Chapter 6
Description of the German Context

Sebastian Kurtenbach

Despite economic prosperity, technological advances and a strong rule of law, youth violence is becoming a public concern in German society. Although the numbers of violent crime are in decline, nevertheless over time it has been observed that violence is increasing in severity. Furthermore, it is well observed that there is an unequal geographical distribution of violence across neighborhoods. The disorganized neighborhoods are contexts with a higher probability of becoming a victim of youth violence compared to other neighborhoods. Those areas are often socially segregated and ethnically diverse. In the literature, those neighborhoods are so-called disorganized, because the local population is not able or willing to prevent the violence. Those risky neighborhoods are the spatial framework of the study. We propose that an interplay of specific dimensions of a neighborhood are useful to describe the neighborhood characteristics that we are looking for. These are:

- *Social dimension*: Risky neighborhoods are socially segregated and have a lower socioeconomic status than the average of the city. The unemployment rate is high and so alternative ways to build up an identity are developed early in life, because labor no longer creates identity.
- *Diversity dimension*: Diversity is an often-used marker of disorganization. The underlying assumption beyond is that diversity causes mistrust in the community (Putnam 2007).
- *Safety dimension*: If the crime rate/violence is much higher than the average of a city, male juveniles, as a vulnerable group, are forced to develop specific strategies to prevent victimization. To adopt the code of the street is such a strategy, (Anderson 1999) even though not ultimately a successful one (Stewart et al. 2006).

Hereafter, the four neighborhoods are described in which the interviews were conducted. Therefore, three datasets were used. First, census data. Second, interviews with ten experts, like social workers, police officers or shop owners. Third, notes from the field diary were recorded of participant observations. Afterwards, the German sample, as well as a general description of the neighborhoods from the perception of the interviewed juveniles is presented. Last, differences between the German

neighborhoods are highlighted to understand the variance within the sample before coming to the comparison in Chaps. 9 and 10.

6.1   Neighborhood Selection and Description in the German Context

In Germany, four neighborhoods were selected a priori, but controlled by census data. These neighborhoods face issues regarding high poverty and low safety and for some of the migrants a dead-end in integration. The neighborhoods are located in the cities Dortmund, Duisburg, and Berlin. Dortmund and Duisburg are part of the Ruhr-Area, in the west of Germany, which is a former industrial area. With the decline of the coal and steel industry between the 1950s and 1980s, the area, as well as both cities, went through a dramatic process of economic change; from heavy industry to high-tech industry, like robotics, science, higher learning institutes, and services, like logistics. Both neighborhoods in the Ruhr-Area are classical working-class places. In Berlin, two former working-class districts were selected, but the districts are so large that smaller neighborhoods in the areas were chosen in the sampling. Also, for the description of the neighborhood, ten interviews with local experts, like politicians, shop owners or police officers were conducted. Below all three neighborhoods are described more in detail.

6.1.1   Dortmund-Nordstadt

Located close to the Dortmund Main Station, with nearly 60,000 residents, the Nordstadt neighborhood is one of the largest socially segregated neighborhoods in Germany, but also the largest solid pre-World-War II neighborhoods in the Ruhr-Area. It is divided into three sub-neighborhoods, Hafen, Nordmarkt, and Borsigplatz, but the social structure of all neighborhoods differs significant from the rest of the city. The population of the neighborhood is characterized by high poverty levels, with an unemployment rate of 24.1% (data: 31 December 2015), but also a habitat for many poor immigrants from Romania and Bulgaria, who do not have access to payments of the basic welfare system. (Kurtenbach 2017) More than 27% of the population are non-Germans and this foreign population is highly mixed, but with a large Turkish and Arabic component (data: 31 December 2015). Form a classical point of view, the neighborhoods show implications of disorganization in so far as the rate of in- and out-migration is high. Through a great deal of non-German signs, the ethnical diversity is reflected in the public space as well (Kurtenbach et al. 2019). The physical surroundings show a lack of investment in many real estates as well as a lack of green space in the neighborhood. Furthermore, the public space shows incivilities, but also the air is highly polluted, because the bus station for several big streets

are located in the Nordstadt neighborhood. With regard to the safety dimension, the Nordstadt neighborhood shows a concentration of violent crimes, with 17.8 delicts per 1000 inhabitants (Dortmund: 5.6) in 2015.[1] An interview with a police officer pointed out that Nordstadt is also an unusual environment for the police, because violent situations occur frequently, and youth violence is an ongoing issue in the area. A local shop owner pointed out that the local drug market is still a problem in the main commercial districts of the neighborhood.

6.1.2 Duisburg-Marxloh

Similar to the Nordstadt, Marxloh is a former industrial neighborhood, but it is located on the fringe of the city. Even with 19,179 residents, it is smaller than Nordstadt, but the challenges are quite similar. The unemployment rate is 22.8%. However, the immigrant population is dominated by Turks and not as diverse as in the Nordstadt, but an immigration of poor migrants from Romania and Bulgaria is observable as well (Kurtenbach 2017). The domination of Turks in the non-German population is also reflected by written signs in public spaces, where Turkish is the second-often-used language after German (Kurtenbach et al. 2019). The in- and out-migration in Marxloh is higher than the city-wide average. The public space shows clear signs of disinvestment and incivilities and also a lack of green space is observable. However, the infrastructure is good, with a well-known commercial strip, which is famous for its Turkish wedding clothes as well as restaurants.

6.1.3 Berlin-Neukoelln

Neukoelln is one of the 12 districts of Berlin and with 167,206 residents as big as a suburban city. The size of the neighborhoods makes evident that much variance is located in the area, which differ from very affluent to poor neighborhoods. Based on census data, as well as two interviews with local experts, three neighborhoods were selected. The Herrmann-Street neighborhood, a gentrifying neighborhood, with a Turkish and Arabic community under pressure of the housing market; an ethnical mixed, but very poor and violent neighborhood, called White neighborhood (Weiße Siedlung), and the Sonnen Center neighborhood, with a dominant Arabic community. This neighborhood is also poor and characterized as a hot spot of youth violence. The public space in Herrmann-Street neighborhood is limited to some playgrounds, but it lies directly on the former Tempelhofer airport, which is one of the biggest public places in Europe nowadays. Also, some of the houses are renovated and mod-

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[1]The calculation based on the police districts and statistical districts of the municipality. These two areas are differing from each other and the police district is bigger than the Nordstadt neighborhood. So, the number is overestimated.

ernized, others are old and show signs of disinvestment. Weiße Siedlung and Sonnen Center are both high-rise housing estates from the 1970s, but the Sonnen Center does not have more than five-story apartment blocks, compared to the Weiße Siedlung, where apartment blocks may have more than ten floors. Both neighborhoods show signs of disinvestment, but have several playgrounds located in the neighborhoods. Furthermore, the crime rate is high in all three neighborhoods.

6.1.4   Berlin-Wedding

Wedding is part of the inner-city district, "Mitte", and has a population of 85,527 residents (Mitte: 373,944). It is located in the north of Berlin and is a classic working-class area of a capital. However, two neighborhoods were selected, based on demographics and an interview with a police officer. One is the area around the Osloer Street and the other called Lynar. Both neighborhoods are poor, ethnical diverse, with a large Turkish and Arabic community, and both have a rate of high in- and out-migration. Both neighborhoods show clear signs of disinvestment and a lack of green public space. Also, the crime rate is elevated.

6.2   Description of the German Sample

As the neighborhood description showed, all areas are characterized by indicators of a risky neighborhood (Chap. 2). The description of the sample of the interview partners needs to be described next. Altogether 30 interviews were conducted in youth clubs in the neighborhoods. All interviews were taped and transcribed afterwards. The interviews had to be anonymized to protect the privacy of the interview partners. Also, the interview partners received a 20 € allowance for their time. After this process, the interviews were coded, by using MAXQDA 18, starting from the nine categories drawn in Chap. 3. Thereafter, six additional categories as well as nine subcategories emerged from the material. Furthermore, the coding followed a four-eyes principle, so every interview was coded and controlled by a second person afterwards. In unclear cases, the code's passage was discussed in detail. Table 6.1 shows the list of the used codes.

   Nearly all of the interviewed juveniles had a migration background and struggled with their identity, a perception of discrimination, as well as a feeling of being disadvantaged, because of the poor reputation of their neighborhood. Table 6.2 provides an overview about the distribution of the interviews over the four areas.

Table 6.1 Frequency of the codes: Germany

Code	Sum
Neighborhood perception	287
Street Wisdom	462
Respect	416
Symbols	168
Toughness/masculinity	135
Friends[a]	540
Enemy	89
Violence	384
Success	208
Family[a]	540
Technology	22
Police	88
Others	1164
	3.963

[a]Friends and family were coded together because the interview partner often mentioned friends and family in a close connection. The number has been counted only once

Table 6.2 Number of interviews per neighborhood, Germany

Neighborhood	Number of interviews
Duisburg-Marxloh	7
Dortmund-Nordstadt	7
Berlin-Neukoelln	9
Berlin-Wedding	7
Sum Germany	30

6.3   Code of the Street in Germany: A Closer Look into the Neighborhoods

Before comparing the results in the Chap. 9, guided by the codes, a general description of the perception of violence at the neighborhood level is provided here. The intention is to describe differences and similarities at the neighborhood level, because they vary with regard to poverty, crime, and mobility. Furthermore, a better impression of the sample is possible by understanding the different frameworks.

6.3.1   Description of the Violence-Related Norms and Neighborhood Perceptions in Dortmund-Nordstadt

The interview partners from Nordstadt are a diverse sample; the participants have either a German, Bulgarian, Arab, Northern African and Turkish backgrounds or a mix of these. All of them have had experiences of violent situations, often as a perpetrator. These situations often found root in situations of disrespect and caused an immediate reaction. Social control was never mentioned, but there was a strong identification with their neighborhood. Nordstadt was perceived as a source of pride on the one hand, on the other hand, it was narrated as a disadvantaged environment. Furthermore, rules on how to organize violent situations were well known and a way to cope with those situations. Like in Marxloh, those rules included one-on-one fights and the role of friends as a label of power, as well as insurance in case of serious violence. However, the level of street violence was perceived to be so strong, that is was common to have weapons, like pepper spray, a knife, or a knuckle duster on them. Also, Nordstadt was the only neighborhood in the German sample where interview partners mentioned the use of a gun in violent situations. Similar to the Marxloh neighborhood, the family was seen as a source of support as well as struggle and by offending the family, a harsh and violent reaction is viewed as being necessary. Also, police violence was reported several times in the interviews and so, the police are marked as the enemy and not responsible for protection. This is connected with a clear notion of masculinity, which is connected to the ability for self-defense. Even if some of the interview partners preferred a subcultural way of life in future, the desire for a middle-class life in another neighborhood of the city was dominant.

6.3.2   Description of the Violence-Related Norms and Neighborhood Perception in Duisburg-Marxloh

Turkish participants were dominant in the sample in Marxloh, who are also a dominant group in the neighborhood. In Marxloh, the male juveniles perceive there to be a strong social control in the public spaces, especially if they are Turkish. They know that all deviant behavior will be reported to their parents by the neighbors and the parents usually become angry about the poor behavior of their children. However, rules on how to behave in public space to avoid conflict are known by all of the interview partners and all have experiences of violent situation, mostly from both perspectives—offender and victim. Two patterns were observable in situations when they became violent: perceived disrespect or the need for money. The second pattern was much rarer than the first. Disrespect leads to violence, which is in line with Andersons concept of the code, but the reaction was often more indirect. Common was the narration that people who have had an argument meet up for a fight at a place without social control and take their friends with them. Those situations followed strict rules, like the duty of one-on-one fights between the parties or that nobody

will be beaten up once laying on the ground. The accompanying friends guarantee these rules, but sometimes the rules are broken and a group fight breaks out. But two other issues were important in Marxloh as well. Male juveniles suffer from the bad reputation of their neighborhood, which causes a struggle for identity, because they are framed as criminals and feel unfairly treated. Those discrimination occurs when flirting via apps, like Tinder, or the use of social media, as well as at job interviews. The other issue was the perception of police violence. The juveniles spoke about very harsh and violent policing strategies, which causes anger and adds to a sense of helplessness. The role of the family was strong, as a source of stability, but also as a unit of protection and a source of conflicts between the juveniles. If the family was insulted, especially female family members, that caused an immediate and violent reaction. Furthermore, masculinity was characterized by the ability to take care of the family and bring up children in a proper and responsible way. Plans for the future were described as a house with a garden in a calm environment.

6.3.3 Description of the Violence-Related Norms and Neighborhood Perception in Berlin-Neukoelln

Interview partners from Arabic countries and Turks as well as from northern Africa were in the sample of Neukoelln. However, even though the three neighborhoods differ in social structure and the form of public space, it did not impact the perception of space, which was a polarization between familiarity and hostility. Even in the gentrifying neighborhood, violence was part of the daily experience of the juveniles. However, the only mentioned connection to gentrification in the Schiller neighborhood was that it was easier to find a job in the neighborhood, because of the new bars and shops, which are scattered between the apartment blocks. All juveniles had a clear knowledge about the organization and informal rules of violent situations, like the duty to respond violently to insults against the family, the rule of a one-on-one fight, the need for friends in the background as a sign of power and the campaign for respect. However, in Neukoelln it was common for the juveniles to tell interviewers about the use of weapons in fights, like knives, knuckle dusters or blackjacks. Nearly all of the juveniles hope to leave Neukoelln to settle down in a calm and peaceful neighborhood, which is a hint that they are familiar with middle-class values. Masculinity was two-pronged: the first was the responsibility to take care of the family; the second the ability to look after your own business, which does not only mean violent confrontations, but also to put food on the table. In comparison to the juveniles in the Ruhr-Area, the interview partners in Neukoelln talked more intensely about their families. Family members, and especially female ones, are the causes of many conflicts and need to be protected and defended in the eyes of many interview partners. Furthermore, the role of resolving conflicts between members of different families rest upon family elders and their decision is respected by all family members.

6.3.4   Description of the Violence-Related Norms and Neighborhood Perception in Berlin-Wedding

Similar to Neukoelln, the interview partners came from Arabic as well as northern African countries. The neighborhood has an urban character in the eyes of the interview partners (experts as well as juveniles), which includes a wide range of opportunities, like shopping facilities, youth clubs and spots in the public space to meet up with friends. However, all of the interviewees perceived violence in the neighborhood and see it is a normal part of their life. The use of weapons is not that common in the Wedding neighborhood, as has been reported in Neukoelln. All interview partners want to leave Wedding in their biographic future, if possible, because they do not see it as a good place to bring up a family. Similar to the interviews in Neukoelln, female family members, or their perceived honor, is a cause for highly violent conflicts among male juveniles. Even in the Wedding neighborhoods, informal rules about street fighting, behavior in public spaces, and the meaning of different forms of violence were mentioned. The sense of masculinity differed and incorporated the ability to fight, as well as to be a smart man who solves problems without using violence.

6.4   Reflection About the German Context

The description of the German sample shows differences between the neighborhoods, insofar that in some neighborhoods the perception of violence and other problems, like an ongoing drug market, is higher than in others. Therefore, this could impact the shape of violence-related norms at the level of violence in the neighborhoods. However, this is fodder for the analysis, because, even if these neighborhoods are the same type of social space, we need to see a broader picture of the construction of the code and must respect that neighborhoods can differ from each other.

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