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"New Directions in the Study of Elites: Part II:  
The Collectivity Structure of Community Influence."

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The Collectivity Structure of Community Influence

One of the obvious limitations of the preceding analysis is its focus on individual elite members and their social positions to the virtual exclusion of the involvement of collectivities in the community decision-making process except by inference. One cannot help but wonder what the impact of departure or death of specific elite members would have on the overall structure of the community influence system. Individuals would seem at first glance to be very slender reeds upon which to build the edifice of the community decision-making system. Of course once individuals are treated as agents for community-active groups and collectivities, greater confidence in the relative stability of the influence system is possible by appealing to the fact that most collectivities usually have more or less routine procedures to replace leadership positions that become vacated. We hasten to add, however, that individuals do, of course, make a difference in that they vary in their relative efficacy in performing leadership and representative roles for their respective collectivities. We are persuaded, however, that although great men (cf. Hook, 1943) do occasionally arise and have profound impacts on social systems, we can assume that the more normal state of affairs is for rather ordinary men to be performing such roles with satisfactory competence (cf. March and Simon, 1958) and that they usually may be replaced without necessitating a fundamental reorganization of the influence structure. We should now like to turn to a more direct analysis of the group influence structure in Altneustadt.

In addition to asking about influential individuals in Altneustadt, we asked our respondent-informants to indicate the organized collectivities and less structured population categories that actively participated in the resolution of the five community issues. These collectivities were spontaneously named, that is, without the assistance of any list of groups. Subsequent to the set of questions on the issues, we presented the respondents with a comprehensive listing of 98 organizations and groupings from which they were to indicate those which were "generally very influential" in Altneustadt.<sup>17</sup> We were quite successful in achieving complete coverage of identifiable organizations and groups in the community as only twelve organizations were spontaneously mentioned in the questions about the issues that were not included in our group list, and none of these received more than a few mentions.

High status or elite members of a community have been consistently found to have much higher rates of participation in a broad range of voluntary associations than those of average or lower status members of the community (cf. Cutler, 1972). The Altneustadt elite is no exception to this generalization. Even using the crude indicator of number of memberships in formally constituted voluntary associations, the Altneustadt elite has an average of 6.80 memberships in contrast to the general community's average of 0.89. Indeed the most influential member of the elite reported membership in no less than 16 organizations, and these did not include memberships in more informally defined

groupings. We are interested in characterizing the patterning of overlapping memberships of elite members in collectivities ranging from the most formally constituted and organized to the clearly identifiable, but informally organized groupings. Only those groups will be included in the organizational analysis below that were explicitly identified by at least one elite member as being influential in community affairs.

Our strategy for describing the underlying structure among collectivities is again to apply a graph theoretic analysis in which the collectivities are defined as points and the link (line) between collectivities (points) is the presence of an elite person who is active in both collectivities. An active member of a collectivity was either an executive officer or member of the organization's executive committee, or was someone who defined himself as active in that organization's affairs.<sup>18</sup> Seventy collectivities met our initial requirement that they be regarded by at least one elite member as influential in community affairs. On the basis of the reachability matrix, however, five organizations had to be dropped as being isolates (that is, not reachable from any other organization). Once these five organizations were dropped, the remaining 65 organizations were all mutually reachable in four steps or less (i.e., path distances of 4 or less).

This symmetric matrix of path distances among organizations was then submitted to a smallest space analysis (Roskam and Lingoes, 1970). An acceptable smallest space solution was achieved in two dimensions (Kruskal's stress = .141; Guttman-Lingoes' coefficient of alienation =

.171) and is portrayed in Figure 11. We can make sense of the underlying structure of the picture by applying our two principles of

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Insert Figure 11 about here  
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interpretation discussed before: (1) the principle of sectoral differentiation and (2) the principle of integrative centrality. It is readily apparent that collectivities of the same functional type tend to share common regions of the space. Economic organizations fall almost exclusively on the righthand side of the picture and may be further subdivided into two wedge-shaped sectors including (1) small retail and artisan businesses and their associations and (2) the larger manufacturing concern (e.g., Gissler and Pass and the sugar-beet processing plant), their industrial association, and the largest employer in Altneustadt, the natural science research installation (KFA). Proceeding clockwise around the space, we encounter a region including predominantly sport clubs and other social voluntary associations, their relative proximities to economic organizations versus other kinds of collectivities being "determined" by their differential recruitment from various parts of the social space. Rürblümchen, for example, is a carnival society located in the region of small businessmen and artisans from whom it primarily recruits its membership, while the Lion's Club and the St. Sebastian and St. Anthony Crossbow Society are high status, socially exclusive clubs relatively close to "socially

respected Altneustadt families." On the lefthand side of the space are the various pattern-maintenance organizations including educational and religious organizations and personnel, which are in turn somewhat segregated from one another into differentiable regions. We close the circle with various civil administrative units concerned with implementing community goals. Finally, the central core of the space primarily includes collectivities especially concerned with integrative functions, such as the various factions of the city and county councils and the executive committees of the three political parties.

The principle of integrative centrality asserts that organizations most concerned with integrative functions should be located toward the center of the space, while the farther away collectivities are from the center, the more narrowly functionally specialized and less concerned they are with community-level integrative issues except to the extent that they pertain to their functional activities. We were able to evaluate the relative influence status of our 65 organizations by employing a procedure essentially comparable to that employed for ranking our individual elite members. Respondents were asked to rank order the top five groups of those they identified as generally very influential in Altneustadt. The summed influence scores<sup>19</sup> had a product-moment correlation of .416 ( $p < .01$ ) with distance from the centroid of the two-dimensional solution, giving some corroboration of our principle of integrative centrality.

We are now in a position to examine the cleavage structure among the collectivities for the five community issues discussed above.

Figure 12 portrays the same solution as in Figure 11, but we have now

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Insert Figure 12 about here  
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indicated the "fault lines" for the various community issues. The identification of proponent and opponent collectivities was made on the basis of their reputed positions spontaneously reported by our elite respondents in the issue series of questions toward the beginning of their interviews. Again we see that the fault lines are located in different parts of the space as a function of the type of issues being examined. The fault lines for the two pattern-maintenance issues, the secular school and the pop music festival, are roughly coincident, dividing the pattern-maintenance oriented collectivities into two opposing factions. The issues of industrial resettlement divides the more inclusive economic region into two parts, with large economic enterprises and employers being opposed to the location of a large manufacturer of electrical equipment in Altneustadt while small businessmen and commercial interests being generally in favor of the move. The incorporation of outlying towns and land area into greater Altneustadt is opposed by agricultural interests located in the outlying region while all city-oriented collectivities, regardless of their oppositional statuses on other issues, are unanimously in favor of extending city control to these areas. Finally the building of a new city hall; the goal-attainment issue, divides the integrative center in half, split



precisely along the lines of the political party cleavage between the CDU and the SPD.

It is worth noting at this juncture that, as in Figures 8-10 which portray the cleavage structures among individual elite members, collectivities which are opposed to one another on a given issue tend to be located relatively close to the fault line for that issue. Groups (and individuals in the previously mentioned spaces) located at some distance from the fault lines were typically not reported by our elite respondents to have been especially active on the issues in question. We might hypothesize, however, that individuals and groups falling on the "for" or "against" side but not actively involved in the resolution of the issue would at least share similar views on the issues to those of the activated individuals and groups. At least for the individual members of the elite, we can test this speculation since we asked them to report their own position on each of the five issues, regardless of their active participation in the resolution of the issue. An inspection of their distribution in the space (excluding the active participants) generally supports this speculation.

## References

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### Footnotes

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To facilitate the use of the list, we divided the collectivities into three broad divisions including (1) named economic organizations (e.g., specific firms such as Gissler and Pass Box Manufacturer and Düsseldorf Mustard Co.) and occupational groups like artisans and large farmers, (2) political, administrative, religious, and educational organizations such as the Engineering School and the Catholic Pastors' Community Council, and other organized social groups; such as Catholics, retired people, the Tennis Club Blue-White, and the carnival societies.

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Note that we are excluding from consideration those numerous elite memberships that are merely passive in character (e.g., rank-and-file status in the organization). Of course, there are a number of other ways by which the interpenetration of or linkages among organizations and collectivities could be described--ranging from determining relative rates of overlapping memberships of rank-and-file members from a large cross-section survey of the community or the determination of the overlapping organizational memberships of the entire executive boards of every organization under consideration to monetary transactions among organizations or rates of formal correspondence among them. Each strategy would generate proximity measures that would yield somewhat different configurations of organizations since these measures reflect somewhat different social processes. Moreover, each would encounter different strengths and weaknesses in operationalization. Our strategy was selected primarily on the pragmatic grounds that the data were

already available. But it was also strongly recommended on the grounds that having active membership in two organizations is in a peculiarly effective position to serve, minimally, as a communication channel between the two organizations and might even serve in a coordinative capacity as well (cf. Perrucci and Pilisuk, 1970).

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The summed influence score for each organization or collectivity was determined by multiplying the number of first-rank votes by "4", second rank votes by "3", third-rank votes by "2", and simple mentions by "1", and summing the resulting products. There was wide-spread agreement on the crucial importance of the group of CDU city council members as being the most influential collectivity in community affairs.

We can again attempt at least one way to validate these influence ratings of collectivities by predicting the outcomes of the five issues from knowledge of the collectivities' relative influence statuses. Following the same procedure employed above relating to elite members' influence (pp. 11-12), we multiplied the number of times a given collectivity was mentioned as being on one or the other side of an issue by its influence rank, summed the resulting numbers for each side, and divided by the total number of mentions on the respective sides. This number can be regarded as the average influence status of proponent or opponent collectivities--the lower the number, the higher the average influence status. Four of the five issue outcomes were correctly predicted with this procedure ( $p = .188$ ) (see Table 3).

Even the error in prediction arose due to the rather special circumstances surrounding this issue. All the informants who named an opposition group on the city hall issue mentioned only one or two collectivities, either the SPD members of the City Council or the SPD City Committee (the executive committee of the party). No other community organization or population group were seen to oppose building the city hall. On the other hand, these informants named many more community organizations as active sponsors of the new hall in addition to the dominant CDU faction on the City Council (the most influential group of all 65 collectivities), which had the final responsibility for deciding the issue. Thus, the average influence rank for the winning side was depressed by the inclusion of these various groups on the support side. If we had used an influence scale that took into account the relative distances between ranks, this anomalous result would probably not have occurred.

Table 3. The average influence status of proponent and opponent collectivities on five community issues, with their winning sides indicated by asterisks.

Issue	Proponent Collectivities' Average influence status	Opponent Collectivities' Average influence status
Adaptive issue primacy Industrial resettlement	16.1*	18.4
Goal-attainment issue primacy Construction of a new city hall (error in prediction)	11.9*	5.8
Integrative issue primacy Community annexation	17.4*	42.5
Pattern-maintenance issue primacy Secular vs. confessional school	12.8*	14.7
Permission to hold pop music festival	21.7	14.0*