

Digital citizenship in local memory websites from a narrative perspective on empowerment

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Message

By discussing emergent properties of group behavior with the group members new levels of understanding can be found which might change that behavior and its effects.

Outline

- Local memory websites?
- Question
- Conceptual model
- Research results
- Results as intervention
- Finding the 'right balance'
- Digital citizenship



The Memory of East and West (2 of 30 websites in Amsterdam)

A website

+

A community of practice



The screenshot shows the homepage of the 'Geheugen van Oost' website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Home, Laatste toevoegingen GvO, Verhalen, Rubrieken, Doe mee!, Wie weet..., Over de site, and Volg ons. A search bar is located on the right. The main content area features a large green header 'GEHEUGEN VAN OOST' and a welcome message: '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 article teasers 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 (WICW), Transvaalbuurt, Weesperzijde & Van der Kunbuurt, Uburg, Zeeburgereiland & Diemerzeedijk', '10 JAAR IJBURG - AAN TAFEL OP ZONDAG 9 JUNI.', and '2074 - VERHALENWANDELING DAPPERBUURT OP ZONDAG 23 JUNI A.S.'. A social media section shows 'Ik ben fan' and 'Tweet' buttons. At the bottom left, there is a photograph of a family standing in front of a table with flowers.



Live in 2003

Local memories from every day life

3000+ stories

25.000+ comments

Steered by locals since 2010

144.000 visitors 2013

→ What is the social significance of local memory websites?

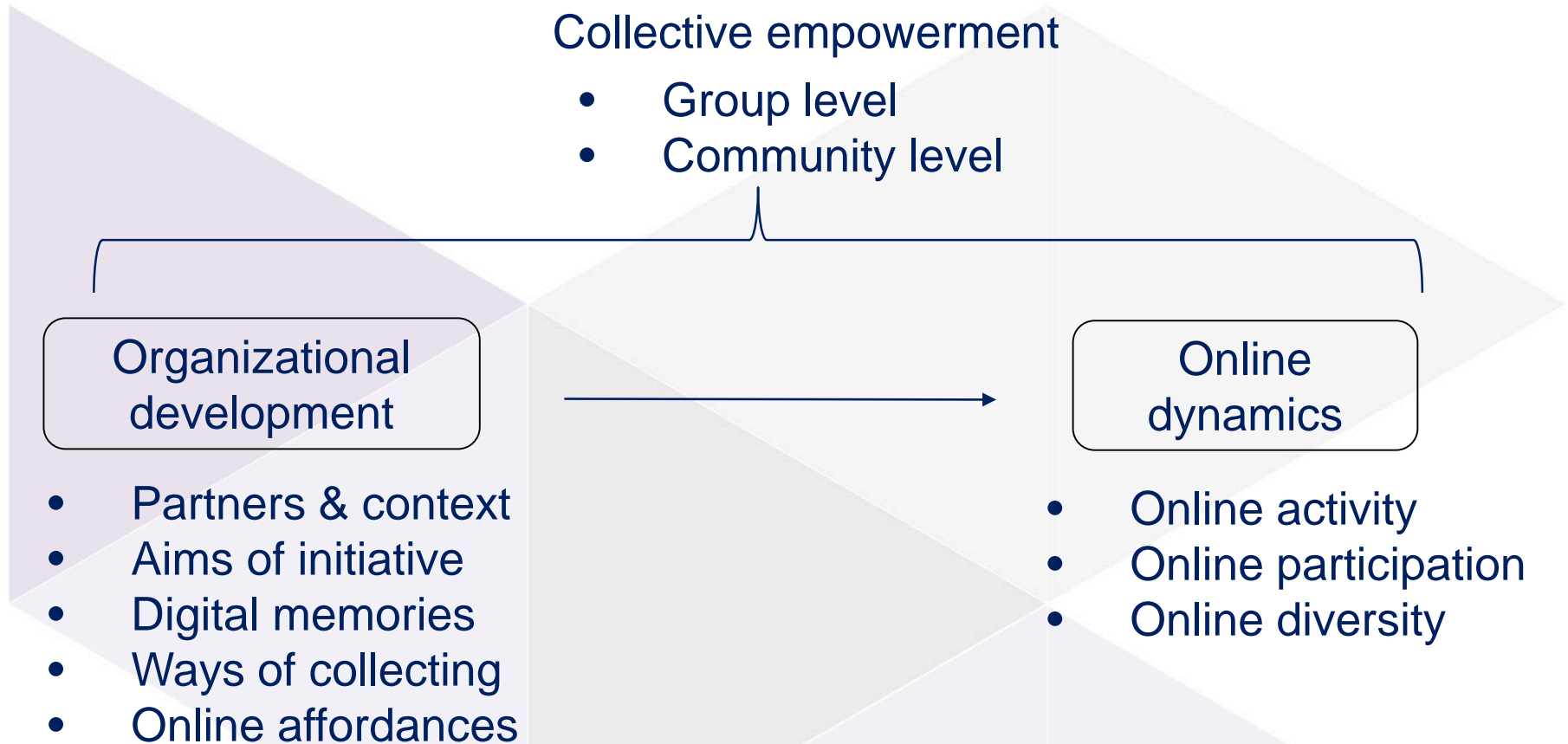
“Much of the work of social change, organizational and community development in the direction of greater personal and **collective empowerment**, may be about understanding and creating settings where people participate in the **discovery, creation, and enhancement of their own community narratives and personal stories**”(Rappaport, 1995, p. 805).

“Empowerment is viewed as a process: the mechanism by which people, **organizations [groups], and communities** gain mastery over their lives”
(Rappaport, 1984, p. 2).

Collective levels of empowerment, “however, are **not simply the aggregate of many empowered individuals.**” (Zimmerman, 2000, p. 44)

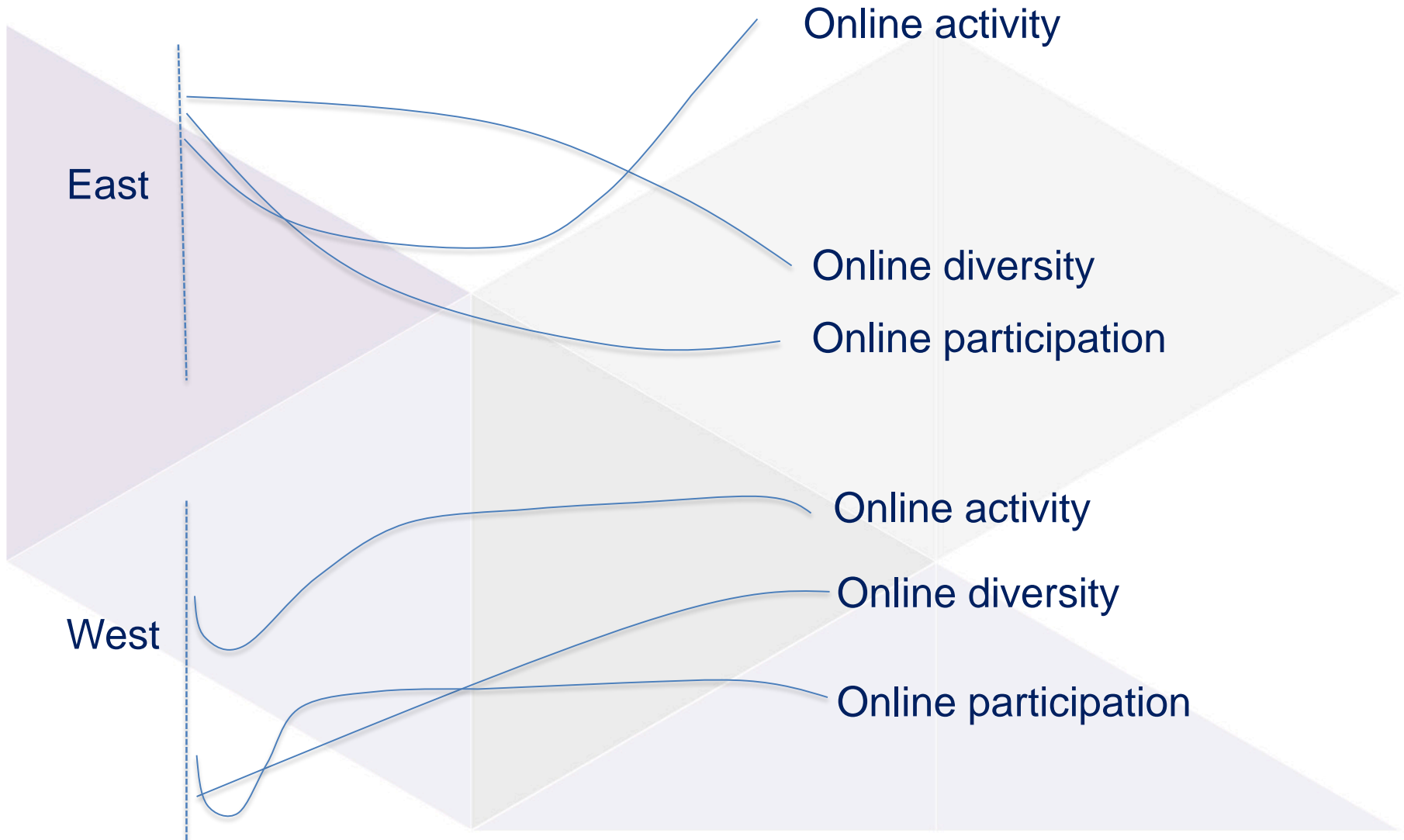
Stories are part of “a complex system of a **collectively construed discourse of organizational [or local] reality**” (Lohman & Boje, 2001, p. 163)

Conceptual model and empirical research questions

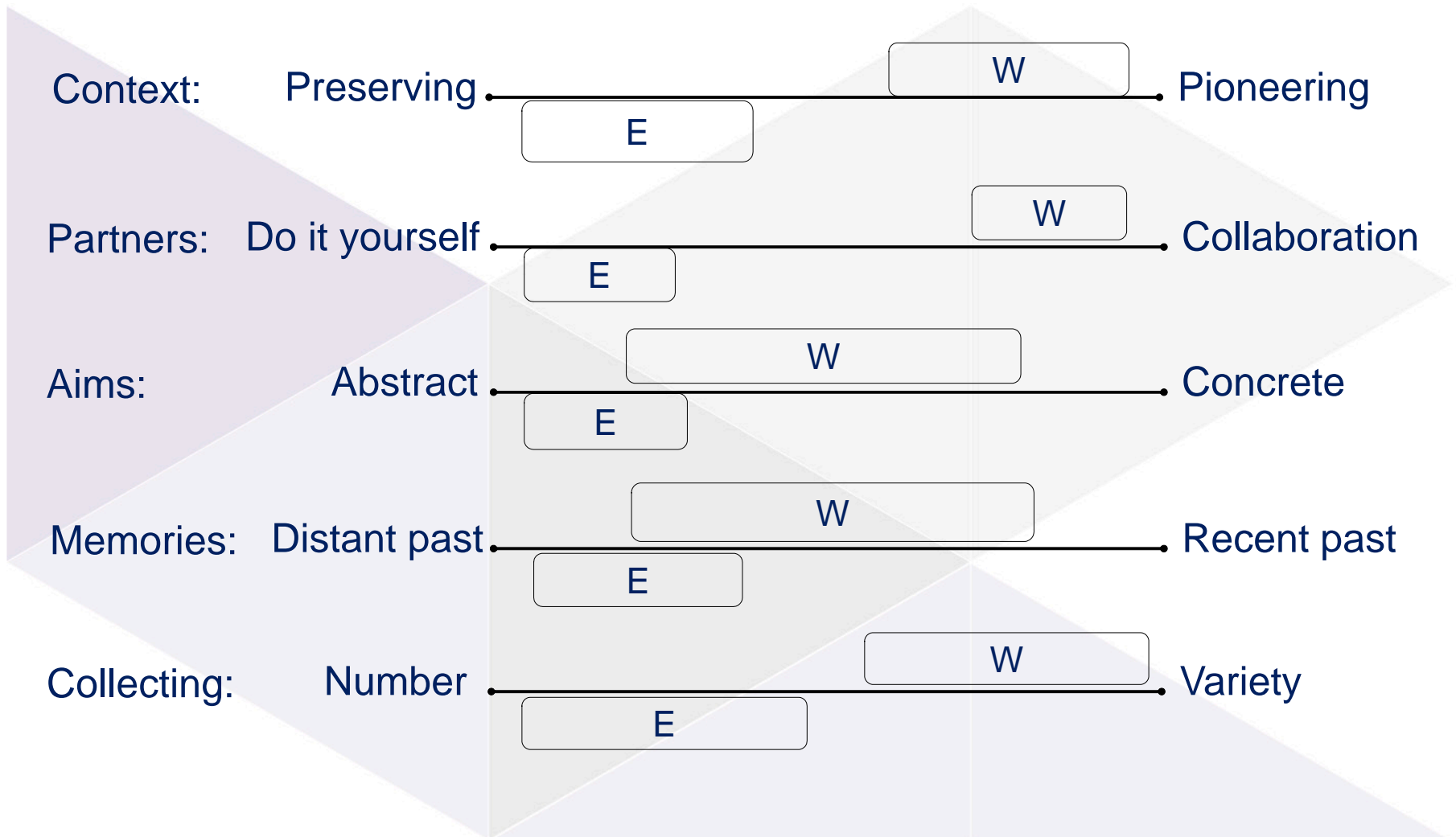


1. What collective empowerment do the online dynamics express?
2. How does the organizational development influence the online dynamics?

Results 1: Evolvement in online dynamics



Results 2: Organizational continuums influencing online dynamics



Results as social intervention

‘Phronetic social research’ is “about producing knowledge that can challenge power not in theory but in ways **that inform real efforts to produce change**” (Schram, 2012, p. 20).

- “1. where are we going [with this practice]?;
2. who gains, and who loses, by which mechanisms of power?;
3. is this development desirable?; and
4. what, if anything, should we do about it?”

(Flyvbjerg, Landman, & Schram, 2012, p. 5):

Finding 'the right balance' in East

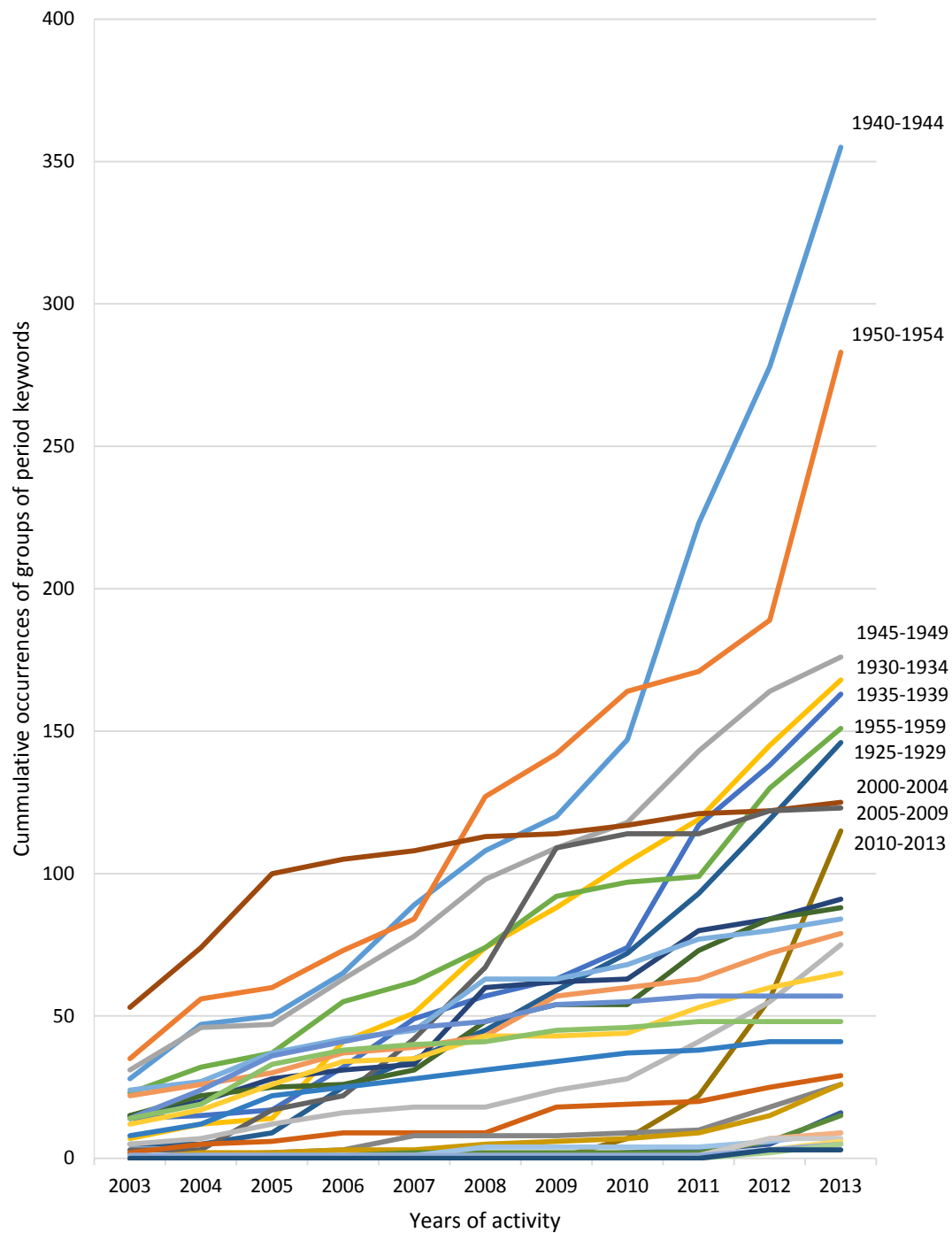
Tension between success in terms of numbers and variety:

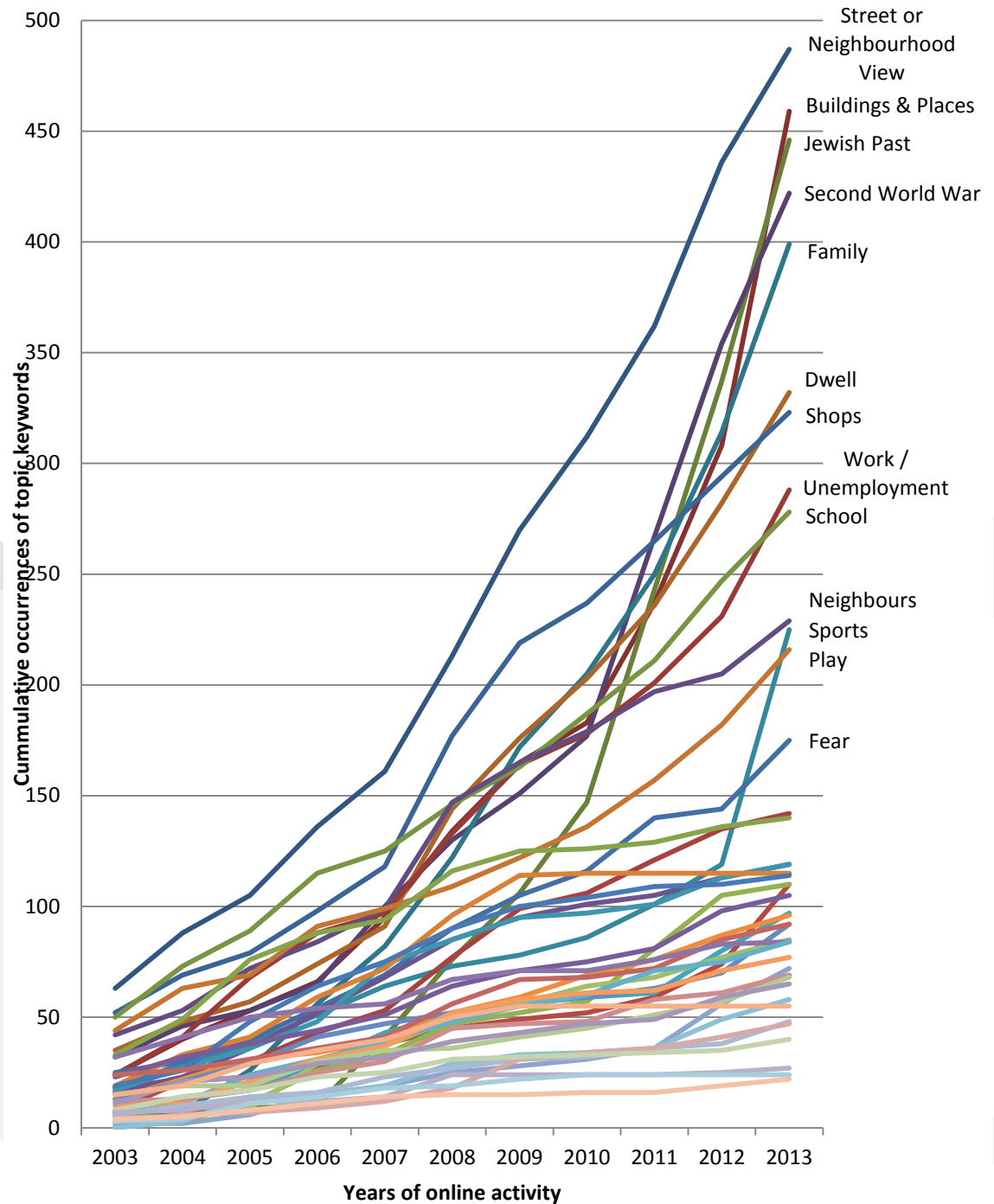
1. “A story that we tweeted and facebooked received 339 visits in three days.”
2. “One of the insecure participants of the workshops published a personal story after two years.”

The first was experienced as a stronger argument to ensure the future of the website, which is why the collecting of memories also was steered by quantity.

In turn this stimulated a few residents to collect as much stories as possible about their topics of interest.

Quantitative insights into the variety or diversity in the stories started to changed this.





Finding 'the right balance' in East

First steps of change

1. Growing online activity with a decreasing diversity by a decreasing group of participants was related to various organizational factors.
2. The numerical character of the graphs visualizing the decrease of diversity made the urgency for variety as real as for numbers.
3. This made the arguments for numbers and variety more equal.
4. A growth of the appreciation for efforts that involve new groups, neighbourhoods and collaborations was the result.
5. New efforts were developed to do so.
6. It does not have to be either-or, but both sides of the continuum can be covered.



Collective act of digital citizenship

Discussion

1. Group interests more in balance with the common good on community level.
2. Representative of East for real.
3. More awareness about online inclusivity.
4. And quantity does not threaten quality or vice versa.
5. New literacies for digital citizenship.

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Thank you!

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