HOW TO DIAGNOSE A CITY – THE ACTIVATING CITY DIAGNOSIS (ACD) AS A NOVEL TOOL FOR PARTICIPATORY URBAN DEVELOPMENT

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The following article presents a novel tool for participatory city development. Cornelia Ehmayer introduces Activating City Diagnosis (ACD,) which is a qualitative method designed to enable cities to develop their future potentials by involving people who usually are excluded from urban development planning. Inspired by theoretical concepts and approaches such as organizational analysis, community psychology, network analysis, qualitative social research and action research, the article outlines the procedure of a diagnosis while providing a collection of appropriate methods to use at various stages of the process.

Keywords*: activating city diagnosis, organizational development, participation, urban planning, sustainability, psychology, resilience*

1. Introduction

Transforming a city means changing its people. Referring to organizational development, every city planning process can be understood as an intervention; and every intervention requires a well-grounded diagnosis.

Until today, there has been a lack of methods and procedures for city diagnosis with a holistic approach that meets the requirements of participatory city development. This academic void was filled by developing the method named Activating City Diagnosis (ACD). ACD was developed over a period of ten years (Ehmayer, 1998, 2000a, 2000b, 2002, 2003, 2010a) and was scientifically approbated as a doctoral thesis in 2013 (Ehmayer, 2014). A key feature of this qualitative method is the involvement of people who usually do not participate in the process of urban development.

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2.   Characteristics of the Activating City Diagnosis

ACD is a qualitatively-oriented, multifunctional, part-standardized method, which includes elements of social science and psychology. ACD helps to identify the sustainable potentials of a city in order to set the ground for participatory development. A further peculiarity of this qualitative method lies in its ability to diagnose cities through a holistic approach. A city can be regarded as a social entity that is similar to an organization. In this context, "city" encompasses all people working and living in a town. Consequently, ACD does not focus on a particular community within a city, rather on the city as an entire unit and political entity. ACD is considered a preventive tool for active change in cities. A further attribute of this method is its suitability for smaller towns and villages as well as for larger cities consisting of more than one million residents. ACD can be applied on all types of municipalities (cadastral community, standard municipality, market municipality, etc.). However, due to the extent of the procedure, its application is only recommended for cities with a minimum of 1,000 inhabitants. Below this threshold, modified variants are more economically viable.

3.   Disciplinary Approach

ACD was originally based on community profiling and network building, which were developed in Italy by Martini and Sequi (1988, 1995), and later modified by Donata Francescato into community profiling and network building method (Francescato 2007, 2008, 2010; Francescato & Ghirelli, 1992; Francescato & Tomai, 2001; Francescato & Zani, 2013). This provided a rich source of inspiration for the first stage of the ACD development. Francescato's approach was first passed on by word of mouth in the context of the project "Cultural Landscapes and Agenda 21" (Ehmayer, 2000b).

ACD resulted from a long and well-grounded period of interdisciplinary research. It integrates concepts and methods from the fields of organizational analysis (Amelang & Schmidt-Atzert, 2006; Borg, 2003; Froschauer & Lueger, 2009; Kleinmann & Wallmichrath, 2004; Rosenstiel, Molt & Rüttinger, 2005; Rotering-Steinberg, 1993; Waclawski & Church, 2002;), community psychology (Keupp, 1993, 1997, 1999; Keupp & Röhrle, 1987; Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010; Rappaport, 1977; Röhrle & Sommer, 1995; Stark, 1996), network analysis (Christakis & Fowler, 2010; Hollstein & Straus, 2006; Holzer, 2010), qualitative social research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Flick, 2007, 2012) and action research (Arcidiacono, Tuozzi & Procentese, 2016; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005; Reason & Bradbury, 2001).

Kurt Lewin (Marrow, 2002), a pivotal figure in the interface between community psychology, organizational analysis and action research, was inspirational to the development of ACD. His influence is particularly reflected in the introduction of the concept of city as a living creature and its interdependence with humans as urban creatures.

4.   Theoretical Background

This section focuses on the organizational diagnosis and discusses how to combine corresponding elements to conduct a city diagnosis.

4.1.   Organizational Diagnosis

Organizational diagnosis builds on the concept of psychological diagnosis, which can be defined as the systematic collection and processing of information with the objective of justifying, controlling, and optimizing decisions and actions resulting from them (Fisseni, 1997). Psychological diagnosis offers decision-making guidance, which can contribute to an overall improvement of the general situation. Organizational diagnosis is a process characterized by several stages, in which the relevant systems and processes of an organization that are crucial for its smooth functioning and efficiency are illustrated. An effective organization can only be developed when its mechanisms of action are traceable. Organizational diagnosis therefore, is an approach that enables this understanding by means of selected access and use of selected methods.

Scholl (2007) defines an organization as a social entity that pursues certain objectives and is embedded into a particular formal regulation. Rosenstiel (2007) considers an organization as a system that is open to the environment, existing in a temporally durable way, pursuing specific objectives, consisting of individuals or groups and characterized by a special structure. Bornewasser (2009) expands this definition to include a spatial dimension: According to this understanding, organizations are deemed to be concrete beings (company name, charter) able to endure even when people are exchanged or buildings are modified. They distinguish themselves by consistency over the course of time and are able to preserve their identity even when changes occur.

In companies, enterprises and organizations, almost every measure is based on some kind of diagnosis, which justifies and authorizes the corresponding action and determines its quality, dimension and direction. A diagnosis requires a theory, which then defines what is considered as a symptom, cause, and context (Bornewasser, 2009; Felfe & Liepmann, 2008).

Making a diagnosis requires understanding of how activities, processes and tasks work within an organization. On a diagnostic level, it is essential to reliably register the symptomatology (target-performance comparison). Research and practical work differ in whether the emphasis is on analyzing the current status (diagnosis) or changing the direction of the target state (intervention) (Cummings & Worley, 2009; Rosenstiel, 2007). In contrast to a medical or somatic system, the diagnosis represents an intervention to which the social system has to adapt (Amelang & Schmidt-Atzert, 2006).

A diagnosis offers support for the preparation, planning and implementation of transformation processes. According to Bornewasser (2009), every intervention not only requires a diagnosis, but every successful diagnosis leads to intervention.

The central task of the organizational diagnosis is to detect the need for change and to identify problematic areas in order to put corrective measures into action. Thus, it is of major importance to determine whether a change within the system is desirable (Felfe & Liepmann, 2008). The benefit of the organizational diagnosis is to provide well-grounded information upon which members of an organization can base their decisions. In a scientific context, the goal of an organizational diagnosis is not as much about the preparation for a change, rather the thorough assessment of the context state of affairs and the following changes in the course of the organizational development.

Depending on the context, applied organizational diagnosis methods may vary: research-related institutions tend to use standardized methods in order to meet the requirements of quality

criteria and comparability. In the field of consulting, qualitative procedures tend to be more important as they are more suitable for the preparation of change processes and to fully grasp their complexities. Diagnostic methods aim not only to analyze critical conditions, but also to seek ways to fix them (Bornewasser 2009), therefore they also perform a preventive function.

In this context, Felfe and Liepmann (2008) propose to transfer the principles of individual diagnosis to organizational diagnosis. They claim the overall objectives to be transparency and openness for everyone involved. In order to ensure controllability, the procedure should be theory-based and the terms and constructs scientifically sound. Concepts should be empirically verifiable, which also poses the question of the validity of the methods used. The validity of results is often discussed in the context of their representativeness: there may be a risk of certain groups being disproportionally represented while others underrepresented. The only way to exclude the possibility of random sampling influencing the data, is to conduct a complete survey. With regard to objectivity and reliability, Felfe and Liepmann (2008) mainly refer to standardized quantitative methods and recommend the use of scales. Concerning the process quality, a verifiable configuration of the sequences has to be ensured, e.g., information on the implemented methods has to be available and the objectives and application field of the procedure must be outlined. Moreover, the quality criteria have to be documented.

Evaluation is recommended in order to examine the effectiveness of an intervention measure. According to Bornewasser (2009) the diagnosis, the intervention measure, and the evaluation form a unity in which evaluation represents the final component of the change processes. However, a systematic evaluation of the change processes is often neglected, which mainly results from the complexity of the procedures. Another reason is the lack of comprehensible and rapidly deployable procedures.

4.2   From Organizational Diagnosis to City Diagnosis

According to the organizational diagnosis, a city can be perceived as an adaptive social entity. Further similarities between municipalities and organizations include the pursuit of certain goals, formal rules, a temporal dimension and interaction, as well as continuous adaption (Scholl, 2007).

Community psychologist Donata Francescato has developed an approach to promote organizational empowerment (Francescato & Aber, 2015; Francescato & Ghirelli, 1988; Francescato & Zani, 2013). The so called "participatory multidimensional organizational analysis" (PMOA) involves individuals on all hierarchical levels in a specific organization – e.g., in a school, teachers as well as students and office staff analyze their organization across structural-strategic, functional, psycho-environmental, and cultural dimensions.

Diagnosing a city is a process of comprehension that reveals how a city or municipality works as a social entity. The diagnosis itself represents an intervention to which the social system has to adapt and actively co-operate with. Thus, an urban diagnosis can be recognized as a collaborative process (Amelang & Schmidt-Atzert, 2006; Cummings & Worley, 2009; Rosenstiel, 2007; Scholl, 2007).

The enquiry should therefore include and address all relevant people who live and work in a town. The active inclusion of the population and the possibility of participation in the process of diagnosis leads to an affective commitment that results in stronger dedication to the upcoming

transformation within the community. Existing commitment is an essential element for the transformation process (Borg, 2003; Westphal & Gmür, 2002).

5. Activating City Diagnosis Procedure

The size of the research team and the duration of ACD are dependent on the size of the city (according to the inhabitants and city's surface area). As an approximate value the research team might consist of about eight people and ACD takes approximately four months. For the work in the respective city, an interdisciplinary team is assembled and prepared in detail.

The following work design illustrates an exemplary procedure of ACD, which breaks down in seven work steps. A mixture of practical applicability and theoretical reflection characterizes the empirical course of ACD. As soon as the commissioning is completed, a consistent part of the process is dedicated to on-site data acquisition, namely in the town or city. This procedure is conducted according to a systematized qualitative approach. While some methods are used only once during the course of the diagnosis, others are applied recursively during the whole process.

5.1 Step 1 – Commissioning with Political Enactment

Once all relevant content-related, temporal, and financial conditions have been clarified, the order of performing the ACD can be officially placed. For that purpose, a (preferably unanimous) political enactment by the municipal or district council is necessary. In order to ensure a broad consensus, the district parliament has to give its approval. In the best case all political groups should formally welcome and support the process. The politicians involved should be willing to implement a participatory, future-oriented urban development process. Therefore, it is crucial that they are dedicated to embracing change and are ready to support the process.

If the political enactment is preceded by a comprehensive discussion, the chances of the diagnosis' success increase. In this case, it can be assumed that problem awareness regarding the necessary change measures already exists.

5.2 Step 2 – Field Data Acquisition

Following the political decision, data collection in the municipality can start. Consistent with a systematized qualitative procedure, data are collected to ensure the coverage of as many different perceptions as possible regarding the future of the municipality. Depending on the size of the town, this step can take about one month. The methodological sequence is arranged in such a way that the research team get to know the city step by step: from the first impression to the in-depth analysis the team can choose from a related set of methods.

5.2.1 Selection of the Sample

According to the principle of sampling and theoretical saturation, the exact number of respondents is not fixed in advance (Glaser & Strauss, 1998; Flick, 2007). For this approach, as many interviews as necessary are conducted until no new information is obtained. This ensures that within a city or municipality, all future-related statements can be collected in order to obtain a representative picture of its future potentials. Previous experience has shown that the number of the interviewees usually ranges between 70 and 150 until saturation occurs.

The selection of the interview partners follows a clear and specific chronological order: first, people in public areas as well as in central places of the municipality are interviewed. Following the interview, the interviewees are asked to name other people that can – according to theoretical sampling – provide new perspectives to the data and topics already collected. Afterwards, these people are contacted and asked to be interviewed. Interviews with people and groups that play an important role within the municipality are conducted by arrangement. The research team interviews until no more new findings can be acquired. The future potentials can usually be described within a week. With regard to the the social fabric, this process can take up to three weeks until data from all groups in a municipality are collected.

5.2.2   Temporal-Methodological Flow Chart

Based on the following scheme (Table 1), the chronology of the single work steps and the application of the corresponding methods are illustrated in a systematic and transparent way.

During the first week, interviews are conducted mostly in public spaces with residents of the targeted town. Questions may include aspects such as:

- What does come to your mind when you think about your town?
- What are the characteristics of your town?
- Do you feel comfortable in your town?
- Does your town have a center/landmark?
- What should be changed in your town?
- What should absolutely not be changed?
- How do you imagine your town in the next 20 years…?

It is of utmost importance to reach all those who are usually not questioned about municipal issues. The research team runs the first comparative analysis of the central topics of the municipality by the end of the first week. The content of the analysis are then used as the starting point for further surveys.

During the second week, the social fabric is examined. All those holding an important function within the municipality - along with those who usually do not participate in municipal decisions - should be considered.

The third week starts with a data check: the collected data is compared to the current available data. Usually the research team knows more initiatives than are detected by official figures due to their intense work within the municipality.

The fourth and last week should serve to answer open questions. This can be done partly by conducting final interviews as well as by comparing subjective perception and objective data. For joint data analysis at the end of each week, the following serve as key questions (Table 2).

Table 1. Survey Phase Procedure

	Methods / Process steps:		Methods / Process steps:
1st week	*Methods / Process steps:* - Initial interview with the Mayor - Empirical walk - Photo documentation - Street interviews in public space - Make contact with important persons *Result*: Collecting first impressions about the municipality/city and relevant topics	3rd week	*Methods / Process steps:* - Group interviews - Expert-interviews - Methodological addition: Brainstorming, write a movie-script, narrative - Collecting secondary data - Checking institutions *Result:* - Focusing on relevant topics/tendencies - Clarifying social structures
2nd week	*Methods / Process steps:* - Expert interviews - Beginning of secondary data research - Making contact to groups *Result*: - Identifying social structures - Important topics/pictures/ tendencies begin to emerge	4th week	*Methods / Process steps:* - Work with groups - Completing the data - Comparison to secondary data *Result*: - Sharpening of topics/tendencies - Finalizing the survey
Ongoing:	Photo documentation Participatory observation Research diary		
Weekly:	Comparative analysis of the results		

Table 2. Key Questions for the Comparative Analysis

Topics	What are people talking about?
	Which topics are not being addressed?
Social fabric	Who does play an important role?
	Who does not play an important role?
Characteristics	What does attract attention? Are there any ordinariness, particularities, or unusualness to report?
	Is a picture of the place starting to take shape

5.2.3   Inventory of Methods

The methodological approach is characterized by triangulation and comparative analysis with a variety of qualitative survey methods. Some methods – such as the initial interview with the mayor or the empirical walk – are used only once during the diagnosis process, while others – such as the group interviews with various target groups – are repeatedly applied. The diagnosis procedure starts with an empirical walk (Ehmayer, 2009). The empirical walk is an application-oriented tool that is related to an *Ortsbegehung* (site inspection). Furthermore, the method also integrates characteristics of qualitative social research, particularly of participatory observation (Flick, 2007; Lüders, 2012). During the empirical walk, first impressions of the particular town are collected and documented using a field manual. This tool can be combined with a photographic documentation to gather visual impressions. Another important source of information is an initial interview with the mayor whereby real problems and best practice cases can be outlined. The selection of local stakeholders is a highly relevant phase in this context. This can include individuals, groups or institutions that fulfill an important role in town. The interview can also be used to investigate where people are most frequently encountered. If written resources about the town are available, they should also be reviewed at this stage.

A crucial research tool is the problem-oriented guided interview, whose questions have specifically been developed for the diagnosis of the whole city. Such an interview can be conducted with individuals as well as with groups and can take place spontaneously on the street or in the form of prearranged expert interviews. The essential question that is part of every interview regards the future perspective of a town, i.e. "What does come to your mind when you think about the future of your town?" This question reveals the subjective perspective of people when prompted to think about their hometown. Further topics addressed in the interviews cover aspects such as local ties, place identity, affective commitment, etc. Every interviewee is asked to mention another person who can provide a contrary perspective regarding the city. This way, the scientific team is able to create a sample according to theoretical sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1998).

An ideal tool to ensure the inclusion of teenagers is the *write a movie script method*. Developed by community psychologist Donata Francescato (Francescato & Ghirelli, 1992; Francescato & Tomai, 2001; Francescato 2007, 2008; Francescato 2010), the *write a movie script method* invites young people to create a fictional scene about how their municipality should look like in the future. Concerns and issues that are frequently discussed in their families can be visualized through to this method.

Group interviews are another important tool for including as many perspectives as possible during the data collection process. They are usually designed as guided interviews where the interviewer also takes on the task of moderator. No more than ten people should be asked to attend such a group interview in order for every participant to be able to speak out.

Group discussions are mostly conducted during Step 5 (Presentation of future potentials). The attendees are divided into several small groups that moderate themselves while the research team undertakes the overall moderation.

To round off the results and to check one's subjective perception, the continuous acquisition of secondary data (such as economic, demographic and anthropological data, information taken from local newspaper articles, photographs, pictures, and chronicles) is carried out throughout the diagnosis.

Apart from the tools mentioned above, keeping a research journal memos according to Grounded Theory, or an image analysis can be additional methods that are useful to complement the research.

In the first step, the team of researchers conducts interviews with a variety of people living in a particular town, addressing topics such as local identity, affective commitment, willingness to participate, town attractiveness and, most relevant in this context, social arrangement: "Which people do you encounter in your town? When thinking about decision processes, who has a say in the matter? And who is excluded from the decision-making process?" According to theoretical sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1998), each interview should end with the invitation to mention a person who can provide an opposed perception of the town and whom the interviewee believes should still be consulted.

5.2.4   Checklists and Data Check

Two checklists help to standardize the procedure in each municipality and to review whether all relevant target groups have been captured:
- Checklist P/O/I = People / Organizations / Institutions: ensures control whether all relevant people, groups, organizations and institutions have been contacted during the first three weeks – for instance retirement homes, pharmacies, employment office, citizen's initiatives, cultural facilities, hospitals, youth centers, museums, sports clubs, chamber of commerce, etc. If some of them are missing, the fourth week provides time to contact them and ask for an interview.
- Checklist minorities: this refers to people who usually are in a marginalized position within a community but who often show a high level of knowledge about small-scale public spaces. These groups may include local minorities, women with children, elderly people, teenagers, students, immigrant groups. These people are usually not involved in community development. They have to be specifically addressed in the process.

When the research team is no longer able to obtain any new information and when the social fabric is explored sufficiently (which is usually the case after one month), the field data acquisition ends.

5.3   Step 3 – Data Processing and Analysis of the Present Situation

For this step, the team of researchers withdraws from the municipality and starts to transcribe and document all of the collected data. This usually takes about one month. However, some of the shorter street interviews have to be transcribed immediately to guarantee that the context connected to the shorthand notes does not get lost. The expert interviews are transcribed in more detail and are written down verbatim, maintaining dialects; notation signs are not used. The coding of the data is a circular process: first, the individual statements (codes) are processed before structuring them according to content-related and thematic emphases in categories.

In contrast to the radically open procedures of Grounded Theory (theoretical coding), the categories used within the ACD are partially known from the beginning as they are to some extent predetermined by the interview guide. One category that is common to every diagnosis refers to typical components and the characteristics of a particular town. Other categories and topics arise over time and depend on the respective local topical problems.

The procedure of coding starts with creating an evaluation grid in a spreadsheet program, which is then filled with all information gathered during the interviews and the related answers to specific questions. The interview questions serve as preliminary categories that are still subject to change. Consequently, during this stage the research team is still required to keep an open mind, e.g., no interpretation is recommended but rather only registering the proposition's frequency.

In the second stage of analysis, categories for each interview question are built. Primarily, in-vivo-codes are used as they offer a better overview of the town's situation from a local perspective. The underlying idea is that *outsiders* should be able to understand all working steps and create a diagnosis, which contributes to a better quality of evaluation.

When coding, firstly all statements concerning a specific category – e.g., *characteristics* or typical features of a municipality – are printed and the individual topics are marked with pencils in different colors. After coding, the statement-categories are once again checked for their content and meaning and afterwards filled into a new spreadsheet. This is followed by a third step during which the categories are weighted textually as well as numerically before they are brought into position to each other. Weighting refers to depicting the statements using bigger or smaller symbols (e.g., bubbles) depending on their relevance – a procedure that is eventually also used for the topic picture as described in chapter 5.3.1. It is possible that a category originally containing less statements is illustrated using a bigger bubble because the research team considers it more important.

The presentation of the results has to correspond with the perceived reality of the residents – otherwise no suitable diagnosis can be derived from it. For this reason, all presentations are reviewed with the residents and decision-makers during Step 5 at the presentation of the results. This helps to ensure that they are ideally met with great approval. Every single category is evaluated in this way. Afterwards, the collected data is analyzed, focusing on the actual situation. This results in a so-called *topic-picture* of all relevant topics as well as a *community-graph*, which offers a cross-section of the city's social cohesion.

5.3.1 Topic Picture

The analysis of topics identifies recurring themes that are discussed in multiple contexts. Topics must reveal strengths and weaknesses, potentials and conflicts of a town. Whenever possible, a spatial relation to the municipality should also be established. A good way of creating core topics is the *Post-it-method* (Ehmayer, 2010b): the existing categories are written on Post-it and grouped until a constellation occurs that seems to represent the actual situation. Afterwards, categories that are connected are marked with a circle. In order for this analysis to be compatible with the perceived reality, additional information such as memos from the research diary can be used to complete the picture.

An example of such a topic picture was demonstrated for Margareten, a Viennese district (Figure 1). One frequently discussed topic was a bustling street called Reinprechtsdorferstraße, which separates the area not only physically but also with regard to the topics discussed: a different urban development, quality of life, and demographic structure lead to a heterogeneous perception.

The topics addressing the Reinprechtsdorferstraße were discussed with reference to their dichotomy:

A central feature of Margareten is its division along the Reinprechtsdorferstraße which seems to tear the whole district apart. While the atmosphere between the Reinprechtsdorferstraße and the 4th district can be considered positive, confidence decreases the more you move toward the Gürtel. Personal perceptions related to migration also vary: in the area around the Gürtel, people criticize foreign infiltration while people in the 4th district appreciate cultural diversity in their neighborhood. In terms of building quality, the interviewees mention that renovation is much more progressed in the area around the Margaretenhof compared to places closer to the Gürtel. The high density of migrants leads to the demand for a more balanced social mix. In parks as well as in settlement areas, particular nationalities are increasingly dominant in certain zones. This makes the development of a common identity significantly more difficult (Ehmayer & Erkinger, 2003, p. 41)
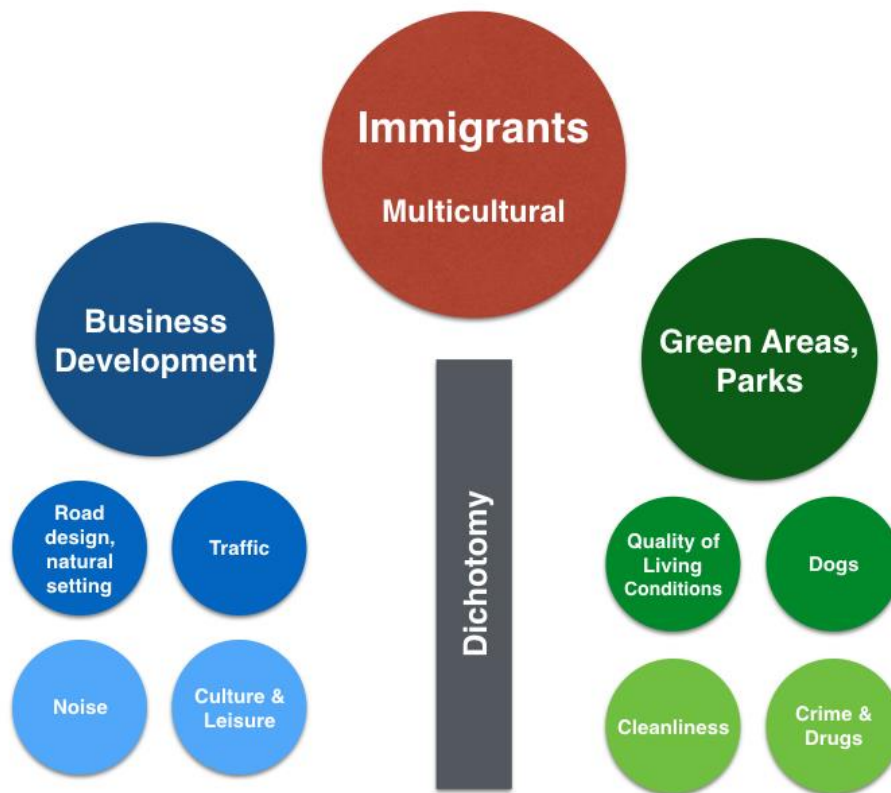

Figure 1.   Topic Picture of Margareten, district of Vienna (Ehmayer & Erkinger, 2003, p. 39)

5.3.2   Community-graph

Inspired by tools such as sociograms (Moreno, 1959) and organization charts, the community-graph provides a social dimension to the geographical-spatial level and reveals power structures within a community. It reveals a city's inner social arrangements as well as the particular connections and links between individuals and groups. Thereby, the community-graph is able to

illustrate and highlight those people who have no or only weak links to the city's authorities and the center of power. By visualizing these connections, the corresponding people can be tracked down in order to actively integrate them into future development processes.

A community-graph combines analysis and diagnosis, which makes it an invaluable knowledge base for the following intervention. It shows who has to be integrated into a comprehensive municipality development process and who has not been involved so far. Thus, the analysis begins first as a visualization of the currently relevant groups, which is later complemented by those groups who should play a more active role in the future development.
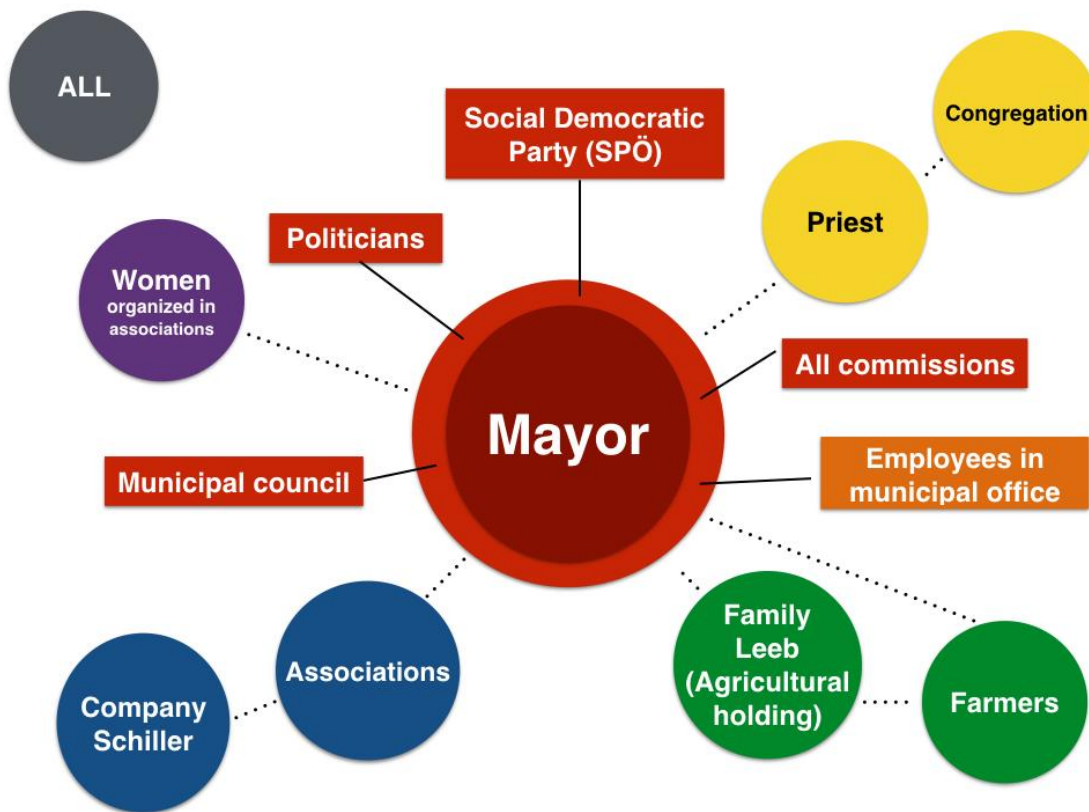

Figure 2.   Community-graph of Baumgarten, a small Austrian municipality (Ehmayer, 2010b, p. 27)

The community-graph of Baumgarten (Figure 2), a small Austrian municipality, is an exemplarily visualization of the current situation. In contrast to bigger cities, the individual groups are much less differentiated. On the other hand, the public spirit is much more pronounced: this is reflected in the answer to the question "Who should play an active role in developing Baumgarten?", which was answered with "everybody":

> The mayor is located in the heart of Baumgarten, surrounded by a whole social network. The mayor is not only considered the center by definition but also literally as a social beacon. The mayor is embedded in a circle of political institutions, that comprises committees, politicians, municipal council, the Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) and the employees of the municipal council. They not only support but also supervise the mayor in his activities.

Moreover, four additional spheres of influence can be identified, among them the local associations who play a decisive role in shaping village life. They are supported by the Schiller family. The Leeb family also has a significant influence on the local community, partly because they are part of the regional farmers. The priest and the congregation are perceived as important. Although the church is not actively involved in community development, religion plays an important role for most of the residents. "Women" as a rather general category are experienced as very present in the town. Around this social fabric stretches a bigger, superordinate circle including all residents of Baumgarten, named "all" in the figure. This reflects a very important attitude, namely that all inhabitants are considered important with the right to participate-(Ehmayer, 2010b, p. 28 ff.).

Based on the analysis of the current situation, the diagnosis of the sustainable potentials can be developed: this includes all tasks and transformation processes that a city has to face in order to achieve sustainable development. These results – both about the current situation as well as the target state – are then presented to politicians in power within the scope of a workshop. Later on, a letter sent to all households or an announcement in the local newspaper informs the broader public of any progress updates.

The next step includes a written report that provides an intelligible documentation of the previous process, which aims to offer a comprehensive overview for every resident. The diagnosis concludes with the delivery of the report to the municipal council in charge.

5.4 Step 4 – Diagnosis of the Future Potentials

Based on the analysis of the current situation, a diagnosis regarding the future potentials is developed. This includes all tasks and transformation processes that a municipality has to face in order to pursue sustainable development. Such tasks can be derived from the outcomes resulting from:
- the topic analysis with the future potentials
- the community-graph with future potentials
- the future potentials framed as a question
- the future potentials combined with fields of action

In the diagnosis, the analytical findings of the current situation are extended by the future potentials, whereby the future potentials are framed as questions that aim to inspire further thinking.

5.4.1 Topic Analysis with Future Potentials

In order to express the future potentials, it is necessary to hold knowledge in qualitative social research and a well-grounded expertise in the concept of sustainable development. Additionally, experience in dealing with cities and municipalities as political systems is required. The future potentials, as they are displayed in the findings, consist of three to seven questions that provide guidance for the future of the respective town, examples include the following aspects:
- What can a town do in order to be a lively village?
- Which activities do contribute to preserve and strengthen social cohesion?

- How can a town sustainably position itself as an attractive municipality?

The future potentials are no prefabricated answers and guidelines; they rather provide guidance for each town thanks to suitable questions, similar to the process of therapy.

5.4.2 *Community-graph with Future Potentials*

As discussed above, the community-graph of Baumgarten can be supplemented by future potentials (Figure 3).
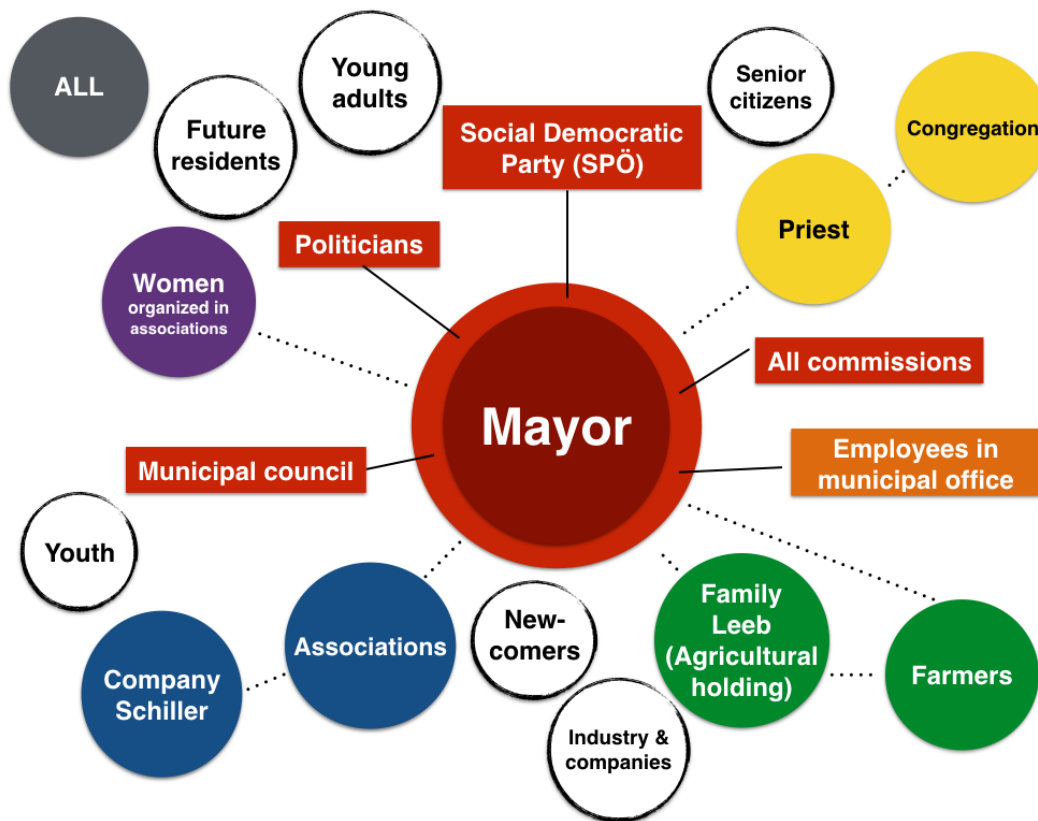

Figure 3. Community-graph of Baumgarten, supplemented by future potentials. The white circles illustrate who is considered important for the future development of the municipality, namely future residents, young adults, senior citizens, newcomers, industry, and companies as well as youth

The community-graph displaying the future potentials contains six relevant groups of people who have not been represented in the community-graph of the current situation. Besides senior citizens and youth, young adults were mentioned frequently in the interviews as living space for young people is notably lacking. As a consequence, they are often forced to leave their social fabric due to relocation. Business people are another crucial group that have been underrepresented in Baumgarten's community-graph so far: the few existing companies ensure employment. Residents state that these companies should be involved to a greater extent. A less obvious, but very important group are future residents considering moving to

Baumgarten. In order for Baumgarten to grow, it has to be open to new inhabitants for whom it should be easy to integrate into the municipality (Ehmayer, 2010b).

5.4.3   Future Potentials Framed as Questions

The future potentials are part of the diagnosis that should inspire the particular city or municipality to further discuss important topics. The questions reveal weak points that require a solution or at least an intensive discussion. In the diagnostic process, these questions form the basis for the common topics of discussion at the upcoming workshop (in Step 5) to be discussed in small groups. The case study of the Viennese district of Margareten (see Figure 1) illustrates how such future potentials can be discussed in practice. In this case, it related to the perceived dichotomy and multiculturalism of the district:

> The future potentials do not aim to give conclusive advice or recommendations but should invite those involved to think about the future of Margareten with direct questions aimed at all those who are committed to participate. The ACD is a method of interaction, it conveys a "still image" – a picture of the situation, but also invites participants to work on this picture and to change the situation. We want to invite all of you to think ahead, develop ideas and to participate actively in the future development of the district.
> *Future potential: How to achieve a better exchange between the various cultures in Margarten?*
> A widely discussed topic in Margareten is the relationship between people with or without migrant background. Some interviewees fear that conflicts might increase while others appreciate the district exactly for its multicultural climate, stating that it is "less snobbish" than other inner-city areas. These people and atmospheres are a future potential that needs to be reinforced without forgetting about some people's fears. Most likely, a harmonious multicultural atmosphere can only be achieved through an enhanced collaboration between different cultures. The residents of Margareten were perceived as tolerant (maybe slightly more tolerant than inhabitants of other inner-city areas?) which could provide a firm foundation for a successful integration (Ehmayer & Erkinger, 2003, p. 88 ff.)

5.4.4   Future Potentials Combined with Fields of Action

During the ACD that was conducted in Baumgarten, the questions of the future potentials were combined with concrete proposals and thereupon defined as *Fields of Action*. Previous experience has shown that future potentials framed as questions may not provide sufficient assistance for a town – often more concrete guidelines were desired. Just as future potentials, *Fields of Action* are developed by the research team, followed by a discussion with political representatives and the interested public. For a better understanding, one *Future Potential* combined with *Fields of Action* is introduced here:

Future Potential: *How can Baumgarten position itself as an attractive municipality for the long term?*

In the following *Fields of Action* (Table 3), the aspect of housing is the key issue, which is crucially linked to the potential of the town's maintenance and expansion. The residents desired more courageous policy-making, e.g., investing in housing before an immediate need emerges.

Table 3: Fields of Action in Baumgarten

1. ESTABLISHING HOUSING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE
- For young people and young families
- For elderly people who can no longer live independently
- Housing concept for renovation and facilitation of financing for apartments for the youth
- Rapid implementation, e.g. building terrace houses

2. MAKE BAUMGARTEN ATTRACTIVE FOR NEWCOMERS
- The favourable prices and the close proximity to Vienna predestine Baumgarten as an attractive place of residence
- Benefitting from the central location of Baumgarten
- Advertising Baumgarten for its favourable housing

3. KEEPING THE YOUTH IN BAUMGARTEN
-Create opportunities for young people to keep them in town

4. WILLINGNESS TO INTEGRATE NEWCOMERS
- Welcome letters for newcomers
- Town meeting once a year to welcome newcomers
- More tolerance and openness towards newcomers

5. SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT
- Promote local economy and workplaces that encourage sustainable management
- Providing new jobs so that residents would not have to commute as much as hitherto

6. MAINTAINING EXTERNAL CONTACTS
- External contacts to neighbouring municipalities are considered very important and should be maintained or renewed

7. MORE COURAGEOUS POLICY WITH REGARD TO FINANCES
- More courage, especially in financial affairs

In summary, the residents of Baumgarten desired a rapid implementation of the *Fields of Action* and more courage on the part of politicians (Ehmayer, 2010, p. 42 ff.). Fortunately, Baumgarten already began with the construction of new living spaces when the investigation of the ACD was still ongoing.

5.4.5 *Complementary Topics, Tailored to the Particular Town*

Every town is characterized by its individual character and distinctive nature – therefore, each ACD is unique. The research team is invited to emphasize particular features that meet these requirements. In some cases, this can relate to specific urban topics such as the traffic situation or the handling of distinct social groups.

These town-specific topics are preferably processed in a narrative or creative way, for instance as a drawing. This corresponds with the desired enrichment of processes through creative techniques and artistic expression discussed in Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss,

1998) or in participative action research (Hall, 2001). Drawings and paintings are a suitable tool, for instance to enable a comparison between the objective physical structure and the subjective perception of a town.

5.5   Step 5 – Presentation of the Results

The public presentation of the results, from both the present situation and the future potentials, are first presented and reflected upon in discussion with political authorities. In a second step, a public audience is also invited to a workshop and informed about the findings.

5.5.1   Reflection with the Mayor

The reflection serves as a basis to discuss and reflect upon the results. This diversified perspective can then be complemented with the principal's point of view. Ideally, an additional follow-up meeting with the municipal council should be arranged. The reflection is designed as a quality assurance measure so that the research results can be adapted as best as possible to the particular town in order to increase the quality of the diagnosis. The political counterpart should receive comprehensible, reasonable, and clear results. From an organizational point of view, at this time the date for a public discussion is fixed and the procedure is structured.

5.5.2   Future Workshop

During a future workshop, the results of the diagnosis are discussed together with the interested public and the future potentials are analyzed in a collective process. Care must be taken to ensure that as many people as possible living and working in the town are able to attend the workshop. The invitation is sent out to the community, ideally in the form of a consignment, to all households. This is necessary to ensure that all residents have the chance to participate. Therefore, the workshop should be held in the evening or on a weekend. Moreover, providing childcare is recommended so that families with small children are not excluded. At the workshop, all attendees have the opportunity to contribute their perspective, to correct and complement the results. The answers and opinions of the attendees are recorded and are integrated into the existing findings.

The research team is responsible for the design of the workshop, including its moderation. In case the necessary know-how of moderating large groups is missing, also external expertise can be sourced. Depending on the size of the town, between 70-250 people are expected to attend a future workshop. At the beginning of the event, the research team presents the analysis of the current situation, followed by the attendee's opportunity to ask questions. In this context, it is essential to prepare the results in such a way that they are generally intelligible. A PowerPoint presentation, supplemented by printed materials, have proven to be well suited to this context.

The second part starts with the presentation of the future potentials, e.g., those questions that the research team considers crucial for the development of this particular town. These questions are framed in an open way so that all attendees have the possibility to contribute their individual proposed solutions. This increases the chances that the fields of action are tailored and adapted to

the town's possibilities of change. After the presentation, the attendees are divided into small focus-groups in which they discuss future questions and develop solutions. The results of the discussion are documented on a flip chart and presented at the plenum. Later on, they will be integrated into the final findings. At the end of the workshop, a future team is assembled, consisting of representatives of the municipal council (not the mayor, however) and of residents. For the last group, particular attention should be paid to ensure that none of the selected people have been involved in the community development process before and do not hold an important function. This measure ensures that newcomers are also able to contribute to determining the town's future and that a greatest possible diversity is guaranteed.

The future team is responsible for the implementation of the future topics in the coming two to three years. This also requires advisory support from external experts. An essential precondition for successful urban development is political commitment, which has to be obtained when delivering the finding. The establishment of a future team marks the beginning of a process of change and at this stage the diagnosis team steps into an advisory role that accompanies the process.

5.6   Step 6 – Findings: Written Report

Feedback from the previous stages is integrated into a written report that comprises a comprehensive documentation offering readers the opportunity to relate to the city. The report must be written in clear and understandable way so that every resident can easily read it.

5.6.1   Mandatory Content

Regardless of the specifics of a town, a basic structure characterizes every municipal finding:
- Name of the diagnosis finding: "Future potentials of …" (name of the respective municipality, district or city)
- Historical context: illustrates the historical development of the town. The history of development is discussed as well as any significant events. Stories, legends and myths are mapped and prominent places and buildings are introduced. Local celebrities and other peculiarities are also mentioned.
- Analysis of the current situation: offers an insight into current topics and explains them comprehensively. Additional photos and graphics complete the picture.
- The analysis of the social fabric: it gives information about the social composition of a town and subsequent conclusions. The presentation of the community-graph is displayed as an organigram.
- The future potentials: consists of all questions that accompany the municipality on its future course. Every question is explained in detail including potential answers and approaches.
- Statistical data: information relating to the federal state, number of inhabitants (total, men and women), age, citizenship, surface area, number of flats, companies, languages spoken. Depending on the results of the diagnosis, also additional data might also be useful.
- Methodological approach: either at the beginning or the end, the methodological approach of the ACD is discussed. For this purpose, all the methods used, the size of the sample and the

procedure for the survey are described.

The written report usually consists of 50-70 pages and should look graphically appealing.

5.7   Step 7 – Political Decision

Finally, the report is delivered to the appropriate municipal council. The principal – usually the mayor – is asked for a formal transfer in the municipal council. The written report should be presented during an official meeting. Ideally, the finding should be adopted unanimously, followed by the establishment of a future team that plans further municipal development. This is intended to ensure that the municipality starts to work on implementing the future potentials.

The procedure has shown that the ACD is a consulting instrument as well as a research tool: Step 1 (commissioning with political enactment) and 7 (political decision) have a pronounced advisory character relating to organizational diagnosis. This emphasizes the political commitment that is of prime importance for the implementation of a development process.

6.   Conclusion

The Activating City Diagnosis provides an important and novel tool for the planning and preparation of a participatory development process in cities and municipalities. With regard to current transformations such as demographic increase, environmental problems and housing shortages, the ACD enables both residents and policy-makers to define the potentials of their cities in order to best prepare them for future challenges. What makes this method so unique is its demand to include as many people as possible. Thanks to the clear structure and the practice-oriented approach the ACD proves to be a well-suited tool for city sustainability and municipality development.

One of the main benefits of the method is its application-oriented approach as it was developed in close collaboration with several Austrian cities and municipalities. Following Bornewasser (2009), every intervention not only requires a diagnosis but every successful diagnosis leads to intervention: according to this definition, every procedure that follows a diagnosis is evidence of its success. Initially, in Baumgarten only a diagnosis took place, without any plan to intervene. After completion of the diagnosis, it became apparent that an intervention was absolutely necessary. Consequently, the municipality explicitly requested further scientific guidance, which was eventually commissioned.

However, one of the main benefits of ACD is its comprehensiveness, which constitutes also a limitation: the method is very extensive and cannot be abbreviated. ACD requires time as diagnosing a city implies more than just collecting and evaluating data. In fact, ACD aims to get to know a city *as a person* while moving in it and checking the information until a joint picture emerges that in return can be communicated to the city. Apart from the scientific know-how, ACD requires distinct experience in dealing with cities and their structures. For instance, it is not common for an external person to be part of a council meeting, much less giving a speech in front of the attendees.

From a critical point of view, one could argue that ACD does not aim to develop a particular theory but to establish a well-grounded diagnosis. However, this is in line with the claim of the

organizational diagnosis. According to Bornewasser (2009), organizational diagnosis identifies the challenge of preparing cities for change processes based on a diagnosis. Furthermore, the existing lack of scientific theory on this particular topic was one reason why the ACD was developed and eventually scientifically prepared.

The theoretical discussions have proven that ACD is well compatible with psychological and socio-scientific approaches and bears resemblance to qualitative social research. However, none of these disciplines have provided a tool to diagnose future potentials of cities so far. The article has shown how thanks to the comparative analysis and the theoretical sampling urban units of up to 50,000 people can be diagnosed. For future studies and diagnoses, ACD may also be applicable to megacities consisting of millions of inhabitants – providing that there is a suitable planning and organizational structure as well as sufficient economic and personal resources. Diagnosis of megacities should be settled at a meta-level so that in each district a team of researchers start with data collection and analysis. In a second step, these findings could be brought together. The advancement of the 20 organizational diagnoses to a megacity-level would be a promising field of research, especially to evaluate if ACD proves to be an appropriate tool in this context or whether it has to be modified in accordance with the city size.

A future challenge lies in the merging of the community-graph and methods of the recent network research. Another promising field of research relates to establishing a factor for resilience in order to prove a city's robustness.

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