

Not in My Backyard: Boundary, Text and Agency in the Case of Refugee Housing in Residential Neighbourhoods in Hamburg

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Abstract

Organisations have to be conceived as “boundary- maintaining systems”; they cannot exist without boundaries. These organisational boundaries are defined on the basis of constituting criteria for organisations: membership, activity coordination, self-structuring and institutional positioning. Based on these criteria, four organisations will be described in the thesis: Hamburg’s district council, refugees coming to Hamburg, residents of neighbourhoods where the council plans to accommodate refugees and the city of Hamburg as a meta- organisation.

In 2014, 626 000 asylum seekers registered in the European Union, up 44% from the year before. At a total of 202 700, Germany received the majority of these claims. Once arrived in Germany, asylum- seekers are accommodated at an initial reception facility where their cases are being registered. After this, they are allocated to housing estates according to a quota. Hamburg receives about 2.5% of all applicants.

Currently, the council faces various forms of opposition from residents of the concerned neighbourhoods. Opposition ranges from verbal criticism and strong language at information meetings to legal actions to stop housing projects.

The thesis explains this phenomenon by elaborating on the theoretical discussion of the Communicative Constitution of Organisations (CCO) with respect to the co-constitution of organisational boundaries. The thesis asks how residents and the city council conceive the city of Hamburg and in how far this organisation can be considered a meta-organisation.

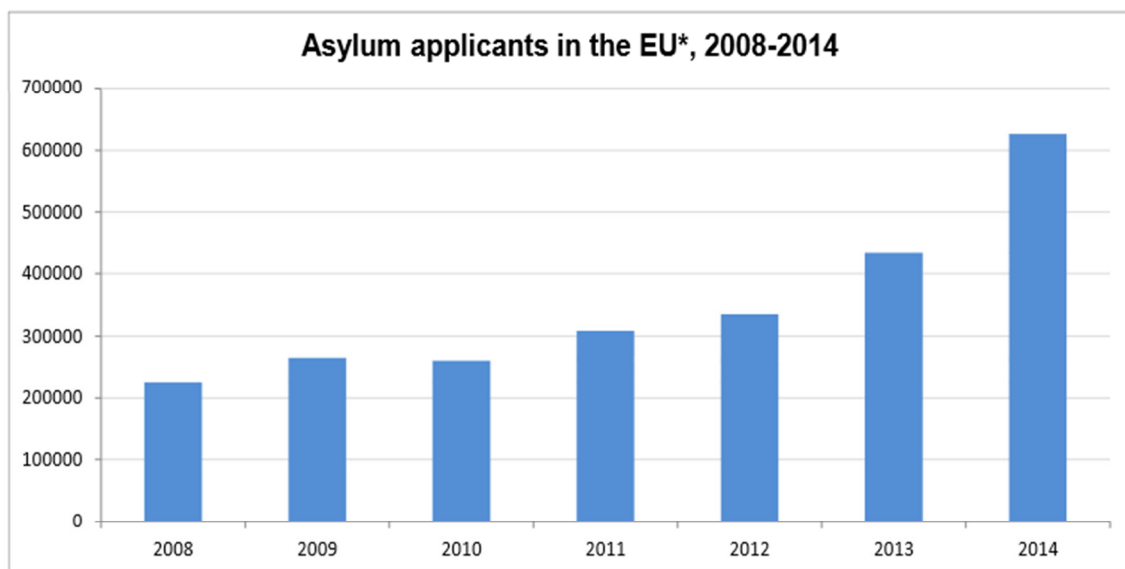
The results show that some residents consider the city of Hamburg a set, unchangeable meta-organisation where unknown entrants such as refugees are not desired. They draw an image of the organisation refugees that suggests the latter do not resemble themselves and therefore are a poor fit for the meta-organisation. On the contrary, the district council suggests neighbours and refugees are not that different and refugees are thus a suitable member organisation. At information meetings, the council has to be aware of the different realities. An information meeting cannot be considered an opportunity to bring about change within either organisation; the actual area of action should be the meta-organisation.

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Introduction

Context: recent migration trends and the legal framework

In 2014, 626 000 asylum seekers registered in the European Union, up 44% from the year before. At a total of 202 700, Germany received the majority of these claims (Eurostat, 20 March 2015). Syrians made up the largest group of asylum seekers in Germany (39 332 according to BAMF, 2015, pp. 22) and in other European countries. However, the number of Syrians seeking asylum in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey combined is nearly 4 million (UNHCR, 2015, p. 11). The infographic illustrates the rising numbers of asylum seekers registering in the European Union (source: eurostat 20 March 2015).



* EU refers to EU27 (excluding Croatia) for the years 2008 to 2012 and to EU28 for 2013 and 2014.

Dublin Regulation

The law that coordinates migration affairs in the European Union is called Dublin Regulation. The Dublin III Regulation of 2013 (the regulation) is a revised document of the original Dublin Convention of 1990. The purpose of the regulation is to “establish the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application” (Regulation (EU) No 604/2013, 2013). The regulation establishes that an asylum seeker can only claim asylum in one Member State. If after examination by the respective state the claim is rejected, the asylum seeker may not

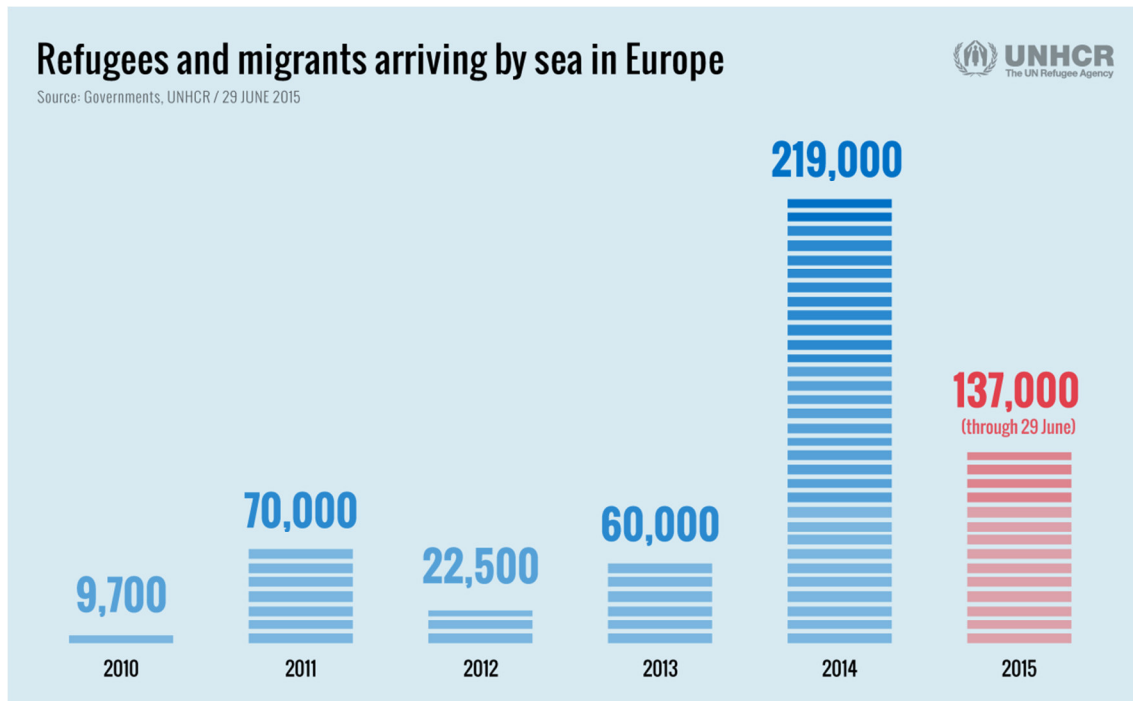
attempt to register in another Member State. In the event where a person irregularly enters a Member State, as it is for example the case when people attempt to cross the Mediterranean Sea by boat, the Member State where they land is responsible for their application. This principle can be overturned should the applicant already have relatives who are recognised refugees in another Member State. In this case the state where the asylum seeker arrives can call on the state where the family of the applicant resides to process the claim (Regulation (EU) No 604/2013, 2013, chapter III). This principle is often applied when unaccompanied minors arrive in the EU.

Development in the Mediterranean

The recent surge of migrants dying in an attempt to reach Europe via the Mediterranean Sea has alarmed European governments. 3 500 people lost their lives at sea in 2014, during the first months of 2015 the number has already reached 1 500 (BBC, 22 April 2015). In an effort to better coordinate rescue operations at sea, the European Commission (EC) launched a new Frontex undertaking in November 2014. “Triton” was to replace the Italian coastguard’s mission “Mare Nostrum”. At a monthly budget of 3 million Euros compared to 9 million Euros for Mare Nostrum, human rights associations criticised that rather than being a concerted response to the development in the region, Triton was in fact a reduction of resources: “the limited range and border enforcement mandate of Operation Triton are no substitute for Mare Nostrum” (Amnesty International, 9 October 2014).

Following the growing death toll even after the implementation of Triton, the EC in May 2015 proposed a revised action plan for the Mediterranean. According to this plan, the budget available to rescue missions would have been tripled and the geographical scope would have been expanded. Another significant change was the allocation of asylum seekers according to a quota: rather than registering asylum seekers in the country where they first landed, a quota would determine how many asylum seekers each Member State could receive (EC, 13 May 2015). If implemented, this would have ensured a more balanced share of responsibility. Under the current rules, countries along the Mediterranean coast such as Italy and Greece are under immense pressure whilst others are hardly affected at all. However, in June 2015 at an EU Council meeting, European ministers abandoned the idea of a binding quota. They

only agreed to relocate some of the refugees and asylum seekers who had landed in Europe already (BBC, 16 June 2015).



To avoid confusion, the terms asylum seeker, refugee and migrant will briefly be explained.

An asylum seeker is someone who seeks protection outside their country of origin. They have not yet officially received refugee status (UNHCR, 2015, p. 5).

An asylum seeker is granted refugee status according to the UNHCR 1951 Refugee Convention based on “[...] well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion” (art. 1 A (2)). Based on the Convention, countries decide whether a person receives refugee status.

The term migrant is used to describe a person moving around; this can be both within and beyond the person’s own country and it does not necessarily need to be motivated by difficulties (Amnesty International, 2015, online).

Relevance of case study: The situation in Germany in Hamburg

Once arrived in Germany, asylum- seekers are accommodated at an initial reception facility where their cases are being registered. After this, they are allocated to housing estates according to a quota (“Königsteiner Schlüssel”). The quota takes into consideration tax contributions and the population of each federal state (“Bundesland”); North- Rhine Westphalia and Bavaria thus accommodate the vast majority of asylum- seekers at 21% and 15% respectively. Hamburg receives about 2.5% (BAMF, 2015, p. 14). Once an asylum- seeker is granted refugee status, they are free to leave their assigned accommodation. In reality however this can be a challenge, and often refugees remain in social housing for a long time before finding their own apartment.

The kind of housing estate where refugees and asylum- seekers are accommodated ranges from purpose- built containers and houses to refurbished schools or offices. This depends on what property or land is available to the local authorities. Following the recent influx of refugees, authorities across Germany have been under a lot of pressure to find adequate housing which has in some places resulted in so called “tent towns” (Kastner, 11 October 2014) and other emergency solutions. When the district council is offered a plot of land or a building that could be remodelled into a housing estate, Hamburg’s office for migration and social affairs examines the offer. If it is deemed suitable and a development plan for the estate is finalised, the district council invites residents living in the neighbourhood of the planned estate to attend an information meeting. Here, the details of the development plan are discussed in context of recent migration trends and figures. Neighbours can see what the housing estate will look like and which groups are likely to live there (families, unaccompanied minors etc.). They can also ask council members questions.

Sometimes the district council and neighbours clash at information meetings; in some cases this escalates into a lawsuit which delays the process of setting up accommodation for refugees. In one case in the Sophienterrasse neighbourhood, building works have been suspended after residents claimed the council’s plan to accommodate 220 refugees is not in line with the area’s residential purpose. The council will revise plans for the area but the court case has already delayed the possible move- in date for the refugees by at least one year (Postelt, 08 May 2015).

Research question and purpose of the case study

The conflict in the Sophienterrasse neighbourhood exemplifies how a disagreement between two parties (council and neighbours) can scale up into a lawsuit which affects a third party (refugees). Even when the dispute is not taken to court, at information meetings the council is often faced with opposition from neighbours.

The point on which the two parties disagree is whether said third party should be allowed in. This space is assumed to be the city of Hamburg. The purpose of the case study is to explore the conflict from an organisational communication perspective. For this, the council, neighbours and refugees are considered organisations. The city of Hamburg is assumed to be a meta-organisation where council and neighbours are members. The council is in favour of admitting a new member: the organisation refugees. The organisation neighbourhood however opposes this idea. It appears that council and neighbourhood construct the meta-organisation city of Hamburg differently. The thesis explains this phenomenon by elaborating on the theoretical discussion of the communicative constitution of organisations with respect to the co-constitution of organisational boundaries (Ashcraft et al., 2009, Cooren et al., 2011, Schoeneborn et al., 2014). Although boundaries are an undeniable characteristic of organisations, these are to be understood as flexible; organisational boundaries can be shifted through the renegotiation of meaning (Schreyögg & Sydow, 2010). Reflecting this idea, and with regard to questions such as “what constitutes an organisation”, “how is membership negotiated” and “what is the role of the organisational boundary” the thesis asks how residents and the district council conceive the “city of Hamburg” as a meta-organisation (Ahrne & Brunsson, 2005) and how information meetings on housing projects are affected by the construction of the meta-organisation.

Thesis structure

The thesis starts with a presentation of the research methods that have been used for the collection of empirical data. After a review of the Communication as Constitutive Organisation (CCO) literature which is based on four guiding questions, the theoretical framework will be elaborated upon with regard to three central themes: boundaries, text and agency. The questions and themes reflect some of the issues the conflict in

the case study revolves around. Then, empirical findings are presented using the CCO perspective as a framework. The following discussion and analysis use the themes and questions presented in the literature and theory section. The thesis concludes with recommendations for Hamburg's district council.

Research methods and methodology

Currently, Hamburg's district councils face various forms of opposition from residents in areas where refugee housing estates are planned. Opposition ranges from verbal criticism and strong language at information meetings to legal actions to stop housing projects. The objective of this thesis is to explain this phenomenon in light of the CCO perspective. The research aims to explore, describe and explain the case of refugee housing in Hamburg using concepts from CCO scholars.

I first had the idea to write about this topic when I watched a broadcast about the council's struggle to communicate the necessity to accommodate refugees in residential areas. I contacted the council representatives and asked them about the authenticity of the TV broadcast. They confirmed that the film represented their reality and they invited me to attend meetings myself. The meetings took place only two weeks later so I entered the field with an open focus and without a set research question. As a deductive process, my research thus started with a problem, not with a theory or perspective. I attended two information meetings in one of Hamburg's seven districts and I also had an informative conversation with employees at the authority that is responsible for this district. My second entry to the field was ten weeks later when I attended a third information meeting at a different district. During the first two meetings and at the appointment at the district authority I took notes of my observations and of comments people made, and I recorded the third meeting. The data generated from these observations is supplemented with the following sources:

- 1) Physical artefacts such as the Power Point presentation used at information meetings
- 2) Contextual information such as the Dublin III Regulation
- 3) Reports from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and EU reports from Eurostat

4) News reporting and further television broadcasts on the issue

As information meetings are public events my presence as a researcher there was not objected to by any of the participants and I did not have to go through a formal procedure to be granted access. At all meetings, journalists were also present and took notes and pictures. Gold (1958) classifies the role of researchers in the field but due to the public nature of information meetings; it is difficult to say which role I had. Since my entries into the field were rather brief and I rarely saw the same people twice, I was an observer- as- participant during the informative conversation (Gold, 1958, p. 221) but a complete observer at the meetings themselves: I interacted neither with neighbours nor with council representatives.

I moved back and forth throughout my data and eventually narrowed down the initial open focus. The topics I concentrate on are boundaries, text and agency. These are central themes in CCO literature and as it emerged from my data, also controversial points in Hamburg. Once I had clarified what I had observed, I was able to combine my observations, which led me to my research question:

How is the city of Hamburg constructed as an organisation by residents and the district council and what are the implications for managing public information meetings on refugee housing?

A qualitative approach to this question is suitable for the case study as it aims to understand the perspectives of two organisations and how their experiences affect information meetings. Using multiple sources, the purpose is to develop an in- depth analysis of both organisations: “In order to answer significant theoretical and practical questions, researchers must be resourceful, creative and flexible” (Tracy & Geist-Martin, 2014, p. 247). The CCO perspective, which is characterised by a dynamic view of organisations, reflects this flexibility. Three different academic schools of thought contribute to the CCO perspective: Luhmann’s system theory, McPhee’s Four Flows and the Montréal School. The multiple source approach of the case study is thus also in line with the multiple contributors character of the theory on which it is based.

As a research strategy, the case study is

“especially effective in approaching phenomena that are little understood; phenomena that are ambiguous, fuzzy, even chaotic; dynamic processes rather than static and deterministic ones, and includes a large number of variables and relationships which are thus complex and difficult to overview and predict” (Gummesson, 2008, p. 39).

For the case of refugee housing in Hamburg, the CCO perspective is particularly useful, as “it captures the inevitably processual, historically situated, and politically contested character of organizing” (Blaschke et al., 2012, p. 890).

Not only are information meetings dynamic processes, the unique and ephemeral nature of them make them difficult to fully appreciate. They are embedded in rich context; each neighbourhood includes variables that are not necessarily apparent to the observer. This made it challenging to go through data sets and identify recurrent themes because I could never be sure to what degree my observations depended on a variable that I did not see.

On the other hand, the CCO perspective is grounded in the view that “organizations are invoked and maintained in and through communicative practices” (Cooren, 2011 in Schoeneborn, Blaschke et al., 2012, p. 286). In this sense, it is legitimate to disregard any variables that did not become apparent at information meetings: for the case study, the organisations as they emerge in their communication at the occasion of the meeting are of interest. This does not mean that relationships and variables are not important and the thesis will in fact show that they play a vital role in the construction of the meta-organisation city of Hamburg. However, the subjects of this research are information meetings, and only observations from these the meetings can be considered.

The CCO premise that organisations are “a discursive phenomenon, *constructed* [...] through talk” (Taylor & Cooren, 1997, p. 410, own emphasis) already indicates that the perspective is rooted in constructionism. As a sociological theory, constructionism

“seeks to understand how social actors recognize, produce, and reproduce social actions and how they come to share an intersubjective understanding of specific life circumstances” (Schwandt, 2007, p. 39).

Similarly, CCO scholars emphasize the “continuously negotiated character of meaning” in communication (Blaschke et al., 2012, p. 890)”. There is no inherent meaning to objects and artefacts. Meaning creation is an active process, not “an extension of the individual consciousness” (Koschman, 2012, p. 23). In social constructionism, human society assigns value to objects. This idea is reflected in the CCO discussion on the role of non-human agents, which will be elaborated upon below.

Literature review

Introduction to the literature review

CCO scholars hold that communication is essential for the creation and maintenance of organisations; it is through communication that organisations come into being. The perspective thus rejects the “container metaphor” (Axley, 1984) which suggests that an organisation is an establishment within which communication happens. CCO advocates a less static idea where the organisation is made up of communication processes. The approach unites three heterogeneous schools of thought: the Montréal School, McPhee’s Four Flows based on Giddens’ Structuration Theory and Luhmann’s theory of Social Systems.

This section reviews the literature of the Communication as Constitutive of Organisations perspective. For the case study, the aspects from the CCO literature which will be of interest are: boundaries, text and conversation and agency.

Despite rejecting the container metaphor, the CCO perspective holds that organisations have boundaries. Boundaries make organisations more tangible and define their zone of influence; boundaries set organisations apart from their environment. However, as organisations evolve from communication, their boundaries also have to be negotiated; they are not static or given. The discussion below develops this idea and emphasizes the importance of boundaries.

The role of text is central to the Montréal School’s view. Here, the purpose is less to discuss in detail the forms text can take. In the context of the case study what will be of interest is text as the product of and ground for conversations. If words, expressions and ways of saying something are used repeatedly and find their way into the

organisational repertoire, they can ultimately shape the identity of the organisation (Koschmann, 2012, p. 22). The role of text will be essential in the context of boundaries: to what extent does text contribute to the opening/ closure of boundaries?

Agency is of interest as it defines the actors of organisational communication and thereby explains who has got the power to cause change. The literature review will show that amongst CCO contributors, the question of agency is primarily of a conceptual nature: to what extent can artefacts such as logos, buildings and other objects that belong to an organisation be considered agents? Is agency exclusive to human actors? This will mainly be elaborated upon in the theoretical underpinnings.

These three aspects are reflected in the following questions which will guide the literature review:

- What constitutes an organisation and what are its structures and activities?
- Who belongs to the organisation and who is part of the organisation's environment, who is "us" and who is "them"?
- What is the role of the organisational boundary?
- What are the possibilities and limits of meta-organisation?

What constitutes an organisation and what are its structures and activities?

Whilst the name of the CCO perspective already answers this question and hence all scholars agree that communication constitutes organisations, there are variations to this view which will be looked at in the following.

In an article by Schoeneborn et al. (2014), the three schools of the CCO perspective enter into dialogue with each other. To the Montréal School, an organisation exists in anything or anyone that represents it; it is through others that an organisation materialises. This can be objects such as a building or a logo but also a spokesperson that speaks on behalf of the organisation and thereby brings the organisation into existence. Robichaud, Giroux and Taylor (2004) supplement this definition of organisation with the "recursive property of language". The authors suggest that organisations emerge in interactive exchange of its members and are reflected in the

texts they produce (p. 618). Language is fundamental to this text production; it is through the mediation of language that social entities evolve. This definition is extended by the notion that the constitution of organisations as the accepted understanding about rights and responsibilities occurs in a metaconversation. This means a metatext has to emerge from an initial interaction of members; that is, the text has to last and be embedded in future conversations. This illustrates the recursive quality of language; what has been said previously is referred to in later situations. The concept is reflected in Koschmann's article (2012) on authoritative texts which will be discussed below.

To McPhee, organisations are systems which are maintained through social interactions (Putnam & Nicotera, 2009, p. 191). McPhee further defines organisations as "influenced by economic and legal institutional practices and including coordinated (inter)action within and across a socially constructed system boundary, manifestly directed toward a privileged set of outcomes" (McPhee & Zaug 2009, p. 28).

This definition reflects the Four Flows which, according to McPhee and Zaug, constitute an organisation. This assumption is grounded in Weick's (1979) theory which argues that organisations are not a static entity but made up of the dynamic processes of organising and interpreting an enacted environment. Reflecting the underlying assumption of the CCO perspective, McPhee and Zaug also mention Taylor's (1993) suggestion that "organising is an effect of communication and not its predecessor" (in McPhee and Zaug, 2009, p. 25). Therefore, for the organisation to come into being, according to McPhee, four communicative processes must exist.

The first is organisational self- structuring, which refers to communicative acts that control and design the organisation. Here, interaction happens among role- holders and groups; the process is thus internally- oriented and shapes norms and relations. Concrete outcomes of this kind of communication could be organisational charts or directives. This guides and controls membership negotiation processes, but this is also where the organisation takes control of itself and creates the foundation for its response to the environment. McPhee and Zaug point out that this "analogue to a sense of self" (McPhee & Zaug, 2009, p. 37) allows the organisation to avoid incoherence and over-adaptation. The way an organisation is structured shapes the

next flow which is activity coordination. This refers to any activity that helps the organisation to solve its tasks and align different views members might have. This can for example be done by forming teams. Membership negotiation includes both recruitment and socialisation of new organisational members. The purpose of membership negotiation is to understand the way interaction happens at this particular organisation. This flow is more internally-oriented whereas the institutional positioning is externally-oriented as it refers to communication with the environment i.e. through spokespersons. This type of communication aims to establish an organisational identity but also to negotiate a place within the ecology of organisations so the organisation is seen as a partner by others. To McPhee and Zaug, organisations are thus social structures generated by interaction.

With regard to agency, all three schools would agree that someone or something that “makes a difference” (Cooren 2004, in Schoeneborn et al. 2014, p. 306) can be considered an agent. Beyond this common denominator however the interpretation of agency differs. The Montréal School advocates that: “Texts, tools, or other material objects are endowed with communicative agency as soon as they are acknowledged, mobilized, or foregrounded in the context of language use” (Cooren 2004, in Schoeneborn et al. 2014, p. 306). The latter aspect would be disputed by Luhmann: “Although material objects can be addressed and their meaning can be negotiated through communication, Luhmann would not go as far as to ascribe agency to these objects” (p. 306). To Luhmann, an organisation is a social system that consists of an eternal set of decisions through which the organisation constantly re-produces itself.

Schoeneborn (2011) elaborates on Luhmann’s Theory of Social Systems according to which organisations’ activities are concerned with uncertainty reduction through decision-making communication. Communication is considered a social system which has to be able to reproduce itself in order to be considered a system. This reproduction is based on “undecidable decisions” as decisions are communication and as such form the constitutive element of organisation. “Undecidable” means only those decisions which present a genuine choice can be considered contingent; choosing one possibility means not choosing another one. If the question requires a certain answer, or all but one conclusion are impossible, there is no contingency. However, according to Luhmann, contingency is necessary for organisations to maintain their existence. To

the organisation, decisions are attempts to create certainty; however the very nature of decisions as explained here suggests that they always create uncertainty because the situation could have been different had another possibility been chosen. To Luhmann, the consequence that follows is that new uncertainties arise from one decision; the past decision becomes a new decision premise. This ongoing stream of communicative events in the form of decision-making processes constitutes the autopoietic character of organisations and also establishes their boundary (Schoeneborn et al, 2014, p. 306). Finally, Schoeneborn brings forward criticism of said underestimation for materiality and the overemphasis on decisions.

Who belongs to the organisation and who is part of the organisation's environment, who is "us" and who is "them"?

The purpose of this section is to further explore the conceptualisation of organisations by focusing on their members; how they conceive an organisation and identify with it. In this context, collective agency will be discussed.

Koschmann (2012) explains the formation of collective identity through communication. The development from transient to authoritative text is referred to as "abstraction" by the Montréal School. It is assumed that organisational identity can be produced "through the symbolic and interpretive processes of communication" (Fiol, 2002, Hardy et al., 2005, Kuhn & Nelson, 2002, Sillince, 2006 in Koschmann, 2012, p. 4). The Montréal School considers communication as co-orientation; common objectives steer people's actions. In light of the idea that communication is constitutive of organisations, the question is how a communicative act can be "solidified" into abstract text that "represents all conversations this abstraction refers to" (Taylor, Cooren, Giroux & Robichaud, 1996, in Koschmann, 2012, p. 6).

The Montréal School argues that individual authorship of a text needs to vanish; agency must no longer be contributed to an individual but to the text. Eventually, to change the status quo, a collective that has previously recognised the text and not a specific person must be convinced. The spirit of such authoritative text clarifies roles, explains power structures and draws an overall picture of the organisation.

Koschmann's results show that in interorganisational contexts, collective identity and meaning are not given; they are constantly being altered through communication. Changes in the interaction pattern therefore trigger changes in the collective identity and meaning.

From this train of thought it follows that the more members in collaborative contexts have the opportunity to participate in the creation of authoritative texts, the stronger the collaboration will emerge as a collective agent (Koschmann et al., 2012, p. 340). Additionally, the Montréal School argues that references to the organisation from its environment also award the organisation recognition. This does not require any action from the organisation itself; a mere reference to it already indicates that the organisation is recognised as a distinguished entity (Ashcraft, Kuhn, Cooren, 2009).

McPhee argues that the Four Flows bring forth the organisation and in that distinguish it from the environment. Taken together, the four communication episodes allow communicators to perform organisational functions (Kuhn, 2012, p. 558). Schoeneborn et al. (2014, p. 294) emphasise that self- structuring is central to this creation process; it establishes a "membership boundary" and "designs the relations among members". This is achieved among other things by "producing a system of signs" (Robichaud & Taylor, 2013, p. 174) which will be discussed further in the empirical findings.

Returning to Schoeneborn's (2011) article on Luhmann, the boundary between an organisation and its environment is drawn by the organisation's decision- making processes. To Luhmann, deparadoxification of the environment by decision- making as the main activity of an organisation already indicates the environment plays a major role for the organisation in that it shapes its deparadoxification activities. Similarly, the Four Flows also relate to the external world; starting with the question who from the environment becomes a member of the organisation and who remains "outside" (membership negotiation).

So far, literature discussing the constitutive aspect of organisations has been presented. It has been shown that organisations are conceptualised differently by CCO scholars; to the Montréal School, an organisation emerges, when people align their activities towards a common goal through the production of authoritative text. For

Luhmann, an organisation originates in decision communication and for McPhee, Four Flows or interaction processes must be present for an organisation to occur.

Next, the role of the organisational boundary will be discussed in light of the question how organisations can deal with the challenge of balancing change and stability.

What is the role of the organisational boundary?

The CCO perspective emphasises the importance of viewing organisations as continuous, dynamic communication processes. One could therefore conclude that organisational boundaries as such do not exist anymore. However, as highlighted by the previous question, “total fluidity” is not what CCO scholars call for. Elaborating on Schoeneborn’s and Ashcraft et al.’s articles, the role of the organisational boundary as established above will be discussed further.

Schreyögg and Sydow (2010) elaborate on the concept of fluidity as an organisational response to today’s dynamic markets and complex environment. Previously, scholars have argued that all kinds of bureaucratic forms of organising have to be abolished and replaced by informal set ups such as improvised project teams and temporary networks. This way, it has been argued, the organisation becomes more adaptable and resourceful. A key characteristic of these organisations is the disparagement of organisational boundaries; they are considered unnecessary for the ever- evolving organisation. Schreyögg and Sydow however challenge this assumption and echo Adrich’s (1971) view that organisations “have to be conceived as boundary-maintaining systems, [...] they cannot exist without boundaries” (Schreyögg and Sydow, 2010, p. 1253), otherwise the distinction between the organisation and its environment becomes blurred.

This boundary- drawing is a natural process as separating “us” from “them” helps social systems to make their environment more tangible. This notion of trying to reduce the complexity of the environment reflects Luhmann’s idea of “deparadoxification”; as he refers to the organisation’s attempt to narrow down the available options and thereby establish a boundary between the organisation and its environment (Schoeneborn, 2011).

As it is impossible to comprehend the constantly changing environment, the organisation has to create patterns and templates of behaviour that members can use. Successful schemes can then be preserved in the organisational memory; however the challenge is to not limit oneself exclusively to tested patterns but to look beyond these. This is particularly important when the context changes and parameters that lead to successful outcomes in the past are no longer applicable. Organisations tend to simplify their processes if they have been successful with a certain strategy over time (Schreyögg & Sydow, 2010, p. 1256). This illustrates the dilemma organisations face; letting go of all patterns deprives the organisation of the opportunity to establish an identity. Reinforcing patterns however bears the risk of becoming path dependent. The authors therefore call for a view of the organisation in terms of “dualistic, dialectic and paradoxical processes” (p. 1256) where the organisation balances out these demands. The key to this view is to constantly evaluate alternative responses to organisational challenges; earlier patterns always have to be reviewed before being re-implemented, thereby keeping an open focus (p. 1258) and to make a conscious decision to adapt or not adapt. In this sense, the organisational boundary provides a point of reference; the organisation has to observe what is happening beyond this point of reference and evaluate whether what is being observed should have an impact on the organisational structures, or not. Therefore, the organisational boundary can be compared to a selectively permeable membrane where the organisation boundary as the cell membrane can block or allow the passage of materials depending on the conditions inside or outside of the organisation.

To conclude, an organisational boundary has an important function; being aware of an organisation’s boundary means being aware of one’s own reach or sphere of influence. The next section is of importance for the case study which argues that the city of Hamburg is a meta-organisation for the three organisations district council, residents and refugees.

What are the possibilities and limits of meta-organisations?

Meta-organisations are organisations whose members are other organisations, associations, federative states or corporations (Ahrne and Brunsson, 2005). They

provide the opportunity to concentrate resources to achieve outcomes no individual organisation would be able to achieve on its own. The authors argue that there is constant exchange between the meta-organisation and their environments which, to echo Luhmann, presents uncertainty. Incorporating parts of the environment into the meta-organisation is thus a means of reducing some of this uncertainty.

The difference between business and state federations on the one hand and associations of organisations on the other hand is that the former is characterised by a clear hierarchical order with the meta-organisation more powerful than individual members. Usually, members cannot leave without the meta-organisation's consent. In associations, members have got the freedom to join and opt out and the meta-organisation cannot compel members to follow its ideas or legislation in the same way i.e. a federal government can pass binding laws for federal states. Where organisations can choose to join a meta-organisation, they weigh up the benefits that come with the membership against the contributions they are expected to make. Ahrne and Brunsson (2005) also point out that some might be motivated by the opportunity to stop a meta-organisation's activities.

The authors further argue that the identity of the meta-organisation is more dependent on its individual members than is the case in individual-based organisations and often, members are considered more important than the meta-organisation itself. With regard to recruitment, Ahrne and Brunsson say that it is in the meta-organisation's interest to get attractive members to join; high-profile members will then be an incentive for others to join, as well.

Although a meta-organisation has the purpose to assemble somewhat similar organisations, differences amongst them can quickly present a challenge and trigger conflicts. To avoid these, the meta-organisation tries to strengthen and reinforce similarities such as similar talk, organisational structures and actions. This is where the limited impact of meta-organisations becomes apparent: according to the authors they are good at issuing standards but struggle to agree on binding rules. However, despite this occasional necessity to agree on the lowest common denominator, meta-organisations have long-term benefits. The European Union is illustrative of this; over several decades, it has brought peace and stability to Western and Northern Europe.

However, events which require an immediate, unison response such as the annexation of Crimea have repeatedly proven difficult for the 28 member states.

For the stability of meta-organisations, it is important that members do not have the same mandates as the meta-organisation as this would call the legitimacy of either into question. This reflects the important role of boundaries as established above: they must not be blurred as they help to clarify where competences and responsibilities lie.

In the following section the CCO perspective will be explored further. Boundaries, text and agency will provide the infrastructure for this.

Theoretical underpinnings from the CCO school of thought

The Communication as Constitutive of Organisations view suggests that, as opposed to being a result of organisational routines, communication is the preceding social process that brings forth the organisation (Nicotera, 2009). This view thus posits that an organisation is not a given entity but a dynamic process where meaning is constantly being reconstructed (Ashcraft et al, 2009). This section examines how CCO scholarship defines organisational boundaries, agency and language and what role it ascribes to them.

Boundaries

The dynamic, process- oriented nature of the CCO perspective concerns all aspects of the organisation, including its boundary. The Oxford Dictionary defines a boundary as “a limit of something abstract, especially a subject or sphere of activity” (2015). This definition however does not capture the ongoing, ever- evolving nature of boundaries which is central to the CCO perspective. A boundary is not static or given but “always (re)configured in interaction” thus “guiding interaction [whilst] remaining open to contestation and change” (Ashcraft et al., 2009, p. 31). The notion of the evolving boundary articulates the CCO schools as followed:

For the Montréal School, the role of language is essential in the establishment of the organisational boundary as the school considers organisations to emerge from textualisation (Brummans et al., 2014).

For McPhee, the notion of the Four Flows which together bring forth an organisation also conveys the boundary aspect: organisations are

“influenced by economic and legal institutional practices and including coordinated (inter)action within and across a socially constructed system boundary, manifestly directed toward a privileged set of outcomes” (McPhee & Zaig 2009, p. 28).

Each flow is a communicative action; together they bring forth the organisation. The organisational boundary is thus established in interaction.

For Luhmann, the process of establishing an organisation is also a process of establishing a boundary. Organisations distinguish themselves from the environment by continuously (re)producing their boundary. As Schoeneborn (2011) elaborates:

“the system–environment distinction needs to be continually sustained, the existence of organizations is a precarious one; they tend to become either lost in pure self-referentiality or absorbed by their environment. Thus to maintain its existence the organisation continuously needs to reproduce a boundary that distinguishes the organisation from the environment” (p. 678).

The means to the establishment of boundaries is communication using “a closed, self-referential language system” (Schoeneborn, 2011, p. 681).

To conclude, a boundary distinguishes an organisation from its environment. This is important to define the realm and determine the operational constraint of the organisation. However, as described above, an organisational boundary cannot be considered static or finite; it needs to be adaptive to reflect developments in the environment.

Text and conversation

For the purpose of the case study, language choices of the members of the respective organisations at information meetings will be of interest, and so will the topics that occur in their conversation. The following illustration thus has different foci; both text as a way of saying something and conversation topics will be discussed.

According to the Montréal School text and conversation are the essential building blocks of co-orientation. Conversation is defined as both an exchange of messages and as “coordinated activity distributed across communities of practice” (Cooren & Taylor, 1997, in Cooren et al., 2011, p. 7). Text is the outcome of conversations but at the same time it provides the base for new conversations: “Together then, text and conversation form a self-organizing loop” (Taylor & Van Every, 2000, in Cooren et al., 2011, p. 7). When continuously produced and reproduced, authoritative text as described in the literature review emerges and gives rise to an organisation.

For the organisation to interact with others, an individual must be authorised to act in the name of the organisation. By voicing what an organisation stands for, the organisation comes into being; “[organisations thus have] no existence other than in discourse, where their reality is created, and sustained” (Taylor & Cooren, 1997, as cited in Cooren et al., p. 11).

Giddens, as the theoretical foundation for McPhee’s Four Flows, notes that “languages and cultural traditions are not to be taken as objects or instruments or methods; rather, we “live within them,” and they mediate our experiences and plans- and vice versa” (in McPhee and Iverson, 2009, p. 56). Recalling that the Four Flows are generated in interaction, it follows that people simultaneously produce and reproduce rules and structures they draw on in their interaction:

“Communicative “production” is no less production of “structure,” if by that we mean rules and resources able to be drawn on in later interaction. The whole point of communicating is to get across a meaning [...] that will be used by others in mediating their later acts and responses” (McPhee and Iverson, 2009, p. 57).

The question that arises is thus how to stabilise roles, structures and memberships so that organisations can arise. McPhee holds that this is done through text which he considers the starting point of any organisational form: text serves as a power base for organisations as they serve as a “medium of information storage and processing” (McPhee, 2004, p. 365). This definition resembles the Montréal School’s definition of authoritative text as a tool to sustain the organisation. McPhee further holds that

“members know they are in one setting among quite a few others, that they influence some discussions but hardly others, and that their production of structure has local but rarely organization-wide impact. Members often seek information from other settings, but they also often protect their own setting from outside influence, resisting ideas that threaten the autonomy of settings with which they identify” (McPhee and Iverson, in McPhee and Nicotera, 2009, p. 57).

Language to Luhmann is a medium of communication. Reflecting the autopoietic character of Luhmann’s theory, language both feeds communication and is generated by communication (Maurer, 2012, p. 7). Being a medium, language does not have the same characteristics as a system and “cannot be self- organising” (Leydesdorff, 2000, p. 280) but serves communication: “Each subsystem [within society] generates a specific code that allows it to speed up the communication by reducing complexity selectively” (Leydesdorff, 2000, p. 280). As a means to reducing complexity, language thus contributes to the deparadoxification process and therefore to the stabilisation of organisations.

Agency

Guttenplan, discussing philosophy of actions defines agency as “an agent undertaking to bring about some change in the world” (1995, online). Whilst this definition explains what agency entails, it remains to be defined who and what qualifies as an agent and whether all agents have the same power to bring about change.

To the Montréal School, “agency is the mechanism that explains how the organisation takes on authority; [it] is acting for a principal” (Brummans et al., 2014, p. 180). The Montréal School holds that the CCO perspective should be as broad as possible in their definition of agents and include elements such as documents, logos, artefacts or architecture. In this sense, strategies or mission statements participate in talks or discussions when they are called upon by the speakers; they can either be explicitly referred to or guiding the speakers’ actions. As such, strategies and mission statements contribute to the enactment of the organisation and can thus be considered agents (Cooren et al, 2011, p. 4). To the Montréal School, the recognition of this textual agency does not imply that either form - human or nonhuman agency - is superior. Cooren (2004) suggests a hybrid approach to organisations; different forms of agency complement each other and texts (here: written documents) help to stabilise organisations as human agents refer to them, read them or act according to them. At the same time, Cooren (2014) emphasises that human actors are an “obligatory passage point” in communicative acts as they attribute meaning to nonhuman actors (p. 299).

The agency debate addresses the question of whether nonhuman actors have agency. Giddens’ structuration theory, which is the base for McPhee’s Four Flows does not reject this idea, though nonhuman agents are not considered something that can be addressed. Rather they act as a facilitator or a restraint to human agents (Schoeneborn et al., 2014, p. 306). As highlighted in the presentation of the Four Flows, each flow represents a communicative act requiring a human actor. McPhee and Zaug (2009) also say that “organizations are a social form created and maintained by manifestly and reflexively reifying practices of members” (p. 31). In this definition, which echoes Giddens’ (1984, in McPhee and Zaug, 2009) claim that “organizations, like all social forms, exist only as a result of human agency” (p. 35) and that “[non-human agents] require and develop inchoate human powers and natal resources for power development: oysters, computers, and committees could not even develop agentive powers in the way that people typically do” (McPhee and Iverson, 2009, p. 60), it becomes clear that nonhuman actors are a minor concern.

Luhmann’s take on agency reflects McPhee in that it also ascribes a supporting role to material objects that can be addressed in communication. Otherwise they are not

considered part of the organisation (Seidl, 2014, in Schoeneborn et al., 2014, p. 298) and consequently would not be agents as such (Schoeneborn et al., 2014, p. 306). A major difference between the Montréal School and McPhee on the one hand and Luhmann on the other is that the latter argues that organisation systems communicate, not individuals.

The different foci of each school of thought and the importance they attribute to nonhuman agency make it difficult to collate them. However, analysing these takes on agency the following assumptions can be made:

For the Montréal School, to bring about change, a human agent would ideally be able to refer to powerful nonhuman agents that support their claim. The quality or impact of an organisation's agency according to McPhee however would depend on the ability to "draw members in, and lead them to [...] understand the interactional world unique to the organization" (Putnam and Nicotera, 2009, p. 35); meaning - or change - is thus negotiated in interaction.

What follows from this is that language is a powerful tool to draw a boundary and separate an organisation from its environment. Recalling what has been established in the literature review; that boundaries define an organisation's reach, it follows that one organisation's language does not necessarily resonate with another organisation where another language would be in place. This is where Schreyögg and Sydow's call for flexible boundaries becomes significant: to create understanding amongst organisations, boundaries must be susceptible to other languages. If the contrary is the case and organisations communicate using exclusively their own language, they cannot create a bond. Instead of entering into dialogue with each other, the organisations' boundaries would only be reinforced. This reflects Luhmann's view of language as a medium to speed up communication: one subsystem's codes might not be understood by another subsystem, as they would be using their own language. This notion will be relevant in the analysis of the case study.

Empirical findings

Information meetings on refugee housing in residential areas

Information meetings on refugee housing are a form of public participation in Hamburg. However, participation here does not imply participation in the decision process if and where refugees are accommodated within the neighbourhood. Rather, residents are invited to receive information on these decisions and to participate in the conception of the everyday life in the community (i.e. by offering activities for the refugees).

At information meetings, members of the district council include the leader and the spokesperson of the respective council, a member from the office for migration and social affairs and a manager from the housing association running the estate in question. Using a Power Point presentation they inform neighbours on both the broader context of migration trends as well as concrete plans for their particular neighbourhood. After, neighbours are given the opportunity to ask questions.

According to the district council, information meetings are always held in the area where the refugees will be living as opposed to in an official building such as the town hall. The council thereby wants to communicate that it (the council) is going to them (the neighbours) as opposed to letting them come to the council (meeting 1, l. 5). Meeting 1 is held at a school, meeting 2 is held at a community centre and the last meeting is held at a church.

The set-up at these meetings is always similar; council members sit next to each other behind a row of tables. They use a microphone when they speak. On the tables are name plates which also explain each council member's role (except for meeting 3) and a laptop for the Power Point presentation. The screen for the Power Point presentation is set up to the side of the council. It is elevated to allow a better view; however, at neither meeting can the audience read diagrams or graphs as the screen is too far away. The chairs for the audience are lined up approximately three meters from the panel; at meeting 1 and 2 approximately 150 people attend but at meeting 3 the number is down to approximately 60 and half the rows remain empty. As meeting 3 is held at a church, people sit on benches in the nave and the panel is slightly farther

away as their tables are set up on the chancel. In the following, meeting 3 will be presented separately as it is distinct in various ways which will be illustrated below.



Meeting 2

Meetings 1 and 2

Before the first information meeting starts, a council member informs me that at the beginning, the meetings are often emotionally laden. The strategy of the council is to remain rational at all times: “how people react differs but the planning for the meeting is always the same” (meeting 1, l. 15).

From my spot to the side of the first row of chairs I overhear people commenting that the name plates are impossible to read. Some people go to the front to be able to read them.

After introducing its members, the council starts the Power Point presentation. Particularly when speaking about different types of accommodation and when referring to laws and regulations, the council uses bureaucratic language. As mentioned in the introduction, the number of asylum-seekers landing in Europe in 2014 has increased sharply compared to the previous year. Consequently, local authorities are under a lot of pressure to find suitable housing. To meet the rising demand, Hamburg’s senate has got the opportunity to expedite the approval of new housing estates. The official term for this is “action under expedite procedure” (“Maßnahme im beschleunigten Verfahren”, meeting 1, l.26) or “emergency action” (“Notmaßnahme”, meeting 1, l. 28) if the case is extremely urgent. In conversations with the neighbourhood, the council uses the terms repeatedly to refer to the planned accommodation: “What we are planning here is an action under expedite procedure”.

Other examples of bureaucratic language include “begin of occupancy” (“Belgungsbeginn”, meeting 1, l. 29) when talking about the future resident’s move-in date as well as “sunlit” (“besonnt”, meeting 1, l. 52) when reasoning why a former school building has been chosen over another premise and finally “children’s playtime activities” (“Kinderspielaktivitäten”, meeting 1, l. 53) when explaining the purpose of green areas and playgrounds on the estate.

The following concerns are raised by the neighbourhood at meeting 1:

When the council opens the floor for questions a neighbour says that refugees are likely to be traumatised and will need psychological support. She asks how this support can be ensured by staff working at the estate. The council responds that the staff role at the estate is “guidance consultation” (“Verweisberatung”, l. 32) and not offering psychological support. They only refer refugees to the respective services.

Another neighbour says that if refugee children join a school or nursery, his own children are likely to be neglected because teachers will have to focus on the lack of linguistic ability of the refugee children. The council argues that refugee children will be “taught to read and write” (“Alphabetisierung der Kinder”, l. 42) in special classes before joining regular classes.

Neighbours repeatedly say that their area is problematic and that they have trouble sleeping due to noise nuisances outside. One neighbour fears that the noise level will increase further when the refugees move in. The council replies that refugees also want to sleep at night.

Other questions are related to cleanliness and crime; the neighbours want to know whether the premises are regularly cleaned by an external company (this is the case) and they voice concern that their allotment gardens could be burgled. Regarding the latter the council tells a story from another neighbourhood where a refugee child damaged a trampoline in a neighbour’s garden. The story is met with laughter by the neighbours.

The final two comments from the neighbourhood are extremely different:

“I do believe that you have to help these people but I am scared! I get anxious when I see how many Muslims are here and how Islam spreads” (ll. 60). The neighbour is visibly emotional when she speaks and immediately storms out of the room once she finishes.

After this motion which the council does not comment on, the floor is given to a final speaker:

“You know, the people who will be coming will be very different. Some will be ordinary, some will be educated, some will be easy-going and others will be extremely difficult- just like us. It is up to us how we deal with the situation. But we don’t know the people yet so let’s not demonise them. I find it embarrassing that so many of our war generation are full of prejudice” (ll.65).

This comment is again met with applause. Afterwards, a council member points out to me how important it is that there are people like this in the neighbourhood: “positive attitudes have to be initiated by the neighbours themselves”.

The following concerns were raised by neighbours at meeting 2:

Many of the points raised at meeting 1 are echoed during meeting 2, i.e. regarding schools and nurseries. However, at this meeting neighbours stress even more that their neighbourhood does not have the capacity to accommodate refugees:

“I feel sorry for the people but why do they have to come to our problematic neighbourhood?” (l. 93)

“There is no reliable public transport in the area, they are going to be stuck at the estate; it is going to turn into a ghetto in no time” (ll.96)

“What about medical examinations, how do you ensure people have been vaccinated? Will they be going to our doctors?” (l. 107)

The council explains that the housing planned for the estate features mainly pavilions with a relatively high standard allowing refugees to live independently and establish daily routines such as making food. These things are very important to the refugees. In reference to this, a neighbour asks whether this would not attract even more refugees.

The day after, I discuss some of my observations from the meetings with an employee at the authority responsible for both neighbourhoods. She explains to me that they often see a reaction which is commonly referred to as “not in my backyard” or “NIMBY” amongst council members: people show compassion towards refugees but at the same time stress that they do not want to be confronted with the refugees’ issues right at their doorstep.

Meeting 3

Meeting 3 does not only stand out due to its unusual location, it also differs in other aspects: the neighbourhood and council seem a lot closer; the council leader is able to call a lot of participants by their name and there are no name tags. Given that the meeting is held at a church, the priest is also the first speaker:

„I have been asked whether this public information meeting can be held at our church. Of course it can! When you have a space like this at your disposal, you are obliged to use it in a meaningful way. So I would like to welcome you” (transcription, ll. 5).

Besides the priest, the police are also present at meeting 3. Asked why this is the case, a council member tells me that he feels safer that way. He indicates that he has been to information meetings where participants showed aggressive behaviour and disrupted the meeting: “in those cases, it is good that the police are present”. The council member also tells me that sometimes neighbours have security- related questions and it is helpful when the police can talk about their experiences from other housing estates (meeting 3, ll. 113).

At the first two meetings every chair is taken but at meeting 3 a few benches remain empty.

The third meeting is held significantly earlier than the first two where the first residents are expected to arrive within six months following the meetings. The housing estate in question at meeting 3 is only due to be completed a year later. However, the council says it wants to involve the neighbours as early as possible, which is why the meeting is scheduled a year in advance (transcription, ll. 39). As a consequence, the council cannot answer some of the questions neighbours have regarding who will be moving in. The replies are general and not site- specific and the council instead refers to laws and regulations. At the same time, this neighbourhood seems particularly keen

to get in contact with refugees: to allow a smooth transition; some ask to establish contact while refugees are still at the initial reception facility. This is not possible “due to reasons of data protection” (transcription, l. 170).

Bureaucratic language is used but less dominant compared to meetings 1 and 2. When asked about staffing at the estate the council replies that there will be “1 ½ technical service staff” (“Technische Dienste”, meeting 3, l. 121).

One neighbour enquires about another construction site where student residences were planned:

“The sign with the development plan is gone and there are rumours that another housing estate will be established. Is that true or are those just rumours?”

A council member’s claim “I believe I have just seen the sign as I passed by...” is immediately contested by the neighbourhood. The council member then says:

“What I can say is that we are negotiating the use of this plot of land but if we come to an agreement with the owner and what the plan looks like is not concrete yet. When the plan becomes more definite there will be a public information meeting” (transcription, ll. 136).

Three months after meeting 3 the council invites neighbours again to the local church to inform them on a refugee housing estate at the site in question.

A common phenomenon at all meetings is that questions and comments from neighbours often refer to points that have already been discussed by the council. This concerns in particular questions related to the legal framework of the estate; i.e. the council has to explain repeatedly the concept of an “action under expedite procedure”.

District council, neighbours and refugees as organisations, city of Hamburg as a meta-organisation: structures and activities

This section introduces the district council (council) and the neighbourhood as organisations using McPhee’s Four Flows. According to McPhee, an organisation exists, when all four communicative flows take place. The council and the neighbourhood

fulfil this criterion but the organisation “refugees” cannot be presented in this way. This is owed to the fact that no refugees are present at the information meeting. Since their existence is the subject of the debate between council and neighbours, they will still be considered an organisation, as explained below. As organisations they will be considered members of the meta-organisation city of Hamburg.

To get a better understanding of how council and neighbours emerge as organisations, the Four Flows provide a useful point of departure. Looking at the communicative processes allows for a systematic comparison of the organisations and will demonstrate potential differences in the construction of the meta-organisation. These differences will then be considered against the backdrop of the conflict that often arises at information meetings.

District Council

Membership Negotiation

Members of the organisation district council can be identified as such through their function within the council. At information meetings they sit together as a panel with tables in front of them facing the neighbours. Employees from the district council are designated as members of their organisation through name plates on the table and introduce themselves to the neighbours saying their name and role.

Members of the organisation district council have not necessarily met prior to the information meeting which is primarily owed to the structure of the government in Hamburg. Regardless of whether or not members of the council know each other, they are employees of the same organisation and speak in the name of this organisation at information meetings. Prior to the meeting they agree upon who takes care of which part. At information meeting 1 this procedure even becomes visible to outsiders: before the meeting council members stand in a circle behind their tables with crossed arms. I am curious to know what they are talking about but the closed circle and the crossed arms make them appear unapproachable. When I eventually ask what they are doing one representative confirms that they are clarifying their roles and responsibilities for the evening, what to expect and how past evenings have developed.

Throughout the evening, council members use bureaucratic language when talking about the housing estate, which is also a means to negotiate their membership: those using bureaucratic language are members of the district council.

Self- structuring

Self-structuring as a process of “creating a membership boundary and determining its permeability” (Schoeneborn et al., 2014, p. 294) through communication “that allocates resources” (Kuhn, 2012, p. 558) and “producing a system of signs” (Robichaud & Taylor, 2013, p. 174) can be observed in various ways; here the Power Point presentation illustrates this communicative flow. Prepared by the office for migration and social affairs it includes facts and numbers on the general development of refugee migration as well as details on the housing project in question. Apart from the latter, the presentation remains the same across all neighbourhoods in Hamburg. Those who are in a position to present the slides are members of the council; members of the organisation neighbourhood would not be able to explain the slides. Giving an account of the situation by using a Power Point presentation thus sets up a boundary between the council and the neighbours. The presentation is shared amongst council members according to each member’s expertise (resources); i.e. the housing manager presents details on the development plan. Members of the council also use bureaucratic jargon as their system of signs; instead of saying “the (refugee) children attend school” they say “the children are being educated” (“werden beschult”).

Activity coordination

Members also discuss how to organise the question round; how many questions to take before answering and who answers what kind of questions. Although each member’s expertise guides this coordination process, the decision is not irrevocable. To illustrate, if the housing manager answers a housing related question a representative from another service can supplement the manager’s reply without violating any unwritten rules about respecting each other’s expertise.

Institutional positioning

This flow as communication with the environment through spokespersons is central for the council. At the information meeting, all representatives become spokespersons, regardless of their actual function within the organisation. When communicating with the organisation neighbourhood they are all representatives of the organisation council.

They refer to themselves as “us as the council” when speaking of themselves and also call upon other organisations to clarify their role within the ecology of administrative organisations. For example, when explaining why a housing estate is established within only months, council members say “the senate has reacted following a sharp increase of refugees arriving in Germany”. The council thereby emphasizes that they only have executive power; the decisions are taken by a different organisation. In the discussion it will become evident that this is not always understood by the neighbourhood.

Neighbourhood

Membership negotiation

The organisation neighbourhood’s members are recruited from a group of people living in a certain catchment area: those who live close to the planned housing estate are invited to attend the information meeting. In contrast to members of the district council, in the neighbourhood, there is no qualification process for members. Council members have to go through an interview process to be admitted to their organisation; neighbours however qualify based on their location. By attending the meeting the neighbours thus communicate that they accept their membership in the organisation neighbourhood. They also accept the conditions of their membership; i.e. the setting where the discussion and thus both organisations evolve, but also the form of the discussion as an information meeting where the organisation neighbourhood can voice concerns but can do little to change the items on the agenda.

Self-structuring

Not all members are against housing estates; the organisation neighbourhood is in fact split: members tend to reject, be indifferent towards or support the project. Whilst the neutral group remains in the background at information meetings, the other two

openly communicate their stance. The following example illustrates how neighbours establish their membership boundary and clarify its permeability (Schoeneborn et al., 2014): at meeting 2, a council member calls for a respectful and unbiased tone in the discussion to which a member from the neighbourhood replies that he finds it ridiculous to be called xenophobic (meeting notes, l. 102). His comment is followed by some applause from others. At the same meeting another neighbour asks what neighbours can do “to stop what the council is up to” (“gegen das, was Sie da als Stadt vor haben”, meeting notes, l. 105). His colloquial formulation is a contrast to the bureaucratic language of the council. It is a form of jargon and a means to distinguish between the neighbours themselves and the council.

On the side of the proponents, members repeatedly enquire about the kind of people who will move in (i.e. families, single parents) so they know what kind of help is needed. They write down their name and e-mail address as well as the resources they wish to offer and thus communicate that their boundary is more flexible than that of the opponents.

Activity coordination

Those members who are supportive of the housing estate offer help with paperwork, German classes or children’s activities. As mentioned above at the information meeting there is a list for people to sign up as volunteers. This is facilitated by a council member, usually the manager from the housing association. Whilst the activities that are offered depend on the resources available in the neighbourhood, interestingly the coordination and thus communication process related to this is guided externally by a member of the organisation district council. At neither meeting the volunteers object to this; they welcome the idea that the housing estate manager offers to coordinate their activities.

On the other end of the scale, the neighbours who flatly refuse the housing estate also coordinate their activities with external help. In the case of the Sophienterrasse neighbourhood, neighbours sought legal advice from a lawyer to put their case before a judge; they conferred all their activities with their lawyer.

Institutional positioning

As the discussion on activity coordination and self- structuring has shown, the organisation neighbourhood does not speak with a homogenous voice. At the information event, both supporters and opponents have speakers who make their view on the matter clear. Recalling McPhee's definition of this flow as "justifying the organisation's existence" against other organisations (Kuhn, 2012, p. 558), suing the council is thus a way to communicate the neighbourhood's right to exist in its current form. According to the district authority, neighbours have instituted legal proceedings at three out of six planned refugee housing estates (October 2014).

Refugees

Refugees are not physically present at information meetings but their existence is a subject of the discussion between the council and the neighbourhood. As an organisation, they do not emerge from their member's communication and thus cannot be presented using McPhee's Four Flows. However, they emerge from the conversation council and neighbourhood have about them and thus qualify as an organisation:

"When an actor can speak for absent or silent others (be they human or nonhuman) and translate what they are, say, and want, the reality he or she speaks for is turned into a "black box"—a taken- for-granted definition of reality" (Callon & Latour, 1981; Latour, 1986, 1987, 1996 in Robichaud et al., 2004, pp. 622)

Both the council and the neighbours consider themselves spokespersons for the refugees; however the reality of them as an organisation differs, which will be discussed further below. The example of the discussion about whether the refugees are potentially a source of nuisance at night (neighbourhood) or whether the organisation refugees shares the interest of the organisation neighbourhood to sleep at night (council) illustrates the different realities neighbours and council members create in their conversation.

The city of Hamburg as a meta-organisation

For this case study the city of Hamburg is considered as an organisation of which other organisations are members. In the context of the information meetings, the member organisations that are of interest are neighbourhood, council and refugees. This is not supposed to imply that other organisations do not exist. Schools, nurseries, businesses, doctors etc. are equally present in the meta-organisation city of Hamburg and they have been mentioned at the meetings. As the research question of this thesis

“How is the city of Hamburg constructed as an organisation by residents and the district council and what are the implications for managing public information meetings on public housing?” suggests, and as the empirical findings presented thus far have shown, the council and the neighbourhood construct the city of Hamburg (hereafter also “Hamburg”) differently. For some neighbours, there is no space for the organisation refugees. Together with the council (and other organisations such as schools) they make up the members of the meta-organisation Hamburg but reject the refugees. The council however suggests that refugees can be included in their community and wants the neighbourhood to accept this: “We want to create an attitude of acceptance” (meeting notes, l. 16).

In this context, the nature of the information meeting as a form of public participation is also important: participation as shaping the everyday- life in the neighbourhood ultimately means shaping the meta-organisation Hamburg. Considering that those neighbours who are willing to volunteer accept the council as a coordinator of their activities and the two organisations thus overlap, “activity coordination” presents an opportunity to shape the meta-organisation. This does not apply to those neighbours who are against the refugees; the difference between the neighbourhood and the council instead results in conflict. The problem of the conceptualisation of the meta-organisation will be discussed further in the following analysis.

Discussion and Analysis

This section examines the dispute that arises during information meetings. The aspects of the conflict that will be of interest are issues related to agency, boundaries and language.

Boundaries

Boundaries are a central issue to this case study. It is suggested that council and neighbourhood are members of the meta-organisation city of Hamburg. The subject of the debate is the admission of another organisation which requires member organisations to open the boundaries of the meta-organisation. Fulfilling this requirement cannot be taken for granted as new entrants change the system identity, organisations need to constantly balance the desire to maintain their system identity (and therefore: the boundary between them and their environment) and the need to reduce complexity by including parts of their environment in the organisation. Currently, neighbourhoods tend to prefer maintaining the status quo (Schreyögg and Sydow, 2010, p. 1254).

Comments made by the neighbourhood suggest that they are reluctant to open up and let refugees in. In practice, “letting in” means sharing facilities and services such as schools, nurseries and doctors. However, questions such as “will *they* be going to *our* doctors” (own emphasis) indicate the neighbourhood’s boundaries are firm: “a boundary is created, in its most basic form, as an us and a them” (Robichaud et al, 2004, p. 621). The question implies that there are patients who are authorised to visit local doctors. These patients would be “us”; neighbours already living in the neighbourhood. Refugees on the contrary (“them”) do not belong to “us”; they are not automatically authorised to see a doctor as they are outside the neighbourhood’s boundary. To neighbours, only those who have been admitted should be granted access to “their” facilities.

Neighbours repeatedly express that they fear lower standards at their facilities if they grant refugees access. In some cases they argue that standards are low already or that capacities are exhausted. This implies that resources are extremely meaningful to the neighbourhood; they would like the council to acknowledge this and to appreciate that admitting another organisation comes at a price for neighbours.

Recalling the CCO premise that boundaries constantly have to be re-negotiated, it could be argued that an information meeting provides an opportunity to negotiate boundaries in a constructive, flexible manner. However, as the findings indicate, this is not always achieved:

The council's membership negotiation where members stand behind their tables in a circle with crossed arms is a counterproductive way to start the meeting. They appear unapproachable and clearly communicate that they are closed off from the neighbourhood, thereby establishing even a visible boundary around their organisation.

"Letting in" also means being receptive to different texts, which presents a challenge at information meetings. This will be discussed in detail further below. The council uses bureaucratic and technical terms in their presentation but these are not understood by neighbours. As a consequence, the latter reinforce their boundary; in some cases even with external help from a lawyer. Schreyögg and Sydow argue that organisations are boundary- maintaining systems but "they have the option of adaptation (learning) or nonadaptation (nonlearning)" (2010, p. 1259). By seeking legal advice the organisation communicates that they consider their current boundaries to be at risk and that they rather opt for nonadaptation. However, as the authors point out, ideally both processes; adaption and nonadaptation are practised simultaneously. Once organisations reinforce their boundaries, being willing to learn, also from each other, becomes difficult, as a council leader expresses following the court case of the Sophienterrasse: "Once you meet in front of a judge, you don't talk outside the court anymore" (e-mail from council leader).

As explained in the introduction, refugees who arrive in Hamburg have been allocated to the city according to the Königstein quota. However, as the empirical findings suggest, neighbours believe the district council has made this decision ("what the council is up to"). This misconception of the council's powers indicates that council representatives have to make their role and the boundaries of their influence in the process more explicit.

As argued above, it is important to be aware of boundaries to be able to determine one's own reach. The objective of the information meeting according to the council is to "create an attitude of acceptance" (meeting 1, l. 16), suggesting that the council can enter the neighbourhood and plant an attitude within the organisation. This is not possible as the council's sphere of influence is limited by their organisational boundary. Beyond that, attitudes and meanings have to be negotiated with the

neighbourhood within the meta-organisation's framework. As indicated in the findings, communication related to activity coordination presents a good starting point as the organisations overlap in this flow: the fact that neighbours accept the council's proposal to create a list with names and e-mail addresses to be able set up a "round-table" indicates that they are willing to adopt this text and way of coordinating activities. The council also needs to be aware that membership in the organisation neighbourhood is not bound to a certain attitude towards refugees. Council members "subscribe" to their organisation's official attitude but neighbours are free to voice different opinions, even as they accept their membership in the organisation. Attending the meeting does not mean adopting the council's attitude.

Text and conversation

When the organisations neighbourhood and council clash at information meetings, this clashing can also be observed on a linguistic and textual level. First, the organisations use different languages. This is a root cause for misunderstandings. The bureaucratic language system the council holds in stock does not resonate with the neighbourhood's language system which does not draw upon bureaucracy. This illustrates what has been established in Luhmann's view on language: the code of the "subsystem administration" is not understood by the "subsystem ordinary citizen". An indicator for this is the number of recurrent questions raised by neighbours that have been answered before, for example concerning the nature of the housing estate. Prior to the information meeting the neighbourhood does not know much about the estate. There is a certain degree of uncertainty around it: what will the premises look like and what does life at the estate look like? Describing refugee housing as an "action under expedite procedure" does not make the concept more tangible and thus does not reduce uncertainty around it. Abstract terms such as "action under expedite procedure" are not understood by the neighbourhood and consequently, neighbours repeatedly enquire about the estate. Another example of this is the question of who will be working at the estate. To this the council replies "1 ½ technical service staff" (meeting notes, l. 121). The question suggests neighbours are interested in the people working at the estate but the council's reply is extremely abstract and technocratic.

According to the employee at the local authority, the council does not have a communication strategy for information meetings but they generally want to make an effort to avoid bureaucratic language. The question is thus why the council does not always implement this plan and holds on to abstract terminology.

As mentioned above, representatives from the council have not necessarily met prior to the meeting. They do not know the culture of each other's department and they do not know what language is used by their colleagues. They do however know that their colleagues are all familiar with bureaucratic language as the common language of public administration; it is therefore a pathway to speaking on behalf of the organisation council instead of as the representative from the housing association.

The council has invited the neighbourhood to a meeting where the former have to appear as the expert organisation that shares information and answers questions. Recalling the CCO premise that organisations emerge in communication, council members have to find a way to communicate in a manner which allows them to emerge as an organisation that is recognised as an authority by the neighbourhood. Using bureaucratic language is the key to this task. It is a tool for the council members to establish coherence amongst themselves and bureaucratic language allows them to compensate for the ephemeral nature of their organisation at the occasion of an information meeting. As the Montréal School (i.e. Koschmann, 2012) argues, the process of developing authoritative text normally requires several communication episodes of coorientation, abstraction, and reification. Over time, authoritative text, and thus an organisation, emerges. However, the council does not have the opportunity to go through this process and establish text that would be appropriate for the information meeting so instead, previously established authoritative text is used. This text however is not necessarily suitable for the requirements of the information meeting. In the conversation with the neighbourhood, bureaucratic text appears abstract and diffuse. As a result, although the council speaks with one voice, it does not reduce uncertainty or anxiety amongst neighbours. The latter do not draw on communication codified in bureaucratic format (Schoeneborn et al., 2014, p. 296) and therefore do not necessarily understand the council.

Not understanding each other diminishes the potential of the meeting as a form of public participation: for both organisations to design the everyday life in the community and therefore in the meta-organisation Hamburg, they would have to

conceive of their boundaries as the aforementioned permeable membrane. The boundaries would have to be open to other ideas. To achieve this, council and neighbourhood would have to author a common authoritative text about the meta-organisation city of Hamburg. Information meetings are a starting point for this as both council and neighbourhood draw their attention to a common subject: the organisation refugees. However, the meeting also illustrates that for successful communicative processes to unfold, the council cannot bring bureaucratic language to the table as it is an “inappropriate scheme for understanding [...] new entrants” and as such makes refugees appear as a threat (Schreyögg & Sydow, 2010, p. 1254). As a consequence, boundaries are reinforced and give way to further misunderstandings. The interpretation by a neighbour of the council’s call for respect in the discussion as an attempt to label the neighbours as racists is an example of this: the bureaucratic text the council has used during their presentation has been inappropriate for understanding why it is necessary to accommodate refugees (new entrants). The bureaucratic text and the council as its author are thus perceived as a threat to the organisation neighbourhood.

Agency

The theoretical framework on agency suggests that agency is the ability to bring about change. As described in the findings, the possibilities for the neighbourhood to reverse the decision to accommodate refugees in the area are limited to legal proceedings. At the information meeting itself, the neighbourhood cannot bring about change regarding the refugees’ arrival. Questions such as what the neighbourhood “can do to stop what the council is up to” or the passionate comment of the woman who stormed out of the room after expressing her fears, suggest the neighbourhood is aware of its weaker stance as an agent. Whilst this is owed to the nature of the set-up (i.e. authorities and residents), several factors at the meeting itself feed the perceived powerlessness of the neighbours.

As the council representative said, information meetings are supposed to be held in the area where the housing estate is planned and where the neighbours live. The council wishes to “actively approach the citizens” (meeting with representatives, l. 133). However, as mentioned above, the council sets up the meeting using a Power

Point screen, a computer and a microphone. These artefacts are nonhuman agents which “transcend time and space and allow the dislocation and consequently the perpetuation of [the organisation’s] existence” (Schoeneborn, 2011, p. 668). The council is therefore present and discernible as an organisation and appears as a strong agent who can call upon nonhuman agents to support its stance. The use of bureaucratic language supports this perpetuation, too. With regard to its aim to reach out to the neighbourhood, the council has to be aware that the neighbours do not have the same kind of nonhuman agents at their disposal. The “active approach” alone cannot even out this imbalance:

“Sites and activities constitute one another in and through practices. A practice, in turn, is a nexus of doings and sayings that unfolds in time and is dispersed in space and dependent on material arrangements (Shatzki, 1996). [...] A material place/space influences the resources available for interaction and, thus, conditions agency. Agency is not about determining the attributes of actors, but is instead about the constant (re)negotiation of possibilities, such that material and human agencies keep shaping one another in evolving space and time” (Ashcraft et al., 2009, p. 31).



Slide from council's Power Point presentation. Difficult to read, council's logo in top right corner: dislocation and perpetuation of the organisation

The imbalance also becomes evident with regard to authoritative text. As described above, council members use bureaucratic text to emerge as an organisation. In contrast, the neighbourhood does not have a previously established text that it can use in its communication at the information meeting. Consequently, not only does the neighbourhood not understand the council's text, it does not have textual agency of its own that would strengthen its stance.

In addition, as illustrated above, the neighbourhood is split; making organisational processes such as activity coordination and institutional positioning more difficult and thus weakening structures and practices within the organisation. In this sense, although both council and neighbours emerge as organisations at the information meeting, the council's communication episodes "successfully" scale up to organisational forms whereas the neighbourhood only partially achieves this. It can be argued that proponents of the housing estate are better at scaling up to organisational forms than opponents. However, this is largely owed to the fact that proponents agree to the terms of the council (i.e. having their activities coordinated by them).

The council's successful communication however is controversial. Recalling McPhee and Nicotera's proposition that "the whole point of communicating is to get across a meaning [...] that will be used by others in mediating their later acts and responses" (2009, p. 57), it becomes evident that the council does not entirely live up to this premise. Whilst it manages to take organisational forms in its communication and also has nonhuman agents at its disposal, in the context of the information meeting it fails to communicate in a meaningful way. "Getting meaning across" would for example imply negotiating with the neighbours a common term for the housing estate instead of using an abstract term neighbours do not understand.

Another issue related to agency occurs when a council member denies a neighbour's story about a sign that has disappeared. By contradicting what the neighbour has seen the council "denies the validity of the asserted facts of the situation with which [it] is confronted" (Robichaud et al., 2004, p. 627) and thereby undermines the neighbour's agency. This reinforces the neighbourhood's weaker stance at the meeting and will it to look for other ways to get recognised as an agent; i.e. by initiating legal proceedings.

The findings indicate that the neighbourhood is not entirely aware that the council does not decide how many refugees are to be accommodated in the respective areas. As explained in the introduction, this is done via a quota. The council's role is to find suitable accommodation for however many refugees Hamburg receives. Yet the neighbourhood believes that the decision is negotiable which is indicated by comments such as "how can we stop you (the council) from what you are up to". Also, when neighbours argue using the "not in my backyard" principle they seem to be under the impression that they can convince the council that it is a bad idea to accommodate refugees in their area. In this case, the strategy is to talk about the area in a negative manner i.e. by saying that it is not served by public transport, that it is noisy at night and that it is about to turn into a ghetto. Interestingly, neighbours in the Sophienterrasse area argue that the refugees will be overwhelmed by the obvious wealth in the neighbourhood: refugees will feel out of place and therefore will be enticed to steal (SpiegelTV, 27 April 2014).

In relation to this, the question of who can speak on behalf of the organisation refugees becomes relevant. Both the council and the respective neighbourhood claim to know what the refugees' wants and needs are and therefore both organisations consider themselves spokespersons for the refugees. The neighbours who oppose housing estates draw a negative image that suggests refugees are different from themselves and therefore cannot be socialised: they damage allotments, they are noisy, and they might be criminal. Admitting their organisation would result in an overall deterioration of the area. When a council member calls for a less biased tone in the discussion, she is immediately criticised by a neighbour who feels reprimanded by her.

The council holds that refugees can easily be socialised and are not that different from neighbours: they also want to sleep at night, they make their own food and their children go to school. However, as established above, the council describes this sameness using abstract terms: refugees occupy the estate, children are being educated and they need playtime activities. As a result, they do not manage to convince the neighbourhood of their "taken- for- granted definition of reality" (in Robichaud et al., 2004, p. 622).

The example shows that it is problematic when two agents attempt to talk on behalf of an absent third and cannot agree on a reality for them. Instead of becoming more

tangible, the absent third remains obscure. In this context, the neighbour who calls upon fellow neighbours to welcome refugees plays an important role. She accepts another organisation's reality. As the council points out, she can be a catalyst within the neighbourhood; however, individual goodwill ambassadors cannot take sole charge of convincing fellow members.

Recognising the potential of the new entrants could however be an empowering experience for the neighbours. A 2007 study on the impact of neighbourhood and school factors on immigrant children's academic performance in the US showed that immigrant children in fact look up to their adult neighbours (Pong & Hao, 2007). Rather than considering their own parents as role models, they aspire to become as successful as the local residents. The researchers found that conditions at school are even more important and that resourceful school environments help immigrant children succeed in their new environment

"Compared to natives' children, the school achievement of immigrants' children depends more on successful neighbourhood adults and less on immigrant parents' resources. It is possible, that immigrant children, eager to assimilate into American society, look to native-born neighbourhood adults for role models" (Pong & Hao, 2007, p. 235). Within the meta-organisation, currently neighbours are not aware of the crucial role they could play.

Having discussed agency for the organisations neighbourhood and council, the question that arises is whether refugees have agency. It has been argued that neighbours perceive themselves as powerless because they can do little to change the plan to accommodate refugees in their area. In their view, it is the council who is the decision-maker. However, as explained above, the council only executes the senate's decisions. The senate in turn acts within a legal framework. Senate and council have to fit however many refugees arrive into this framework. Yet, arguing that refugees are thus particularly powerful agents as they decide to flee their home country would not do their situation justice. From the outset their destiny lies in someone else's hands. Those who arrive via the Mediterranean Sea have to trust their smugglers. Once arrived and registered, they are moved according to the Königsteiner quota.

When a large group of refugees has to be accommodated in a residential area, they

trigger activities within and among the organisations neighbourhood and council. These activities would not have occurred without the refugees. However, at no point did the latter have the chance to assume authority as an organisation. Given the passive nature of their situation they cannot be considered powerful agents.

Conclusion, Recommendations for practice, outlook

Many of the issues that are raised at information meetings point to a feeling of fear and anxiety towards the unknown organisation. The neighbourhood fears that the refugees' entrance into the meta-organisation will have negative consequences for the area and services (organisations) such as schools and doctors. Council and neighbourhood need to understand that including the unknown organisation in the meta-organisation is in fact a means of reducing anxiety towards the unknown and making the environment more manageable (Ahrne & Brunsson, 2005, p. 447).

This however cannot be achieved by telling neighbours to accept refugees using abstract text which they do not understand. Both organisations should establish a common understanding of the organisation refugees which requires authoring a common text about them. Language is an important aspect in this process; the current bureaucratic language needs to be replaced. It reinforces boundaries and does not clarify who the new entrant is.

One way in which to achieve this would be to consider the information meeting as an opportunity to exchange - rather than just give - information. Instead of giving the neighbourhood information, council and neighbourhood should engage in a process of informing each other. The council needs to acknowledge what they are being told by neighbours and they must not deny the neighbourhood's personal experience; the council needs to "aligns itself with their interlocutors, and then add a supplement of context" (Robichaud et al., 2004, p. 629). As the executive power, the council should communicate what it is going to do about the situation as it is described to them.

Considering that the space the council can co-illustrate with the neighbours is the meta-organisation city of Hamburg, this is where the council should focus its attention. Neighbours repeatedly communicate that schools, nurseries, playgrounds, bus routes and other public services are important to them. If the neighbourhood realises that the

council acknowledges the neighbourhood's priorities by keeping these facilities at a high standard and by consulting them about the development of the area, neighbours are more likely to engage in processes of coorientation and the formulation of common text. The neighbours' interests and perspectives have to be accepted as legitimate in these processes (Koschmann et al., 2012, p. 340). They need to experience that they can also make demands such as reliable public transport and schools with enough capacity.

The council has to abandon the idea that an information meeting can produce immediate results; i.e. that an information meeting automatically triggers a positive attitude or understanding in the neighbourhood. Rather, continuous efforts in the community where council members and neighbours get to know each other as organisations (i.e. their structure and language) will eventually lead to better communication among them; that is, communication which resonates with the other organisation. For this, both organisations need to appreciate different viewpoints:

“increasing the flexibility of members' interests and identities will increase an authoritative text's potential for collective agency and its capacity to create value” (Koschmann et al., 2012, p. 342).

The council also needs to be aware of the effect of the role of nonhuman actors that might make neighbours feel inferior and thus reluctant to engage in developing the meta-organisation. Rather, the council should employ nonhuman actors as facilitators for communication processes at the information evening; not as means to get their information across. Instead of formulating the goal of the meeting to be “creating an attitude of acceptance amongst neighbours” which suggests the council can enter the organisation neighbourhood and shape it according to its ideas, the goal should respect the boundary of the neighbourhood and the limited sphere of influence of the council.

Individual members of the organisation neighbourhood cannot be responsible for convincing their fellow members to show support while the council passively hopes for this process to unfold. As suggested above, all organisations in the meta-organisation need to participate in integrating the new member-organisation refugees. One way in which the council could do this is by helping neighbours understand that including an organisation which is currently part of the environment is in fact a means of reducing

anxiety towards it. However, this cannot be achieved in one meeting but requires continuous efforts. To find a suitable strategy for this undertaking, the council should build upon the structures and characteristics of the organisation neighbourhood that already exist. At the meetings that have been considered they would include the willingness of some neighbours to coordinate their help with the council but also the neighbour's wish to meet the refugees as early as possible. These are promising starting points which provide the framework for the council's approach.

The US study on immigrant children supplements the previous recommendation to maintain high standards at local schools and other facilities. It also suggests that neighbours are far from passive receivers that have to accommodate decisions made on an abstract, political level. They can make a real difference. Helping neighbours grow aware of their important role could be another approach of the council's commitment in the community.

To summarise with regard to the research question "how is the city of Hamburg constructed as an organisation by residents and the district council and what are the implications for managing public information meetings on refugee housing?" it can be concluded that some residents consider the city of Hamburg a set, unchangeable meta-organisation where unknown entrants such as refugees are not desired. They draw an image of the organisation refugees that suggests the latter do not resemble themselves and therefore are a poor fit for the meta-organisation. On the contrary, the district council considers the city of Hamburg to have flexible boundaries. The council suggests neighbours and refugees are not that different and refugees are thus a suitable member organisation.

At information meetings, the council has to be aware of the different realities. An information meeting cannot be considered an opportunity to bring about change within either organisation; the actual area of action should be the meta-organisation.

Outlook

For this thesis, I have considered neighbours, council members and refugees as organisations in order to explain communicative processes at information meetings. These are rooted in the individual context of the respective neighbourhood. It was

however not possible for me to explore the respective context in detail within the scope of the thesis. An individual- based view, particularly of neighbours, would complement the organisational perspective of this project and it would more accurate explanation of processes. For this, questionnaires and focus groups would be suitable forms of research and the researcher would have to spend significantly more time in the field. One of the questions that remain unanswered is what neighbours expect from information meetings and what attitude they have towards it. Researching this question would also help them council to formulate a realistic goal for the evening.

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