', and 'EEN NIEUWE RUBRIEK - GESPOT IN OOST. Doe mee en win ons jubileumboek.'

Amsterdam Museum 2003 exhibition  
Cohesion, empowerment, belonging  
Interviews, meetings, life-writing  
Memories from every day life  
Steered by residents (2009)  
2.500+ digital memories  
22.000 comments  
200.000 visits

... and in a PhD-project.



## The red thread of my story today ...

Mapping 80 cases similar to the one I showed you.

- Why?
- How?
- What?



## Why map this field?



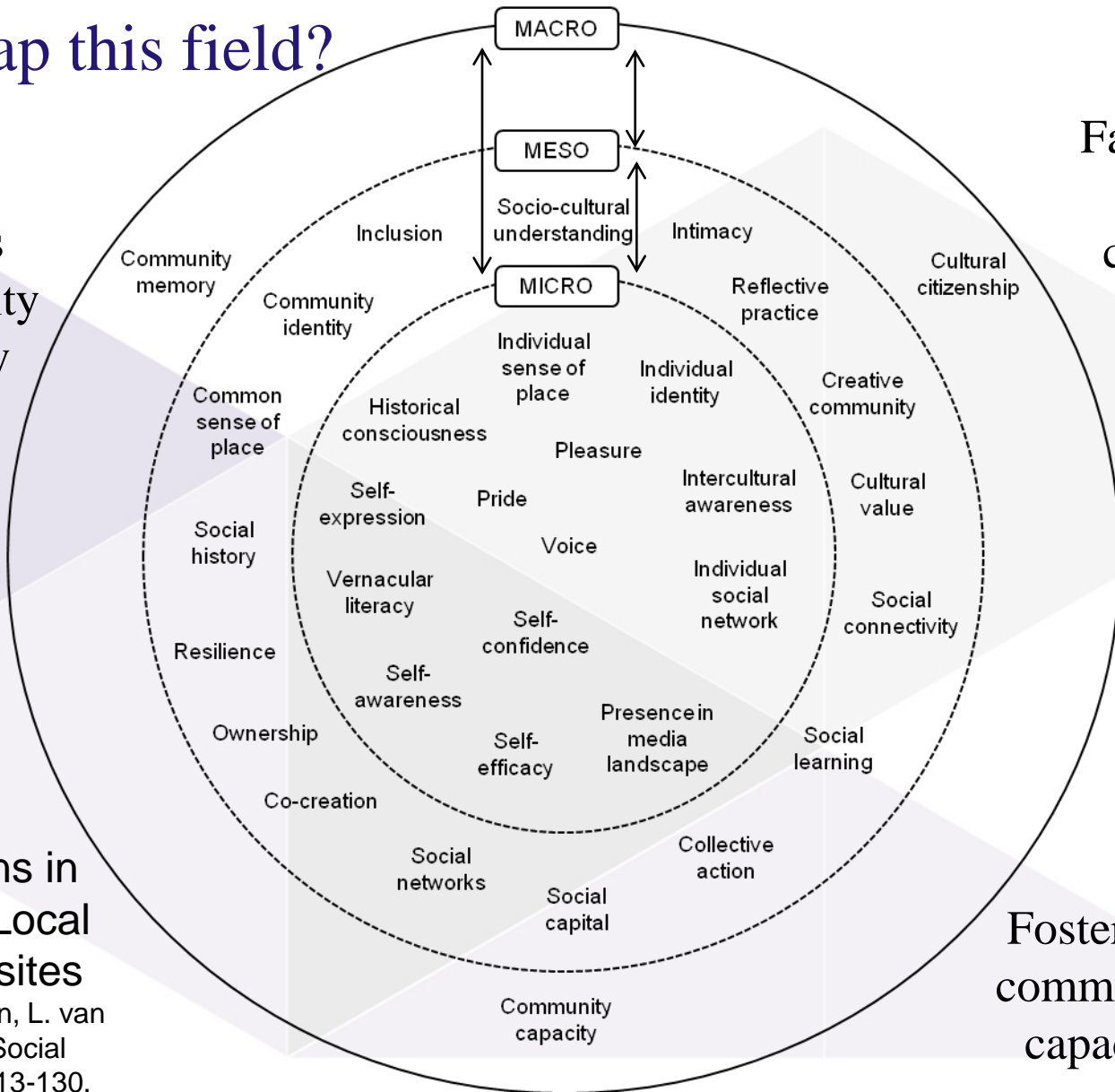
The present literature contains many claims on the benefits of local memory websites, which I structured according to the three levels of empowerment as described by Rappaport (1987), Zimmerman (2000) and Maton (2008).

The following picture emerged from this ...

# Why map this field?

Constructs  
community  
memory

Facilitates  
cultural  
citizenship



## New Directions in Research on Local Memory Websites

Kreek, M. de & Zoonen, L. van (2013). Journal of Social Intervention, 22(2), 113-130.

Fosters  
community  
capacity

## Why map this field?

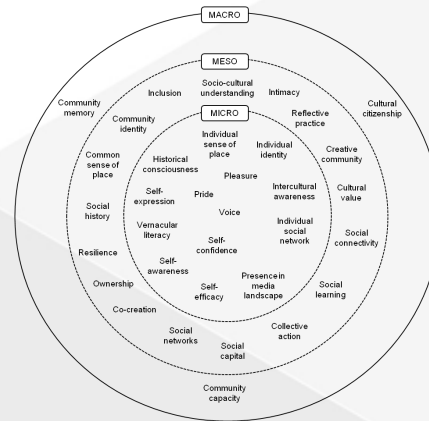
Citizen 'own' representation of neighborhood's past for future use.

For example, the extended representation of deported Jews in WW II.



The Future of Local Memory Websites as Empowering Niches in Amsterdam.

Kreek, M. de & Oosterbroek, M. (2013). In Workshop Proceedings of the 9th International Conference on Intelligent Environments



An 'independent' cultural public sphere where meaning in the present is negotiated and cultural value is judged by ordinary people.

For example, the poems containing critical statements towards current local policy.

Emergence of discourses in 'new' networks in favor of collective action or social power.

For example, disgust about deportation of Jews and tolerance towards newcomers.

## Why map this field?

Especially the claims/hopes on group and community level are attributed to a continuum of participation facilitated by online local memory platforms. (e.g. Vos & Ketelaar, 2007).



Great, but there are some gaps between these claims in the literature and the real world and between the two articles I wrote.

## Why map this field? Because, despite the promises ...

1. The representation of the field is incomplete.
  - >What other cases are there apart from the institutional ones applying the method of Digital Storytelling? (descriptive)
2. It is unknown how online participation manifests itself on these local memory websites.
  - >How do they organize themselves towards (longterm) online participation? (causal)
3. The claims on meso and macro level are poorly substantiated.
  - >The institutional cases did not develop online participation, so how does online participation relate to group and community empowerment?

## How to analyze the field?

- Finding = Snowballing.
- Selection criteria.
  - Non-fictional expression of experience about or in neighborhood.
  - Dedicated website at least 20 digital memories.
  - Five+ involved residents.
  - Limited to neighborhood, district or city.
- 34 Dutch, 24 British, 9 American, 4 Australian, 3 Argentinean, 3 Belgian, 2 German and 1 Spanish (80 total).
- Dimensions: involved parties, aims, methods, digital memories, affordances, number of contributions (MacWilliam, 2009; Burgess & Green, 2009; Kietzman, 2012; Kreek, 2011; ...).
- Qualitatively coded texts from the websites according to these dimensions inductively filling in attributes.
- Exploratory Data (Quantitative) Analysis (Tukey, 1977)

# How to analyze the field? (60 attributes)

- Involved partners
  - Participating: knowledge, historical, social welfare, association, resident, ...
  - Supporting: idem, member fees, donations, funds, products.
- Aims
  - Preserving, individual learning, inclusion, community building, products.
  - Community memory, cultural citizenship, community capacity (**deductive**).
- Methods
  - Researching archives, personal memory, co-creation (p/r), interview (p/r).
- Digital memories
  - Format: video, audio, text, picture.
  - Period: past, present, future.
  - Frame: historical, everyday, report.
- Affordances
  - Navigational: categories, latest stories/ comments, news, search, contributors, ..
  - Interactional: email, direct, comments, question, guestbook.
- Number of contributions
  - During last complete year prior to the data collection.

# What were (some of) the descriptive results?

Across  
multiple  
dimensions

Three types

## **Residential**

Private  
Preserving  
Personal memory  
Community development sec  
Text + image  
Everyday  
Past to present  
Affordances +-

## **Institutional**

Funds/ subsidy  
Aims+  
CB -> community memory  
CB -> cultural citizenship  
Professional in method  
Combination of formats  
Everyday + historical  
Past + present + future  
Affordances ++

## **Associational**

Memberships/ donations  
Preserving  
CB -> community  
memory  
Researching archives  
Interviews  
Text/ images/ Audio  
Historical  
Past  
Affordances -

## What were (some of) the descriptive results?

Across pairs  
of dimensions

1. Involved partners - Aims

Historical >< Community Memory

Social Welfare >< Cultural Citizenship

2. Involved partners - Methods

Historical institute >< Researching Archives

3. Involved partners - Memories

Historical (!) or Social Welfare >< Present

# What were (some of) the descriptive results?

## 4. Aims - Methods

Cultural citizenship >< Co-creation

Preserving >< Researching archives

Across pairs  
of dimensions

## 5. Aims - Memories

Preserving >< Text/ Images, Past, Historical

Learning or Inclusion >< Video, Present, Future, Everyday

## 6. Methods - Memories

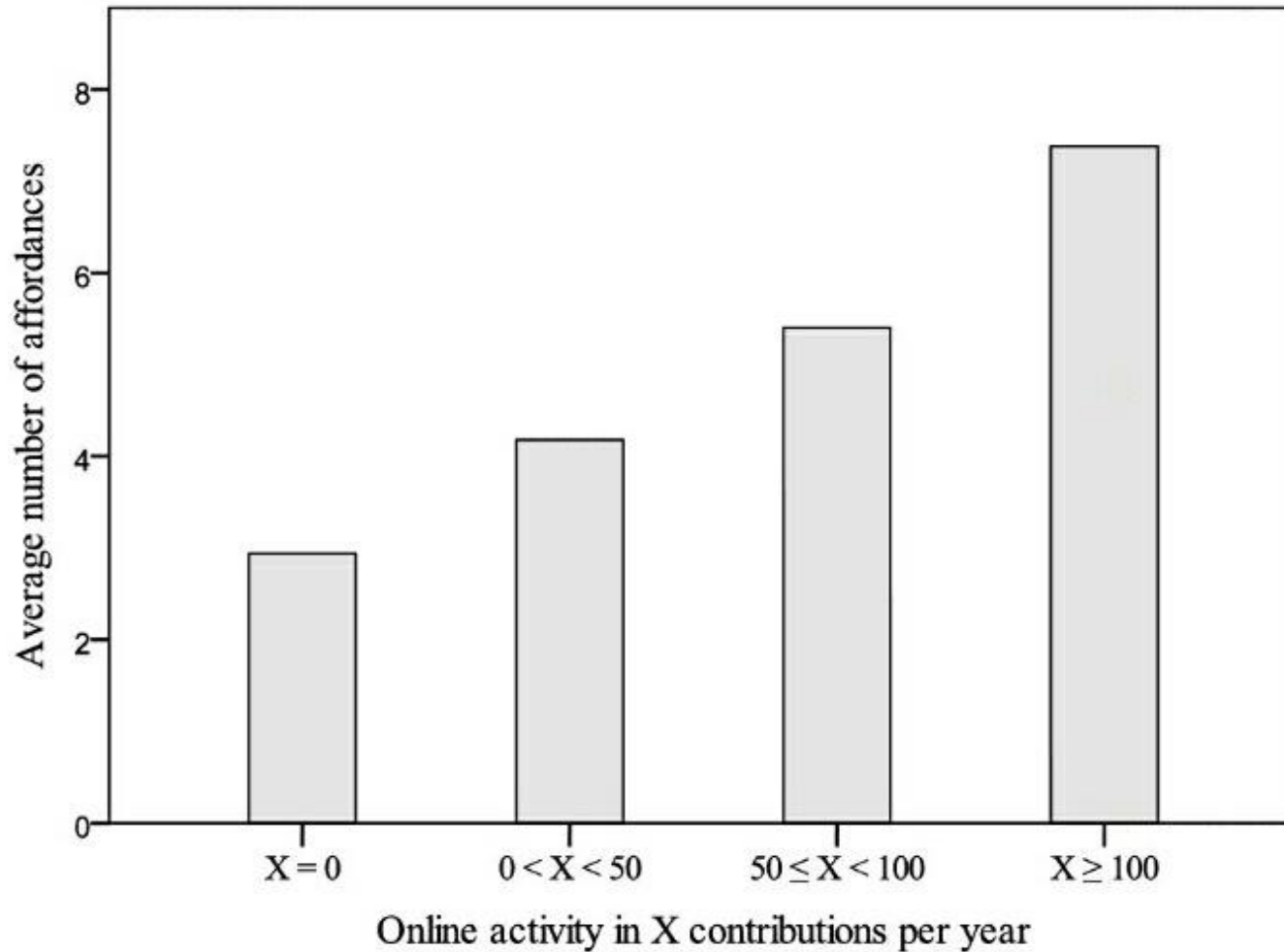
Resident only >< Text and Images

Professional involved >< Video and/ or Audio

## 7. Affordances - Online contributions

More affordances --> More Contributions

# What were (some of) the descriptive results?



Only 13 over 100 contributions, +- 3 of each type.

## What were (some of) the 'causal' results?

- High involvement of institutes does not lower online participation.
- High involvement of professionals does seem to do so.
- More involved resident methods increases online participation.
- Hypothesis: short term aims decrease online participation (Carpentier, 2009). See "output, outcome and impact -thinking" in W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004).
- Less accessible formats (video, audio) decrease online activity.
- The type did not influence the online participation.

## What conclusions can be derived?

- The field is much broader than institutional initiatives.
- Since the field shows low continuum in online participation, expectations about empowerment on meso and macro level should be tempered.
- Rules of thumb in favor of online participation:  
Foster autonomy and authenticity (Burgess, 2009; Poletti, 2011)  
by
  - combination of aims
  - professionals < residents
  - at least text and images
  - at least past and present
  - both historical and everyday
  - reasonable set of affordances

# What conclusions can be derived?

Last, but not least: there *are* local memory websites in the field with high online activity, so the empirical data to study the relation with empowerment on meso and macro level is available.

# What will my future study look like?

My next steps:

- Data sets of Memory of East and West
- Quantitative content analysis (obvious patterns)
- Qualitative narrative analysis (implicit patterns)
- Comparing the two cases

# What will my future study look like?

Main sensitizing quotes at this moment:

- “Organizational and community empowerment, however, are not simply the aggregate of many empowered individuals.”  
(Zimmerman, 2001)
- ... [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)
- “the incorporation of ordinary “voices” can facilitate the affective communication of [...] history to a broader public” (Burgess & Klaebe, 2009, p. 164)

# Thank you

Ideas, feedback, suggestions, critics, ... welcome

More reading at

<http://www.storyhood.nl/category/activities/publications>

