The shift from stakeholder to communityholder for Territorial Social Responsibility: the contribution of UNICITY Laboratory and MADIT methodology

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Abstract. University of Padua's UNICITYLab arises as a hub for the study and co-design of policy interventions for the strategic development of Padua as a University City, responding to the need to understand the university-city interaction within the socio-economical system, along with the need to "know to govern" the complex processes in its urban organization. Besides to developing scientific knowledge, UNICITYLab aims to promote dialogue between the city and the university. Within this perspective, a line of research is dedicated to measure the degree of shared responsibility and social cohesion of the community in order to promote a shift in citizens from a profile of stakeholder to one of communityholder: citizens who participate as active resources within the community, acting as "dialogic node" accelerator of social cohesion. Within an often-conflictual interactive framework, but which can also find virtuous forms of encounter, collaboration and sharing of goals and common goods, a significant role is played by local businesses. These actors, as interlocutors targeting both the native population and students, can contribute to promoting the social cohesion of the community: in terms of Territorial Social Responsibility, they are not limited to pursue an exclusively economic purpose, but also of care and regeneration of the territory. Research's results show that it's useful to strengthen their role as community nodes, because, while they narrate themselves as social hubs, they lack operational pragmatism in exercising a role as active contributors to the social cohesion of the community.

Keywords: Social cohesion, Social responsibility, Local development.

1   Introduction

The present research was conducted in 2020 by the UNICITYLab of the University of Padua's "Giorgio Lago" Study Center. UNICITYLab was founded in 2018 with the aim of studying the relationships between the university and the city of Padua and the impact that these relationships have on urban health, sustainable development and community social cohesion. The Lab consists of several lines of research that study the processes of social, economic, environmental and urban regeneration development within the city of Padua.

The research presented here was conducted by a team of researchers from UNICITYLab working on measuring community cohesion and the shared responsibility exercised by all the main actors inhabiting the area: citizens, the

university community, shopkeepers, and the tertiary social sector. In fact, within some of Padua's neighbourhoods the relationship between university students and citizens is conflictual and fragments the community. Several sources of scientific literature [1-4] identify this phenomenon as "studentification", due to a strong housing influx of the university student population in the city's neighbourhoods. Some studies [5, 6] question the various critical implications that there may be in urban coexistence between students and residents, including conflicting social dynamics, increased anti-social behaviour, public drunkenness and unregulated nightlife, and general noise pollution [1, 4, 5, 7]. Therefore, in some cases the student population is perceived as a threat to the stability and cohesion of the neighbourhood and to the trust present in the community [8].

The contribution we propose here consists of an innovative theoretical-methodological framework to study, assess and measure the degree of social cohesion between resident and student population of a urban neighbourhood through an *ad hoc* built survey. UNICITYLab has therefore carried out an initial exploratory research through the application of the survey within the Portello district of the city of Padua, a neighbourhood inhabited by both Paduan residents and university students and home to several university facilities. Portello is a small district located northeast of the city centre, which initially was a commercial harbour and from the early 1900s onwards began to host multiple university facilities. As of today it is one of the city's main study hubs, with 19 sites (departments, lecture halls, offices), 14 study rooms, 10 libraries, 4 university residences, 2 canteens and 2 university museums [9]. Its administrative boundary[1] comprises a population of 7032 people (as of 2017) [10].

2   Theoretical and methodological framework

2.1   Theoretical assumptions

Within the above-mentioned UNICITYLab research line, we distinguish, on a theoretical level, two different citizen profiles: *stakeholder* and *communityholder* [11, 12].

The *stakeholder* citizen interacts in the community with the aim of mainly safeguarding their own personal interests; its interaction modalities therefore respond to questions such as "What do I want (to get)? What do I need?". In doing so, he/she tends to generate social fragmentation and fails to create a cohesive community.

The *communityholder* citizen, on the other hand, interacts within the community fabric by pursuing common and shared goals; its interaction modalities answer the question "What is needed (to be done, triggered, etc.) for the community in which I live in?". He/she generates and promotes social cohesion, orienting the community towards cohesion objectives. In detail, the term *communityholder* is defined as "the citizen (or associations of citizens) who bring his/her contribution and exercise his/her role in taking responsibility for 'bringing' to the community".

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[1] Which unifies the 'Santo' and 'Portello' districts.

Based on this definition, each inhabitant or territory agency is (and can be) conceptualised as a "dialogic node"[2], i.e. a potential contributor to the wellbeing and overall health of his/her community, when adopting interaction modalities oriented towards shared responsibility for the management of the territory's needs. Shared responsibility, in the theoretical assumptions used by UNICITYLab, is defined as "an interactive community arrangement in which each person (or aggregation of people) can build his/her own dialogic node in it and thus contribute to its development, towards the generation of social cohesion for the entire community to which he/she belongs".

2.2   Methodology

In order to study the aforementioned interactive community arrangements, and to measure the degree of social cohesion they express (and are capable of expressing), UNICITYLab adopted MADIT (Methodology for the Analysis of Computerised Text Data) [14, 15].

MADIT, methodology for the analysis of human interactions expressed through the use of Natural Language (the one commonly used in everyday life), has codified the interactive-discursive modalities used and usable by community members in specific "units": the Discursive Repertories (DRs). Each DR is assigned a different 'weight' (Dialogical Weight), representative of the *quantum* with which it contributes to generate a reality of social cohesion or fragmentation.

This weight is given not (only) by the type of content used by citizens, but rather by the particular way in which they attribute sense and value to the reality in which they live (made up of discourses, actions and interactions).

The DRs, collected in the Periodic and Semi-radial Table [15], are divided into three typologies:

- generative, orienting the interactive arrangement towards social cohesion by fostering shared discourses and ways of managing common needs;
- stabilisation, anchoring the interactive arrangement towards social fragmentation by constraining discourses and interactions within self-referred interests;
- hybrid, contributing to direct the interactive arrangement towards cohesion or fragmentation according to the other DRs with which they bond.

The Social Cohesion Thermometer. Starting from the theoretical-methodological assumptions outlined above, whereby social cohesion and shared responsibility are considered products of citizens' interactions within the community, UNICITYLab designed the Social Cohesion Thermometer tool. Through the Thermometer, it is possible to observe and rigorously measure to what extent the interactive-discursive modalities employed by citizens orient the community towards social cohesion and shared responsibility, or, on the opposite towards scenarios of social fragmentation and deresponsibility.

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[2] Territorial aggregations and interactive spaces, formal or informal in character, where interactions and dialogue between community members/roles are generated; the 'dialogic nodes' have the potential to make an effective contribution to increasing participation as a strategy for building community identity (and social cohesion) [13].

The tool, structured in the form of a questionnaire with 6 multiple-choice questions, investigates two macro-dimensions:

1. citizens' orientation towards common goals of community cohesion;
2. the level of active citizenship skills the citizens use to interact in the neighbourhood[3].

Each response option corresponds to one (or more) DR; their analysis allows us to obtain an overall social cohesion index on a scale of 1-20, where the minimum and maximum values represent the lowest and highest detectable degree of cohesion respectively. The numerical index resulting from the analysis of the questionnaires, therefore, offers a measure of the quantum of social cohesion that the community under investigation expresses, and a snapshot of the interactions that its citizens deploy.

3   Case study and Results

In 2020, a case study was conducted with the Social Cohesion Thermometer within the Portello university district of Padua, where university students and residents coexist on an everyday basis. The neighbourhood is composed of multiple university sites (departments, libraries, teaching hubs, study halls, offices, residences, dining halls). In addition, there are several businesses that cater primarily to university students (copy shops, bookstores, clubs, snack bars). The aim of the case study was to assess the degree of social cohesion of the Portello community through the instrument of the Social Cohesion Thermometer, administered to the three main actors in the district: 49 university students (mean age = 22.89), 26 residents of the neighbourhood (mean age = 52.40), and 25 shopkeepers (mean age = 47.52) who conduct their business within that urban area, for a total of 100 respondents. The questionnaire was administered in both paper and online forms. The first was administered to local traders, and delivered door-to-door by the research team. The latter was disseminated with the collaboration of local associations encountered during the preliminary study of the district, who shared it with their resident members.

The analyses conducted showed an overall degree of cohesion of 6.4 on a scale of 1-20. The resulting score is below the median value of 10. The instrument highlights two competences as strengths: *competence of using territorial services to manage critical situations* (60% of responses have the high cohesion value) and *competence of describing critical issues* (61% of responses have the high cohesion value). The critical aspect that lowers the overall degree of cohesion is the *exercise of the role of citizen*: this, in fact, is oriented to the satisfaction of personal interests that may conflict with those of other residents as they do not contemplate a shared goal for the community (54% of the answers have the low cohesion value).

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[3] The level of "citizenship skills" accounts for the exercise of the citizen's role as a responsible action towards his/her community of belonging in terms of social cohesion; that is, action that can anticipate what interactive arrangements a certain public initiative may generate for the community itself and the related degree of cohesion [13].

Table 1: percentage of answers divided by degree of cohesion and by skills analysed

		Answers with low cohesion value	Answers with medium cohesion value	Answers with high cohesion value	Total
Citizenship skills	Anticipation of the impact of actions on the community of the neighbourhood	19%	44%	37%	100%
	Use of local services	10%	30%	60%	100%
	Shared description of the critical aspects	18%	21%	61%	100%
	Shared management of critical issues in the neighbourhood	23%	28%	49%	100%
Citizen role exercise	Pursuit of common goals in the neighbourhood	26%	22%	52%	100%
	Role of active citizen	54%	13%	33%	100%

In 2021, the case study at the Portello district continued with a specific survey targeting neighbourhood businesses. In fact, the role of shopkeepers within the neighbourhood cohesion dynamics has been receiving increasing attention for several years [16]. Sixteen shopkeepers were interviewed (mean age = 40,57), of which half employees and half owners: 11 from food services (bars/restaurants/hot food/pizzerias/bakeries), 1 from bookstore, 2 from stationery stores, and 2 from tobacco shops. In this case we considered investigating the discursive configuration of the role of shopkeepers as a social actor within the neighbourhood through the use of an open-ended questionnaire. The textual data collected were analysed through MADIT. The research explored the interactive-discursive modalities used by the shopkeepers to configure: 1. their role as a commercial activity in relation to neighbourhood cohesion; 2. the contribution they offer as a commercial activity in the management of possible neighbourhood issues. Here we present the results of the first dimension analysed.

The results obtained show that the commercial activities interviewed qualify as dialogic nodes: social actors that can foster interactive arrangements of cohesion in the neighbourhood between the resident and student population. This contribution translates into being places of aggregation and socialisation, spaces for meeting and confrontation between inhabitants in which it is possible to make new acquaintances (cf. table 2 with the most frequently used contents by shopkeepers to describe their activity within the community in which they operate). The student population is

configured as the main customer and target by commercial activities, but not exclusive, as the residential component is also considered by respondents.

Table 2: percentage of main contents used by respondents to describe their role as a commercial activity within the neighbourhood

Content analysis	%
Role of commercial activity as a support and aid for students	20%
Role of commercial activity as a meeting place	20%
Role of activity as support for people	15%
Role of commercial activity as support for the elderly people	15%
Role of commercial activity as an opportunity for sociocultural integration	10%
Role of commercial activity as an information/guidance/referral hub for citizens	10%
Role of commercial activity as a 'custodian' of the territory	5%
Other	5%
Total	100%

This strong connotation of proximity service with socialisation of the neighbourhood is conveyed through totalising and mainly self-referential discursive modalities (50% of DRs are from the stabilisation typology) (cf. Fig. 1 for DRs). The overall Dialogical Weight measured is 0.4 out of 0.9. This data indicates a discursive configuration of the role of commercial activity based on poorly shared self-referential criteria that do not allow tracking how it can contribute pragmatically within the neighbourhood. Thus, while the interviewed shopkeepers describe themselves content-wise as part of the community, they do not use interactive-discursive modalities that can make this contribution factual and pragmatic within the neighbourhood. This result is in line with what was also highlighted with the Social Cohesion Thermometer in the previous year, which points out a critical aspect for the shopkeepers related to the scarce use of shared strategies for managing critical issues in the neighbourhood, and thus preventing them to fully operationalise their role as social actors in the local community.
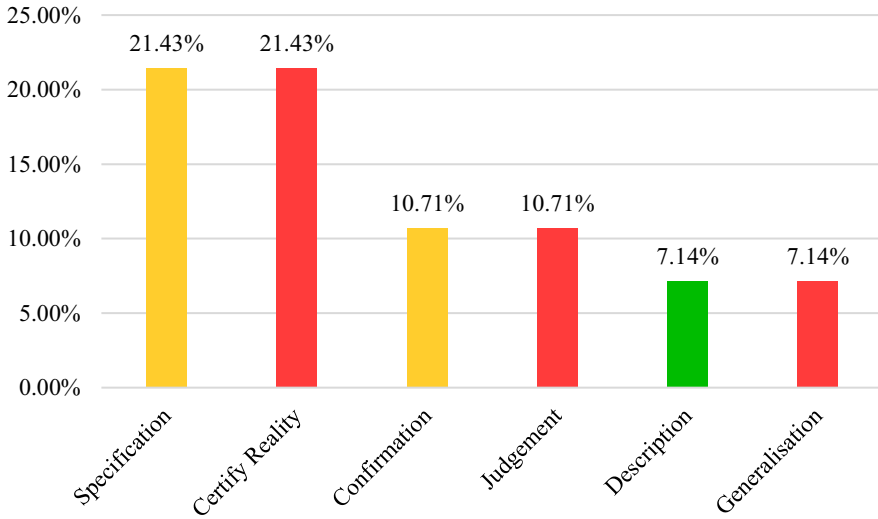
Fig. 1. Percentage of Discursive Repertories most used by respondents to configure their role as a commercial activity.

4   Conclusions

We have seen that the relationships within a community, and in particular the modalities by which its inhabitants interact with each other, can impact on urban health, sustainable development and more broadly on its social cohesion.

With our research, we have shown that each citizen - native, student, but also shopkeeper, public authority, etc. - can contribute in different ways to community cohesion and development, becoming its *dialogic node*. Promoting a system of relations/interactions in which all development actors (public and private) of a given territorial context operate as dialogic nodes in the direction of generating shared development objectives and strategies is the approach we define as *Territorial Social Responsibility*. Objectives and strategies are more effective when they increase social cohesion and at the same time make the territory more attractive and competitive.

MADIT and the Social Cohesion Thermometer tool make this possible. By placing their object of investigation and intervention on the use of natural language, they allow, first of all, to rigorously measure the interactive arrangement of a community, observing its criticalities and strengths. Moreover, starting from this measurement data, they enable to define what is the emerging need in the territory (or in its individual neighbourhoods) and to design purpose-built community initiatives and interventions - including Nature Based Solutions - anticipating their social impact. Lastly, they make it possible to assess the effectiveness of cohesion-promoting actions undertaken on the territory, based on data derived directly from the engagement of its inhabitants: comparing the interactive-discursive modalities used pre- and post-intervention to observe and measure their change.

Both MADIT and the social cohesion index have been applied (are still being applied) within a permanent observatory – named Hyperion – which monitors the degree of community social cohesion in the Veneto Region during emergencies through the analysis of social post and newspaper articles. In particular, the investigations conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic showed similar results to the one presented before: a frequent use of stabilisation discursive modalities, personal criteria and self-referred objectives, which reduced the degree of social cohesion for the effective pursue of the aim of reducing the spread of the virus [17].

With the results presented, we have shown some of these application possibilities of the proposed methodology; possibilities that are transversal to any other territorial and social context since natural language is what unites us as a human species - it is distinct and subsumes idiomatic differences. Having codified the usage modalities of natural language, MADIT can therefore be used anywhere to promote the shift from stakeholder to communityholder and Territorial Social Responsibility.

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