Chapter 9
Educational Research on Community Building Practices: From Evaluation to Witnessing

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Introduction

In this chapter, we focus on educational research of community building practices. Community building practices entail a wide range of organised practices that address the issue of living together with differences in more or less direct way. Examples are community arts (Clover 2006), neighbourhood programmes (Millar and Kilpatrick 2005), dialogue groups (Rossing and Glowacki-Dudka 2001), community walks (Biesta and Cowell 2012), civic participation (Harinen 2006) or activities of social movements (Pink 2008). During our study of educational research literature on such practices, we discovered that educational researchers propose different answers to the challenge of living together with differences and thereby use different definitions of community. These definitions of community have an influence on the expectations, role and outcomes of educational research. In this chapter we question some of the definitions of community, and we develop a new understanding of educational research on community building practices addressing the issue of living together with differences.

The necessity for a new understanding of educational research on community building practices comes from our own attempt to research a concrete practice in Brussels: the Zinneke Parade. Zinneke Parade is a biannual artistic parade, built by voluntary participants and artist in about 20 groups (Zinneke vzw 2011). Each of those groups is composed of participants from different backgrounds. One group, for example, counted children from a day-care centre, adults from a French-speaking cultural centre, migrants participating in a literacy course and EU civil servants recruited at the EU institutions in Brussels. Another group counted youngsters from a youth house, people in poverty recruited in a social restaurant and asylum seekers

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living in a federal state centre for asylum seekers. The groups do not only parade together, they prepare the parade in all its aspects in numerous workshops guided by artists. Participants work together to build wagons, to design and fabricate costumes, to decide on storylines and dances and to rehearse movements and scenes.

In this chapter we present our search for a concept of educational research for investigating Zinneke Parade. Our text is organised in five parts. In the first part, we discuss educational research that understands the issue of living with differences as a challenge to (re)build community. Educational research in this line is conceptualised as the search for effective practices, that is, practices that effectively deal with differences by producing a common way of living together defined as a good community. In the subsequent part we give a number of critiques to the idea that educational research can be conceptualised as an evaluation of what works to build a good community. In the third part we then redefine educational research on practices like Zinneke Parade as a form of witnessing in which the experience of community is put at stake. The approaches of community we explore in this part are not focussing on solving differences within society, but present community as an experience of togetherness and difference at the same time. We connect this rethinking of community in the subsequent part with an existential-ethical research tradition in the field of education and give an example of how we observed the preparations of the Zinneke Parade. In the last part of the text, we will argue that this kind of educational research has to do with a concern for a democratic understanding of citizenship and develops an educational understanding of community building.

Building a Good Community

Educational research on community building practices is often conceptualised as the search for practices that effectively produce a good way of living together, defined as a good community. The concern for building a good community seems to be valid in a time where we are confronted with difficulties between social and cultural groups, and is in line with policy concerns to find answers for concrete problems, like safety or segregation. We found two important traditions (sometimes conflated) in educational research that studies practices as means to build a good community: the social cohesion traditions and the critical tradition. The differences between these traditions result from a different definition of what a good community means. Building a social cohesive society is nowadays the dominant tradition. This tradition aims to realise a community that is closely integrated, that is productive and that has no internal conflicts. Kearns and Forrest (2000, p. 996) claim that the kernel of this concept of community is 'that a cohesive society 'hangs together'; all the component parts somehow fit in and contribute to society's collective project and well-being; and conflict between societal goals and groups, and disruptive behaviours, are largely absent or minimal'.

Community building in this tradition is seen as an investment in a particular kind of social relations, where all, no matter how different, share the same basic values

and seek to agree on future projects. Relations should be mutual and supportive, and individuals should identify with and be responsible for their community. The investment in social relations is expected to yield future revenues. Jenson and Saint-Martin (2003, p. 83, emph. in original) argue: 'In this discourse, it is acceptable for the state to spend generously when, and only when, it is behaving like a good business would, seeking to increase the promise of *future* profits'. The kind of future revenues social cohesion promises seems now more and more related to economic objectives. According to Jenson and Saint-Martin (2003), a loss of social cohesion is nowadays considered dangerous for economic competiveness. One consequence is that investments in social cohesion must pay off. Investments, for example, in social and cultural organisations that are instructed to promote community, must be used effectively, and the goal to be reached is clear from the outset.

An example of empirical research of community building practices in line with this tradition is offered by Millar and Kilpatrick (2005), who investigate a children's activities programme, a study programme in literacy and life skills and computer classes for single parents. What matters in the positive evaluation of the projects is that communities develop the skills to be responsible for their own outcomes, that people have the capacity to compete and are willing to identify with their communities. Identification with others hangs together with the willingness to develop and use capacities for the benefit of the community in a competitive world. Millar and Kilpatrick (2005) show a strong concern for facilitating re-engagement with learning. Learning is thereby seen as an individual acquisition process of knowledge, skills and attitudes to be competitive. Individuals have their own deficiencies or learning needs and their own learning trajectories. Learning does however not only bring individual benefits, but is deemed useful for the wider community, or as Hodgson (2009, p. 69) concludes: 'Investment in learning not only contributes to self-actualization but at the same time delivers competencies that enable people to operate in their labour environment and in society as a whole'.

In opposition to the dominant social cohesion tradition, there are researchers who work from a critical perspective and who define community as empowerment from oppressive social structures, social divisions and inequalities in the name of justice and freedom (Biesta 2010). Community, in this tradition, is appealed to as means of resistance and critique against oppressive structures, which are nowadays often linked to the worldwide impact of neoliberalism and economic globalisation (Clover 2006). The concern of community building, here, is thus not individual adaptation, but 'working for social justice through empowering disadvantaged, excluded and oppressed communities to take more control over the conditions of their lives' (Butcher et al. 2007, p. 17). Community building practices have to develop spaces of resistance and critique in which people empower themselves and develop their own vision about a more desirable world. Community building implies that people express their view and experiences and realise changes in their circumstances. This implies that community workers identify with oppressed groups and not with the dominant power structures (Rose 1997).

An example of empirical research in line with the critical tradition is a study of group dialogues by Rossing and Glowacki-Dudka (2001). They start from an approach

of dialogue as space for community building: 'the view of dialogue as a means of empowering groups that feel oppressed or marginalized by the dominant society to take social action to change conditions that constrain them' (Rossing and Glowacki-Dudka 2001, p. 741). The space opened by the dialogue form is a space for persons with different backgrounds to meet and share stories. The listening and narrating bring forth new insights about the condition of the community. Rossing and Glowacki-Dudka (2001, p. 739) conclude that community building in dialogue groups contributes to a just community that does not silence marginal voices and enhances solidarity against oppression: 'Findings from a small-scale evaluation of a three-year series of dialogues seem to lend support to theoretical suppositions. (…) Listening to stories of others does yield new insights and a sense of human connection or community'.

Despite their different definition of the good community, the social cohesion and the critical tradition both value learning as means to produce community. While learning is an individual acquisition process to overcome deficiencies in the social cohesion tradition, learning is often seen as a communal process in the critical tradition (Biesta 2005). Community is necessary for empowerment in this tradition, which entails that community is seen as a means to an end. Fendler (2006), who analysed US literature, argues that also in this tradition 'target groups' are defined as lacking community and as deficient by researchers. Despite the explicit purpose of empowerment, this tradition also starts from defining target groups as deficient. Fendler (2006, p. 313) argues that 'some groups are positioned as deficient and in need of remediation, and other groups are seen as normal and acceptable as is', which is 'an example of deficit-model thinking in which those who are excluded from the community are regarded as lacking, in need of assistance, or deserving of support from those more fortunate'. Both traditions, despite their different definition of the good community, define those who lack community as deficient and as excluded. This hangs together with a particular conception of educational research.

Research as Evaluation

In both traditions, the cohesive and the critical, the use of a normative definition of the good community leads to a conception of educational research as evaluation of effectiveness. Two previous studies on Zinneke Parade follow this logic. Christiaen (2001) researched the parade and its preparation in the year 2000. She conceives her research as an 'evaluation of the social impact of the Zinneke Parade' (Christiaen 2001, p. 32, own translation). Social impact is described in the language of the critical tradition in this study: as bringing people closer together, as sociocultural emancipation and participation of citizens and as fight against social exclusions and poverty. Christiaen (2001) uses a combination of research methods in her explorative study: in-depth interviews, telephone questionnaire, media coverage, observation and video recording. The aim of these methods is to find out what the effects of the parade and its preparations are. These effects are studied on the level of

individuals, organisations and groups, on the short and long term and on the social and cultural level. Christiaen (2001) concludes that Zinneke Parade has a positive social impact on participants, participating organisations and spectators and mentions a number of challenges for the long-term success of the project, like the lack of continuity or the unclear role of artists.

Evaluative questions of the same type are asked by Costanzo (2012) in an ongoing PhD research on the 2010 parade. In his study, Costanzo (2012) aims to know how being part of a cultural initiative like Zinneke Parade might 'impact the integration of immigrants and foster broader community cohesion'. More in detail, Zinneke Parade is expected to foster 'a sense of belonging, a changed/emerging/new identity (or identities), or provide for social or economic benefits among its participants' (Costanzo 2012). This research used a short questionnaire for spectators, participants and organisers during the parade, a detailed follow-up questionnaire and in-depth interviews with numerous stakeholders. It is clear that this research aims to evaluate whether Zinneke Parade contributes to the building of a particular definition of community. This research uses the language of the social cohesion tradition in which people must belong to the community, must identify with the community and in which community gives social and economic benefits.

This way of doing educational research of community building practices – research as evaluation of what works to build a good community – is often appreciated by policy makers and practitioners who aim to find solutions for concrete problems in their neighbourhood or city. It is however based on two assumptions that are increasingly challenged in theoretical debates: the assumption that researchers know what the good community is and the assumption that practices are an instrument to build such a community through learning. Young (1986) has written an influential critique on the assumptions and implications of the ideal of community. Her critique addresses researchers from the critical tradition who appeal to community as alternative for oppression and exploitation. Young (1986, p. 3) claims that the ideal of community represents an ideal of living together as a whole or unity. This always depends on a distinction of what is included, good and shared from what is excluded, not desired and separated: 'Any definition or category creates an inside/outside distinction, and the logic of identity seeks to keep those borders firmly drawn'. The ideal of community denies differences, because it is assumed that we all understand each other and can belong to the same social wholeness. This is however no longer the case, as we live with the presence of so many differences (Bauman 2001).

Another critique on the assumption that researchers can know what the good community is comes from Esposito (2010). According to Esposito (2010, p. 2), community is reduced to a kind of object when it is postulated as a normative ideal: 'The truth is that these conceptions are united by the ignored assumption that community is "a property" belonging to the subjects that join them together: an attribute, a definition, a predicate that qualifies them as belonging to the same totality, or as a "substance" produced by their union'. For Esposito (2010), community is something we cannot know in advance, know as an abstract ideal. When we reduce community to a property within one or other philosophical or political discourse, we

actually distort what we try to name. Esposito (2010) argues that nothing is more urgent than rethinking community. All kinds of normative definitions and programmatic notions stay within the framework of classical notions, as they keep thinking community as a vast entity that we can lose or recreate.

The second assumption is that practices should build a good community through learning. It is assumed that certain practices will lead to certain desired outcomes, which means that practices are seen as interventions or treatments for a malfunctioning community in which the problems and outcomes are already clear (Biesta 2007). In the social cohesion tradition, individuals should learn the knowledge, skills and attitudes to be a good citizen. The learning that is involved in the formation of citizens can be understood as socialisation into a well-defined position in the community. It is clear what it means to be a good citizen and individuals need to adapt to fit in. In the critical tradition, individuals need interventions form the outside to be emancipated and to overcome their oppression. The analysis of what oppressive structures are and the interventions and outcomes that are based on this analysis can be defined in a closed and definite sense. This ultimately also entails socialisation or adaptation to a known ideal and rational community (Ellsworth 1989).

The learning that is involved in both traditions has to do with 'the many ways in which, through education, we become members of and part of particular social, cultural and political "orders"' (Biesta 2009a). Socialisation has to do with inserting individuals into already known positions in the community, and this does not respect differences between people and varied possibilities to deal with the issue of living together. Biesta (2011) relates socialisation to communities of sameness. This stands in contrast with communities of difference and a democratic understanding of citizenship and civic learning. A democratic understanding of citizenship and civic learning is based on the presence of difference and allows citizens to appear in positions that are not already known in advance. Our question is how we can conceive educational research of community building practices in which we can bring forward this democratic understanding of citizenship and thereby be stimulated to rethink community as focus of educational research.

During our first exploration of Zinneke Parade, we felt that the outcomes of the project were not already clear from the start. Of course, there were concrete goals in the request for subsidies, like improving encounter, social contacts and personal growth. These goals were however very general and did not offer much insight on the concrete ways in which people relate. We noticed that the workshops and rehearsals in which people with different backgrounds started to work together were quite experimental. The learning that would take place by mixing social and cultural groups and by working towards a parade performance was, to a large extent, unforeseeable (Ruitenberg 2010). It was not already clear what kind of community would take shape during the project. We thus needed to develop a conception of educational research on community building practices that would be able to put the definition of community itself at stake and that would be able to address the question what it means today, in this concrete practice, to be in community and to deal with differences. In the next parts of the text we develop such a conception of educational research, starting from a different approach of the notion community.

Putting Community at Stake

During our exploration of educational research literature on community building, we found inspiring references to the work of post-structural philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy (Rose 1997; Brent 2004; Panelli and Welch 2005). Nancy (1991, 2003) indeed starts from a critique of the idea that we can know what a good community is and that we can build community through interventions or work. Taking a normative stance on community and then working towards it is no longer possible, nor desirable for Nancy (1991). It is no longer possible because of globalisation, which unsettles stable communities, and it is no longer desirable because it has become clear that modelling humans according to a plan is a form of oppression. Community as unity and as producible has been torn apart over the last century (Nancy 2003). It has become clear that community realising itself as work always leads towards exclusions and injustice. This does not only hold for extreme versions of totalitarianism, it is also true for democratic regimes. Even when democratic regimes try to produce an ideal community, defined as social cohesion or empowerment, this is a form of oppression.

This does not at all imply we have to stop thinking about what community or togetherness means. For Nancy (1991, 2003) it has become clear that community must be rethought, not as property, not as essence that can be known and built. Community must be rethought as our condition of existence. Nancy thinks community as our condition: the fact that we exist with each other and that this existence with others is without ground. Community or being with others is experienced before and beyond any idea and any project. It is not something we know like a concept or theory. Community is what happens to us when we are close to but different from others. It is an experience that is always coming from the outside. It is an experience that leaves its mark on us, that matters without becoming a clear foundation. The reason why Nancy keeps thinking community, instead of abandoning the notion altogether, is that we always exist with others and that this existence with others makes an appeal on us. It concerns us without being an object of knowledge. Community is not a choice, it is our condition of existence that cannot be built or defined, but permeates us in all our actions and situations.

The rethinking of community as a longing rather than a belonging (Brent 2004), and as an experience rather than an object of knowledge (Panelli and Welch 2005), seems promising for community building research. When community is something that always happens and that is in the first place an experience, research on community building practices is actually research about what it means to be in community today. EU expats, local inhabitants and migrants from a literacy course brought together to prepare a parade in Brussels have to establish ways of dealing with each other in these concrete activities. The experience of community happens time and again in concrete practices like Zinneke Parade. Research about what it means to be in community and to deal with differences needs to pay attention to what happens in concrete practices, and this is not an evaluation based on normative definitions of community. Some of the writings of Nancy (2002) can

give an idea of how educational research that does not start from an already known definition of community may look like.

Devisch (2002, p. 385) argues that Nancy's work is 'a witnessing of the world 'as such': that is to say, the world here and now in which we are living in common'. What Nancy does in a number of his works is giving enumerations and descriptions of concrete things in such a way that they challenge our thinking of community. Nancy looks at concrete scenes of togetherness in such a way that they have authority, that they inspire us to think about community in a different way (Devisch 2002). The next fragment is an example of Nancy's witnessing of Los Angeles. Nancy (2002, pp. 72–73, our translation) enumerates a number of concrete scenes in such a way that it expresses our condition of community taking place in the city.

> Whether she wants it or not, the city mingles and mixes everything, while she divides and dissolves at the same time. You associate with each other, you hit each other, you touch each other, you lose sight of each other: all that in one course of action. We stand close to each other, shoulder to shoulder, in the subway or on the escalator, bumper to bumper, an even live at night window to window on both sides of the street. (…) It is about closeness: that is not a bond or a connection, but a whole room placed next to each other, exchanges sketched only in faint outlines. Friction and rubbing, light or rough, on the sill or on the street, in the cinema or on the tram. Our fellow is close without being near, far away but within reach or earshot. Between us an exchange of weak flickering signals takes place, an imperceptible and accidental correspondence.

What happens in this fragment is not judging whether the city of Los Angeles brings forth a good community. What happens is a 'witnessing' of the city (Devisch 2002) and a speaking of the city in such a way that it does not lead to new exclusionary definitions, but has relevance for our thinking of togetherness in the city. This is described by Devisch (2002, p. 391) as 'ontological affirmation of the evident, the quotidian, and the praxis of our existence'. Nancy describes the most ordinary and evident aspects of city life in such a way that it presents an experience. Our way of looking at and thinking about cities is at stake in the description of concrete observations. Educational research can also be conceptualised as a witnessing of community building practices, in which attention is given to the ordinary and concrete in such a way that concepts of community are challenged and unforeseeable ways of being together are presented.

Existential-Ethical Research

This kind of research can be called existential-ethical research, in the words of Simons and Masschelein (in press). They distinguish such existential-ethical educational research from knowledge-oriented/based research, which is still dominant today. A knowledge-oriented/based way of doing research aims to develop valid knowledge. Evaluations of practices based on validated methods and leading to knowledge about what works to build community belong to this tradition. In an existential-ethical-oriented way of doing research, on the other hand, the researcher

works upon his/her relation to the present. The main concern is the present situation of which the researcher is a part. This present – in our case the present situation of togetherness during the Zinneke project – is not an object for developing valid knowledge: 'The present, instead, is what is experienced when we are attentive or when we are 'present in the present' (Foucault 1997/1984). Hence, the present is what is 'actual for us today' (Simons and Masschelein in press). What is necessary in this existential-ethical way of doing research, according to Masschelein (2010), is not a new and certain methodology but becoming attentive. It is about paying attention to the present, to the concreteness of the situation at hand. In our own research of Zinneke Parade, we did not use questionnaires or interviews. Our aim was not to measure the effect of the project on individual participants or groups. We focussed on the concrete way in which togetherness took form during the workshops and the parade and we used observations.

The difficulty with observations and with becoming attentive is that it asks us to stop looking at the present situation with all kinds of normative and conceptual frameworks. Becoming attentive demands the suspension of judgement and requires discipline to stay with the present situation, to stay with what one perceives (Masschelein 2010). In order to make us 'present in the present' or to stay focussed on what there was to see, rather than our ideas and judgements of how community building should look like, we developed a specific protocol. We followed individual participants during 30 min and wrote down all their activities and movements, no matter what they did and no matter what activity at hand. The selection of an individual was based on chance as well as the moment of observation. The arbitrariness of the protocol and the intensity of the observation task served to suspend our judgement and to force us to focus on what was happening in its physical and bodily concreteness. The protocol made us look at activities in a way that would never be possible with an observation scheme or conceptual framework. We paid attention to all kinds of evident and quotidian activities, from picking up clothes for the parade to gluing objects on heads and repetitively rehearsing parade movements. At one instance, for example, we followed a participant – we knew he was an asylum seeker – during a rehearsal:

> He stands still and waits. He looks at two other participants rehearsing their movements. He coughs and looks with an amused face. He sits down, while looking, and leans against the heating on the wall. His arms are crossed and lean on his knees. He stares and seems to be dreaming. He does not move when a number of other participants go to the centre of the room and rehearse their movements for the parade. Sometimes he laughs, when looking at the other participants, sometimes he moves his body a little. He follows a conversation, without saying anything. He stares and sits down for minutes. He is calm, he looks at the rehearsing participants, the face moves along with the movements of the participants. (Group A Travers, 17 April 2010, 16h08)

What we observed as a result of the protocol was the waiting of a participant during 30 min. Jotting down particular details of the (in)activity of waiting, like the sitting down with crossed arms, or the small movements of the face while looking at others, brings something under the attention. Waiting is an eminent way of relating to others. During the activity of waiting, our participant followed other people's

actions and conversations. He was there, ready if someone would ask something or call upon him. Waiting shows connection and disconnection at the same time. It shows connection, the eyes follow other people's movements. The face smiles when something funny happens. It shows disconnection, the sitting on the side of the room, the separation from other bodies rehearsing their movements. The observation of waiting during the preparation of the Zinneke Parade brings a concrete way of relating in the spotlight. A way of relating that may seem irrelevant from a social cohesion or a critical perspective.

Waiting may seem irrelevant from a social cohesion perspective, because it does not result in new competences to deal with others and to take a future position in the community. Waiting may seem irrelevant from a critical perspective, because it does not result in awareness of oppression and inequalities and in changes in the circumstances of the asylum seeker. The waiting of the asylum seeker shows however that he is already dealing with others and that he is already a part of the community. He is already present in his waiting. The focus on his waiting makes something visible about what it means today to be in community and to deal with others. The observation may, if one is willing to take it serious, challenge how we think about community. Waiting brings something unforeseen into presence. Taking this seriously and letting our thinking of community be challenged by the concrete observation of an asylum seeker, who is waiting, puts accepted definitions of community at stake and brings the attention to activities that seemed irrelevant before.

The same kind of rethinking happens in Nancy's observation of the city as a place of passage. For Nancy (2002), the city is friction and rubbing, standing close but separated, touching and losing sight of each other. Starting from his observations, Nancy (2002) starts to speak about the meaning of city. The city is no longer a community, no longer a place with a specific identity and filled with people who would share this identity. The city is just a place. It is a place for activities and a place that mixes people and activities, traditions and trajectories without becoming a unity. Nancy (2002) starts from the concreteness of observations, to ask questions about what it means to be in a city, to be a city. Educational research of community building, which can no longer start from established definitions of community, takes the same step. Starting from concrete observations and focussing on activities like the waiting of a participant, research questions the sense of being in community today. The educational researcher can take the waiting of a participant seriously. Speaking about community as the (in)activity of waiting for others who are busy troubles established definitions of the good community and troubles the idea that individuals need to learn before they can become a member of the community.

Community and/or Democracy

One of the words Nancy (1991) uses to describe the experience of community is the word inoperative. The formula *inoperative community* indicates that the experience of community is something that undoes or unworks all kinds of normative

definitions of community. The experience of being with others is something that crosses through all kinds of programmatic definitions that lead to building communities as a project. This does however not lead to new definitions for Nancy (1991, p. 31) because the experience of community is an experience of finitude, of the fact that community is our condition and not something we define and make: 'This is why community cannot arise from the domain of work. One does not produce it, one experiences or one is constituted by it as the experience of finitude'. The experience that an asylum seeker waits and thereby relates to others, troubles all kind of programmes that want this asylum seeker to *learn* before he can be considered to be a member of the community. Existential-ethical research of community building practices troubles such normative approach and can be understood as inoperative research. It is research that does not lead to knowledge about how to build community in line with some normative ideal. It is research that on the contrary interrupts such normative endeavours in the name of concrete experiences of being with others.

Existential-ethical research therefore tries to speak in a different way about living together with differences. It tries to speak in a different way about practices like Zinneke Parade. It does not provide new definitions or conclusions about what works, but speaks about experiences that matter to the researcher. We do not want to defend the Zinneke Parade as something that works, like previous research by Christiaen (2001) and Costanzo (2012). We want to speak about Zinneke Parade and its workshops as a place where community is experienced in the activities, materialities and relations at hand. We want to speak about experiences that matter, but do not lead to closed and definite answers on the issue of living together. Latour (2005) distinguishes two different ways of relating to things. Matters of fact are clearly definable objects that can be measured and verified in knowledge-oriented/based research. Matters of concern on the other hand are those things that arouse our interest and our worry. Making community into a matter of concern has to do with interrupting established and particular definitions of community. It is a form of presenting or speaking that has to do with letting oneself and one's own thinking be challenged by what there is to see in concrete practices (Cornelissen and Masschelein 2010).

Such research that troubles definitions of community manifests a concern for democratic citizenship. Biesta (2011, p. 2) argues that democratic citizenship 'is not simply an existing identity that individuals just need to adopt, but is an ongoing process that is fundamentally open towards the future'. Democratic citizenship is not related to a socialisation conception of civic learning, which is about inserting individuals into already known positions. Democratic citizenship is related to a subjectification conception of civic learning. Subjectification happens in moments where the existing order of the community is broken and where unforeseen ways of being and acting come into presence. The waiting of a participant is an interruption of the order, in which the participant is supposed to learn to be a part of a future community. Subjectification has to do with the appearance of something new: 'Subjectification is about the appearance – the "coming into presence," (…) – of a way of being that has no place and no part in the existing order of things' (Biesta

2011, p. 95). Existential-ethical research tries to become attentive for something unforeseen. The arbitrariness of the protocol we used for observing the workshops of the Zinneke Parade served as an interruption of judgements and normative frameworks. It served in other words as an interruption of the order of visibility or an interruption of what is important to be seen according to established definitions of the good community.

The focus is on concrete and material relations that are taking place and that are unforeseen. The focus on a relational understanding of community helps to develop an educational approach to community building. Such educational approach is not about individual learning (Biesta 2005), but about relations taking place in practice. It is about responding to concrete others in concrete situations without ground or foundation (Nancy 1991). Relating to others in the preparation process of a parade is an open process in which people act and deal with each other without ground and without certainty of how the relations between participants and groups will evolve. Participants and researchers do not foresee what connections and disconnections will take place. Zinneke Parade installs a practice that is experimental with regards to the issue of living with differences (Biesta 2011). The educational moment is the moment in which people respond to each other and build relations in concrete activities like rehearsing, waiting, fabricating, talking or preparing food. The concrete connections and disconnections like waiting are an experience of community that have educational force. It is in such moments that community takes place time and again.

We described the observations of concrete activities as witnessing. Witnessing the waiting of a participant is not only about crossing through existing definitions of the good community. It is also about presenting something unforeseen. Witnessing has to do with affirming what has been seen; it is an affirmation of what is not important or excluded (Biesta 2009b). This means that ultimately, existential-ethical research manifests a concern for democratic communities in which not everything is already visible and defined. The kind of subjectification that is taking place in the Zinneke Parade can be defined as an experience of being able to deal with differences (Simons and Masschelein 2010). It is the experience that everyone is able to relate to others, which is visible in the concrete setting of the workshops. There is no preparatory learning process. People enter the workshops and respond to others. It is on the level of the relationality – which is understood as connection and disconnection at the same time (Nancy 1991) – that education is situated as the coming into presence of ways of being together that are unforeseen. The subjectification taking place in the workshops of the Zinneke Parade has to do with democratic citizenship and democratic relations, in which not everything is already clear and already defined. It is not about politics in the sense of deliberation and dissensus about issues of common concern. Zinneke Parade touches another register of democratic relations, the everyday, concrete relations taking place in the activities related to making a parade in Brussels with people who are and remain different. This is probably the biggest surprise of Zinneke Parade, the fact that so many participants spent hours of time on making costumes and objects, on inventing rhythms and rehearsing movements and on waiting for others and looking at others.

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