



Master's thesis

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Public participation, sustainability and environmental awareness

Case study of the effect of wisdom councils on participants in the region Bregenzerwald



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Abstract

Several researchers claim that technological improvements and innovations are necessary but not sufficient to achieve sustainable development - vital are changes in values, norms, moral judgements and social constructions that determine the necessary changes in inherent attitudes and behaviours (Ehrlich & Holdren 1971; Brand et al. 2013; IPCC 2014). This is particularly important for tackling environmental risks and global environmental changes such as climate change. Public participation processes are considered to be an important element and a path for enabling more sustainable development (Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, 1992; Baranek & Walk 2005), because they involve the civil society, which is seen as an important actor for more sustainable development (Brand et al. 2013).

Hence, this thesis analyses the effects of the public participation method “wisdom council” on its participants. This is done by conducting a participatory observation of a wisdom council in the region Bregenzerwald, as well as semi-structured qualitative interviews with participants of this wisdom council. The objective is to investigate how the wisdom council process affects participants regarding legitimacy, credibility and acceptance of decisions and political institutions. Furthermore, it also assesses the effects on participants regarding their own potential future commitment as that of other stakeholders towards these decisions. Additionally, it then examines what consequences these effects could have for supporting more sustainable development. This is done by applying concepts like general education, social learning, empowerment, self-determination and community spirit. Another aim of this thesis, which sets it apart from already conducted studies, is to analyse in what way attending wisdom councils changes the environmental awareness of participants. The reason why this could be important is because environmentally aware citizens are seen to be more capable of promoting sustainable development (Iizuka 2000; Hassan et al. 2010; Razman 2012; Crotty & Hall 2013).

The findings show that the aforementioned concepts are valuable for examining the effects of wisdom councils on its participants and to better understand if and how these effects can be meaningful for enabling more sustainable development.

Zusammenfassung

Mehrere ForscherInnen behaupten, dass technologische Fortschritte und Innovationen notwendig sind, aber nicht ausreichen, um eine nachhaltige Entwicklung zu fördern – essentiell sind für sie Veränderungen von Werten, Normen, moralischen Urteilen und sozialen Konstruktionen, welche die notwendigen Veränderungen in inhärenten Einstellungen und Verhaltensweisen bestimmen (Ehrlich & Holdren 1971, Brand et al 2013, IPCC 2014). Dies ist besonders wichtig für die Bewältigung von Umweltrisiken und globalen Umweltveränderungen wie dem Klimawandel. Bürgerbeteiligungsprozesse gelten als ein wichtiges Element und als Weg für eine nachhaltigere Entwicklung (Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, 1992, Baranek & Walk 2005), weil sie die Zivilgesellschaft mit einbeziehen, die als ein wichtiger Akteur angesehen wird um nachhaltige Entwicklung zu ermöglichen (Brand et al. 2013).

Daher analysiert diese Masterarbeit die Auswirkungen der Bürgerbeteiligungsmethode "BürgerInnen-Rat" (BR) auf seine TeilnehmerInnen. Dies geschieht durch eine teilnehmende Beobachtung eines BRs in der Region Bregenzerwald sowie halb strukturierte qualitative Interviews mit TeilnehmerInnen dieses BRs. Ziel ist es, zu untersuchen, wie dieser Prozess auf die TeilnehmerInnen in Bezug auf Legitimität, die Anerkennung und die Akzeptanz von Entscheidungen und politischen Institutionen wirkt. Darüber hinaus beurteilt sie auch die Auswirkungen auf die TeilnehmerInnen bezüglich eines möglichen zukünftigen (politischen) individuellen Engagements oder dem Engagement weiterer Stakeholder bezüglich dieser Entscheidungen. Weiters untersucht die Masterarbeit, welche Konsequenzen diese Effekte für eine nachhaltigere Entwicklung haben könnten. Dies geschieht durch die Anwendung von Konzepten wie allgemeine Bildung, sozialem Lernen, Empowerment, Selbstbestimmung und Gemeinschaftsgefühl. Ein weiteres Ziel dieser Arbeit, die sie von bereits durchgeführten Studien abgrenzt, besteht darin zu analysieren, in welcher Weise die BRs das Umweltbewusstsein der TeilnehmerInnen verändern. Der Grund, warum dies wichtig sein könnte ist, dass umweltbewussten BürgerInnen eher zugeschrieben wird in der Lage zu sein, eine nachhaltige Entwicklung zu fördern (Iizuka 2000, Hassan et al. 2010, Razman 2012, Crotty & Hall 2013).

Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass die genannten Konzepte für die Untersuchung der Auswirkungen von BRs auf ihre TeilnehmerInnen passend sind, um besser zu verstehen, ob und wie diese Effekte bedeutend sein können, um eine nachhaltigere Entwicklung zu ermöglichen.

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1. Introduction

There are several actors and stakeholders that can contribute to sustainable development, which can be defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED 1987). In short, these can either be classified as state, corporate or civil society actors (Brand et al. 2013). In this thesis, the civil society and its lifestyles are considered to be crucial for enabling sustainable development. Thereby it acknowledges several researchers claiming that technological fixes and innovations are necessary but not sufficient to achieve sustainable development - vital are changes in values, norms, moral judgements and social constructions that determine the necessary changes in inherent attitudes and behaviours for sustainable development (Ehrlich & Holdren 1971; Brand et al. 2013; IPCC 2014). This is particularly important for tackling environmental risks and global environmental changes such as climate change. With regards to lifestyles, the target 12.8 of the 12th SDG is significant for this thesis. It aims for people everywhere in the world having “the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature” (United Nations 2015). Based on the results of an EU-wide Eurobarometer survey about attitudes of European citizens towards the environment, 77% of Europeans state that environmental problems and changes have a considerable impact upon their daily lives. Furthermore, 70% of Europeans think that their national government is not doing enough to protect the environment and 85% believe that they individually can play a role in benefitting the environment (European Commission 2014). But how can the civil society be inspired to actually contribute to a sustainable development, also including an environmentally friendly way of living?

One way could be to make the principles of governments more sustainable which also includes finding ways and possibilities to help and induce citizens to change their lifestyle (Jackson 2008). This is also addressed by the agenda for a sustainable development, stating that there should be more collaboration of governments with the civil society (United Nations 2015). However, in the last few years, distrust in common political institutions and traditional policy-making processes in democracies is increasing in Europe if not worldwide (Mishler & Rose 1997; Strele 2012; Lenard & Simeon 2012). One possibility to counteract this development and to encourage ordinary citizens to contribute to sustainable development could be to perform public participation. In short, this can be defined as “any process that directly engages the public in decision-making and gives full consideration to public input in making that decision” (Kandil 2016). There are many forms of public participation. Nevertheless, ideally involving citizens in

decision-making processes might result in general education, social learning and thereby changed attitudes and behaviour, empowerment and self-determination of citizens (Mansbridge 1995; Florida 2013). Based on these characteristics, public participation could help to create more active, common good oriented, participating and motivated citizens that are supporting a sustainable future development. Furthermore, it is very likely that politics and public administration profit from opening the democratic process more to the general public. Reasons for that could be increased transparency, better informed and cooperating citizens which would most likely lead to policy making that can be easier legitimised by the public and results in less opposition (Leggewie & Nanz 2016).

Sustainable development and (public) participation are central terms in lots of important (international) legal documents as well as in many different sectors, even though the reasons and contexts vary sometimes. The involvement of the civil society plays a crucial role in various fields. Within these fields, (public) participation is on the one hand applied expediently as a way or a method to achieve sustainable development. Involving the civil society is necessary to include the society's manifold perceptions of sustainability and to create binding, socially shared values and objectives. On the other hand, (public) participation is perceived as value in itself and as a fundamental element of sustainability. This refers particularly to concepts that regard inter- and intragenerational justice as well as gender equality as a crucial part of sustainability. Hence, (public) participation can be a social design method that is both objective and a path of sustainable development (Baranek & Walk 2005).

Involving citizens in reaching decisions that affect them has been a common practice in Vorarlberg for years. One public participation method with a fairly good reputation that is used in this federal state is called wisdom council (WC). It can be assigned to the consultation stage of public participation processes, meaning that citizens have the chance to deliberate about certain projects, etc., but do not make a final decision. Ideally, it takes place at three stages. The first one is the WC, which is a maximum 2 day workshop with randomly selected participants discussing a (predefined) topic. The centrepiece of this WC is its way of moderation called dynamic facilitation. It is particularly applicable for complex topics because of its specific conversation and discussion culture that also follows impulses and emotions, not only linear and rational thinking (Lederer 2009; Büro für Zukunftsfragen 2010). The second stage is the citizens' café (CC), which is a public event where the solutions that were developed in the WC are presented by its participants. In the CC, the public can then evaluate and follow up the solutions of the WC. The revised results of the WC and the CC together are then summarised in a report. In the best case, this report is the basis of a discussion in the third stage, the responder

group, consisting of representatives of politics, administration and the WC. This stage is performed to guarantee that the results are integrated in policy-making or the projects in question are conducted in a transparent way (Büro für Zukunftsfragen 2010; Strele 2012; Büro für Zukunftsfragen 2014).

The method WC was analysed several times and was also evaluated by the European Institute for Public Participation (EIPP). Reports and evaluations of WCs show that sustainable future development for a better quality of life on the social, economic and environmental dimension are very often the underlying topic of WCs. Furthermore, studies confirm that people often change their opinion and attitude in various ways after participating in a wisdom council, at least shortly after attending it (Strele 2012; Büro für Zukunftsfragen 2014).

Hence, to find out more about these changes of participants in opinions and attitudes because of participating the WC, one objective of this thesis is to investigate how the WC process affects participants regarding legitimacy, credibility and acceptance of decisions and political institutions. Furthermore, it also assesses the effects on participants about potential future commitment of themselves and other stakeholders towards these decisions. Additionally, it then examines what consequences these effects could have for supporting more sustainable development. This is done by applying concepts like social learning, empowerment, self-determination and community spirit.

Even though WCs have been analysed already, there is no specific research about effects on participants in terms of environmental awareness, which can be defined as the understanding and concern about the fragility of the environment and the importance to protect it (Neugebauer 2004; Kuckartz & Anke 2006; Chrebah 2009). Therefore, another aim of this thesis is to analyse in what way attending WCs changes the environmental awareness of participants. The reason why this could be important is because environmentally aware citizens are seen to be more capable of promoting sustainable development (Iizuka 2000; Hassan et al. 2010; Razman 2012; Crotty & Hall 2013). The main goal of a lot of public participation processes is most certainly to make citizens realise how uncertain and complex some issues and decisions are, and to generally encourage them to get (politically) active for the common good and participate in solving (local) issues (Papadopoulos & Warin 2007). However, comprehending uncertain and complex issues might also help to make citizens better aware of global environmental risks and changes such as climate change. Moreover, when reflecting on the above discussed effects of public participation processes on participants, there may even be the chance that citizens slightly change their attitudes towards the environment and thus strive for a living in solidarity with others on important environmental issues (Heinrichs et al. 2011).

1.1 Case study of a wisdom council in the state of Vorarlberg in Austria

The municipality in which the analysed WC took place is situated in the region Bregenzerwald in the state of Vorarlberg, Austria. To preserve the interviewees' anonymity, the name of the municipality is not mentioned in this thesis. It is about 6,500 hectares big and mainly consists of forest, alps and agricultural land. In the municipality, various kindergartens, schools, shops, restaurants and businesses are located, as well as churches, fire brigades, sewage plants, one heating plant and diverse associations. In 2015 it had around 3700 inhabitants with approximately 1400 households (Gemeinde X 2015).

The centre of the municipality is very important for the quality of life of the municipality residents. Its development and transformation have been discussed for several years, accompanied by different plans for reshaping the centre. These specifically involved the traffic situation mainly regarding the heavily loaded crossing in the municipality centre, and the use of the old post office building. There have already been concrete plans for the future use of this building, however, the projects were stopped because of resistance in the population. In addition, the public square in the municipality centre is unattractive and just used as parking lot. With regards to politics of the municipality, there is a general feeling of citizens of not being asked and not being able to participate or having a say. Before the WC was conducted, the design of the municipal centre had not been finalized. This might have been the reason for the municipality to initiate a public participation process (a WC) to improve the relation between the political institutions and the ordinary citizens in the municipality. To make sure that the WC is not perceived as an alibi event, there is a follow-up meeting one year after the WC took place for discussing what has happened until then (Büro für Zukunftsfragen 2016).

The purpose of the WC process was to answer the question of 'How can we create an attractive centre in the municipality?', including the view and ideas of citizens of the municipality, first through the WC at the end of September 2016 and then via the CC in mid of October 2016. This was supported by a documentation of both processes and a presentation of the essential content in a report for the further development and planning of the municipality centre. The specific implementation possibilities were then discussed and worked out by 2 members of the WC together with other stakeholders such as politicians, administrative employees, local business representatives, etc. within a responder group at the beginning of November 2016 (ibid).

The intended effects were a shared vision and concrete inputs to the design of the municipality centre that meets the needs of the entire municipality. Additionally, the WC strived for effects like experienced democracy, awareness raising, self-efficacy and civic education. Moreover,

the WC process should be an impetus for a constructive discussion culture in the municipality and for raising public awareness on social cohesion (ibid).

1.2 Research question

The aforementioned effects of WCs on participants and the municipality are of particular interest in this thesis. This is because several researchers criticise that only informing citizens about policies and environmental changes and risks is not enough to change their attitudes and behaviour. They advocate that citizens should be more engaged and involved in debates about environmental risk and policy to achieve sustainable development (O 'riordan et al. 1999; Owens 2000; Bulkeley & Mol 2003).

Therefore, it seems relevant to further analyse WCs in order to better understand if and how the effects of WCs on its participants can be useful/meaningful for enabling more sustainable development.

Hence, the aim of this thesis is to find out about the effects of a WC on its participants with regards to general education, social learning, empowerment, self-determination, community spirit and environmental awareness (regarding consumption, energy and mobility). This will be investigated by answering the following research questions:

- 1. Which changes (concerning general education, social learning, empowerment, self-determination, community spirit and environmental awareness) do participants perceive and experience by taking part in a WC as an example of a public participation?*

- 2. What are the implications of these changes for enabling more sustainable development?*

1.3 Method and analysis design

This thesis is embedded in a one-shot case study which examines the effects of the public participation method WC on its participants and its implications for enabling sustainable development. Participatory observation was carried out at all three stages of the analysed WC process in the municipality in the region Bregenzerwald. This was done to better comprehend the dynamics in the process and to understand the background, social and regional setting of the specific case. The main data, however, is based on semi-structured qualitative interviews with most of the participants of the WC. Qualitative interviews were chosen to be the best method for this case study to elicit which changes participants perceived and experienced after

participating in the WC. These interviews were then transcribed and analysed, using a slightly modified version of the method of Meuser and Nagel (Meuser & Nagel 1991).

A one-shot case study is characterised by an investigation of a single group of people after a certain interference occurred. Hence, by conducting semi-structured qualitative interviews, the effect of the interference, in this case the WC, on participants can be evaluated (Bernard 2006). Theory often states that public participation processes can lead not only to general education, social learning, empowerment and self-determination of citizens, but also to an increase in social capital in entire communities and enhanced legitimised sustainable political decisions (Mansbridge 1995; Irvin & Stansbury 2004; Arbter 2010; Florida 2013).

Although there is no specific way to measure these effects, Hess et al (2015) at least differentiates between three levels that certainly interconnect with each other to some extent. The micro level refers to the effects of the public participation processes on the individual participants, the meso level to the whole group of participants, and the macro level to the politics and policy level as well as the entire citizenry. These three levels are also used as a framework for the analysis of the data.

1.4 Delimitation of the study

In this thesis, one WC process in a municipality in the region Bregenzerwald was observed and analysed instead of several, due to simpler comparison of the interviews. The research is based on 16 interviews with participants of this specific WC. It is important to note that only participants were interviewed, no facilitators, other citizens, politicians or administrative staff. This might limit the knowledge about the effect on the whole municipality with regards to community spirit, but this thesis emphasises an analysis of the effects of a WC on its participants and not the whole municipality. The focus of the analysis is mainly on perceived changes in attitudes and awareness and not on behaviour. Many concepts used in this thesis are valued as important to answer the research questions. Some of them are explained more in detail to provide a delineation to make it easier to analyse the interviews. The aim is to generally find out how the WC affects participants and in further consequence to question how these effects can be related to enabling sustainable development.

2. Literature review

In this chapter, the theoretical framework with the relevant concepts that are used as a basis for conducting the analysis and answering the research questions is presented. The first section discusses the origins and the general meaning of the complex concept of sustainability and its use in this thesis. The second section addresses public participation and describes its potential outcomes. In the third section the link between public participation and sustainable development is outlined. The fourth section addresses the relation of public participation processes and environmental awareness. The analysed participation method ‘wisdom council’ (WC) and its moderation technique dynamic facilitation (DF) is presented in the fifth section.

2.1 Discussion of Sustainability

There is no universally agreed definition of sustainability. In the last two decades, the concept of sustainability was used in so many various ways, sectors and policies, that some researchers even fear that the concept is in danger of becoming irrelevant (Baranek & Walk 2005; Redclift 2006; Adams 2006).

However, similar concepts of the now prevalent concept of sustainability (see Brundtland Report definition below) were represented in the traditions of various indigenous people for centuries. For example, this can be seen in the constitution of the Iroquois Nations ‘The great binding law, Gayanashagowa’, which was recorded by John Arthur Gibson in 1899 (Vecsey 1986):

“Look and listen for the welfare of the whole people and have always in view not only the present but also the coming generations, even those whose faces are yet beneath the surface of the ground -- the unborn of the future Nation” (Murphy 1998).

The first time the term sustainability (‘Nachhaltigkeit’ in German) was noted in Europe was in the book ‘Sylvicultura Oeconomica’, written by the German forester and scientist Hans Carl von Carlowitz in 1713. In this book, Carlowitz wrote about a smart, stable and sustainable way of forest management where he stated that only as much wood should be harvested in a forest as could be regenerated in a natural way within a certain time. Since then, the term sustainability has been widely used in forest management and conservation, but rather on the basis of resource economics (Heinberg 2010; Pufé 2014). Somehow linked to resource management as well, there was a discussion about sustainability between preservationists and conservationists from

the 1960s to the 1980s, especially in environmental literature. The often romantically and spiritually expressed view of preservationists was to save specific natural areas from any intervention, i.e. to leave these natural areas untouched. Conservationists, on the contrary, endorsed the protection of natural areas with the intention of having enough resources for potential human use in the future (Robinson 2004). Another still ongoing debate dealing with sustainability and environmental degradation starting at that time, can be categorised in a 'technical fix' position on the one hand and a 'value change' position on the other hand, best represented by Commoner and Ehrlich (Commoner 1971; Ehrlich & Holdren 1971). Commoner argued that enhanced technology and efficiency will lead to sustainable development, whereas Ehrlich emphasises the need for changes in underlying individual attitudes and behaviours to achieve sustainability (ibid).

In 1987, the definition of sustainability as development that "meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED 1987), mentioned in the Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development 'Our Common Future', also known as Brundtland Report, became very popular worldwide and is probably the most often used definition of sustainability and sustainable development nowadays (Heinberg 2010). In this report, sustainable development is linked to human development including socio-political, distributional and economic issues and their correlation to environmental degradation (Robinson 2004). Criticisms of the Brundtland report include its general anthropocentric view, that the importance of the economy is overestimated and that the current economic system based on economic growth is not fundamentally questioned. (Bartlett 1994; Robinson 2004; Seghezze 2009). The same critics could be applied on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development from 2015, although it at least strives for decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation (United Nations 2015). Nevertheless, the concept of sustainable development that is described in the Brundtland Report is still widely seen as representative for many sustainability concepts, upon which several policy measures worldwide are based (Holden et al. 2014).

At the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, sustainability became a commonly used term especially in international politics (United Nations 1992b; United Nations 1997). Since then, the concept of sustainability has evolved and there is a general acknowledgement of 3 aspects of sustainable development, that should be equally important:

Economic dimension: An economically sustainable system must provide goods and services on a permanent basis, keep the different sectors which affect industrial and agricultural production in balance and avoid financial over-indebtedness.

Environmental dimension: An environmentally sustainable system must be resilient, which means to have the ability to recover from disruption and damage. That implies avoiding over-exploitation of resources and maintaining ecosystem functions.

Social dimension: A socially sustainable system must approach distributional justice and gender equity, provide appropriate social services such as education and health and comprise participation and political accountability (Harris 2000).

Nevertheless, many scientists are still having a debate about which aspect of sustainability is more important. Vucetich and Nelson (2010) argue that in this debate a vital dimension is not considered – the ethical dimension, which is basically about “understanding the meaning of normative concepts such as human needs, socially just, depriving, and ecosystem health” (Vucetich & Nelson 2010). The left lower part in Figure 1 shows a general diagram of the three aspects of sustainability and how they should be linked to each other, as well as the right lower part, whereas this one underlines that the environment is the basis for the society and the economy. The upper part illustrates sustainability as relationship between the environment and the society. It includes ethical attitudes and a physical facet (exploitation). Vucetich and Nelson (2010) explain that “the relationship is affected by (a) our technologies, (b) understanding of the environment, (c) understanding how exploitation affects society, (d) understanding how exploitation affects the environment, and (e) how we understand our ethical attitudes about ourselves and nature. [...] Ethical attitudes are a critical aspect of any relationship involving humans (e)” (Vucetich & Nelson 2010) and they also influence how we apply technology. Hence it is important to include ethics in every scientific field that deals with sustainability and across all levels of society. The ethical aspect is also relevant for this thesis, as it can be seen as a guiding principle for how public participation processes affect different attitudes. Furthermore, it better reflects the concept of intra- and intergenerational justice, which implies that future generations have the same rights as the present ones and that persons of the same generation belonging to different political, economic, social and geographical contexts, have the same rights (WCED 1987), which also involves spatial and temporal components.

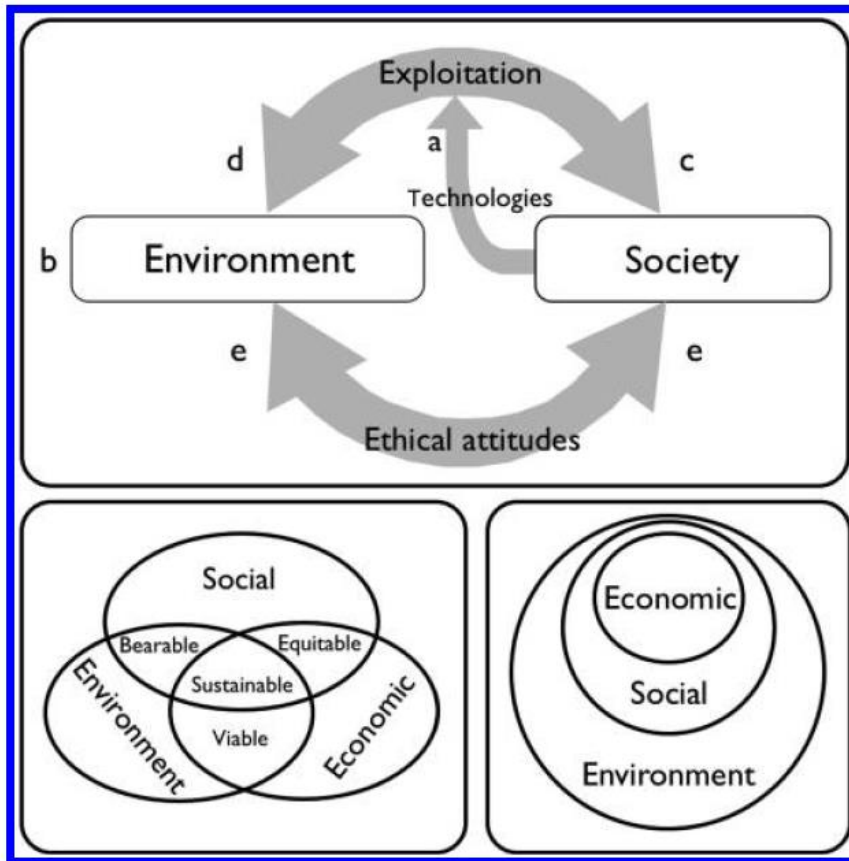


Figure 1: Sustainability as a relationship between the environment and the society (Vucetich & Nelson 2010).

When using the term sustainability or sustainable development, this thesis considers the 3 dimensions of sustainability as well as the ethical aspect. Furthermore, it sees sustainability as an integrative concept across all (scientific) fields, different sectors and interests and as a process that is constantly going on. It acknowledges that technological fixes are required but also underlines that they are not sufficient and emphasises the importance of values, norms, moral judgements and social constructions that determine the necessary changes in inherent attitudes and behaviours for sustainable development. Because these values, norms etc. vary between individuals, it is very important to integrate as many perspectives as possible in the process of sustainable development. One way of doing that is to include and engage citizens in political decision-making processes that affect them (Robinson 2004). Hence, public participation as an element of sustainability and a way to achieve sustainable development is explained in the next section.

2.2 Public participation

Participation is a fundamental principle of democracy. According to Held (2006) democracy generally means a mode of government in which the people rule, but with the addition that it often varies who the people are, and what ruling actually means. Nonetheless, democracy implicates some kind of political equality among the people of a political community. Held describes several models of democracy, from the classical or Athenian model almost 3000 years ago to the more modern models of the 20th century. He differentiates between two broad types: direct or participatory democracy, which indicate a system where citizens are directly involved in public decision-making processes, and liberal or representative democracy, a system where elected officials are supposed to represent the opinions and interests of citizens within a legal framework (Held 2006). For decades, many liberal democracies, or as Schmitter (2015) would say “really existing democracies”, show a gap between what is promised by the elected representatives and what is actually delivered. Thus, they are not fulfilling the ideal of a democracy anymore which is, as already stated above, “self-rule by citizens possessing equal rights and having equal influence over the choice of leaders and the conduct of public affairs” (Schmitter 2015). As a result, there is a growing distrust and scepticism of citizens in political institutions and elected representatives, who more and more perceive politicians as living in a totally different and self-referential world (Biegelbauer & Loeber 2010; Pateman 2012; Schmitter 2015). To tackle this “crises of democracy”, post-liberal concepts have been developed to extend, improve and counterbalance the deficits of liberal democracy.

For this thesis, the post-liberal concepts deliberative and participatory democracy are relevant, as the analysed method WC comprises characteristics that can be linked to both concepts. A common definition of deliberative democracy is “a form of government in which free and equal citizens (and their representatives), justify decisions in a process in which they give one another reasons that are mutually acceptable and generally accessible, with the aim of reaching decisions that are binding on all at present but open to challenge in the future” (Gutmann & Thompson 2004). It reflects four characteristics of deliberative democracy. The reason giving requirement demands justifiable reasons that should be accepted by free and equal persons that request fair conditions of collaboration. Another characteristic is that the reasons given must be accessible to and understandable by all affected citizens and the deliberation has to occur in public. The third characteristic states that the outcome of a deliberation process has to be binding for at least some period of time. Nevertheless, the fourth characteristic emphasises the dynamic of the process, meaning that even if there are binding decisions for some period of time, citizens still have the chance to criticise former decisions. Thereby the decision-making

process is kept open, acknowledging that its outcomes are provisional, because present decisions might not be appropriate for the future and people who were not in favour with decisions at the first time still have the opportunity to revise them in the future (Gutmann & Thompson 2004). For Habermas (1982), an ideal speech situation can foster the results of deliberative processes, but he also notes that it is very hard to reach. This situation is given when the communication between individuals is regulated by basic implicit rules, where participants, motivated to commonly achieve a rational consensus, would be able to mutually assess their statements simply based on explanation and proof, in a completely free ambience without any psychological or physical compelling influences (Habermas 1982).

Although deliberative and participatory democracy vary from each other, they also have some things in common. They are both based on an optimistic picture of the citizen and primarily aim for political participation in as many opinion and decision-making processes of as many citizens as possible in the framework of a direct democracy. Both call for an expansion of the democratic principle into all social and economic spheres as well as the private sphere. Consequently, democracy is no longer understood only as a form of government but also as a form of life. The educational function of public participation is also emphasized by both models of democracy (Schmidt 2008).

For Carole Pateman (2012) there are some elements that are essential for participatory democracy theory. An interaction within democratic authority structures that enable participation for citizens is vital, also as a means for education and personal development. Furthermore, participatory democracy is seen as instrumental for a democratisation of the social and political life of individuals, meaning that it changes the individuals' opportunities to participate in decision-making processes in everyday life as well as in political spheres. Consequently, the creation of a "participatory society" (Pateman 1970) is required, which can in short be described as a society where participation in decision-making is plausible and necessary for both citizens and society and goes beyond the government level, for example into the industrial level resulting in educating responsible and critical citizens and empowering them. The objective is to tackle social injustice and unequal distribution of power through participation (Pateman 1970). For the above mentioned changes to happen, the democratic authority structures need to be reformed (Pateman 2012).

Hence, participatory democracy is based on the direct action of citizens who exercise some power and determine issues influencing their lives. Deliberative democracy instead focuses rather on a process of mutual reasoning, argumentative exchanges, and public debate that must happen prior to a decision, that is eventually made by legitimate democratic institutions. This

shows that these two concepts differ from each other when it comes to question whether and how participatory and/or deliberative processes must or can have decisional power (Florida 2013).

However, the concept of participatory democracy and especially deliberative democracy is commonly criticised for its unrealistic human image, that assumes generally public oriented and political interested and competent citizens and exalts citizens' ability of (political) listening, which in reality is rather replaced by an unwillingness of listening (Schmidt 2008). Moreover, the amount of time and resources needed to get informed on, discuss and vote on political issues is very high and the facilitation of such processes is most of the time cost-intensive and cumbersome, depending on the used method. Critics also worry about a retardation of decision-making processes due to over-participation associated with a prevalence of claims and emerging conflicting goals that overburden the political system and the diminish the efficiency of decision-making (Roberts 2004; Dachs 2008). Participation requires enough interest, time and commitment of citizens, which often leads to an overrepresentation of well-educated, rather wealthy citizens or retired people in participation processes, who have enough time (sometimes also including students). Therefore, a biased image of society emerges that excludes disadvantaged groups such as ethnic and religious minorities, indigenous and unemployed or young people, women, old physical constrained people, gays, lesbians and transsexuals, immigrants and the underclass. A further criticism is that, especially deliberative approaches exaggerate the consensual power of language and communication as well as the motivational power of reason, even in the free ideal speech situation of Habermas. More importantly, there is a lack of an appropriate institutional order that would make deliberative or participatory concepts feasible in democracies with millions of citizens (Roberts 2004; Dachs 2008; Schmidt 2008). This fact might be the reason why deliberative and participatory processes are sometimes seen as alibi events, because the results are often not binding and the implementation is too little transparent (Florida 2013; Alcántara 2014).

In the present form of democracy common forms of participation for citizens include voting in elections, referenda, petitions or official opinion polls, that are normally regulated by law. However, more and more people want to get actively involved in (political) decision-making processes that affect them (Arbter et al. 2007; Godemann & Michelsen 2011). Hence, public participation can be defined as "the involvement of ordinary citizens in both decisions about and the implementation of social and economic change" (Bulkeley & Mol 2003). The European Institute for Public Participation (EIPP) defines public participation as "deliberative process by which interested or affected citizens, civil society organisations, and government actors are

involved in policy-making before a political decision is taken. By deliberation we mean a process of thoughtful discussion based on the giving and taking of reasons for choices” (EIPP 2009).

Public participation includes the participation of individuals (ordinary citizens), citizens’ initiatives and the organised public (lobbies, common interest groups), and can be conducted at multiple levels. The highest level refers to policy and legislation, the next one is developing programmes or certain planning operations and another level relates to specific projects (Arbter et al. 2007).

To which extent the interests of ordinary citizens or common interest groups are considered in decision-making processes or in what way they can affect decisions depends on the different stages of public participation. One well known typology that tries to outline these different stages is the ladder of citizen participation (see figure 2) with eight different levels created in the USA by Sherry Arnstein (1969). The lower parts of the ladder - ‘manipulation’ and ‘therapy’ - represent forms of non-participation, where powerholders try to educate or cure participants and impose their own intentions on them, just to fulfil the requirement of including them but without giving them the opportunity to actually get involved in the discussion. With participation as tokenism it is meant that participants get informed about an intervention, have the chance to comment on it and be heard and thereby give those in power an input. However, there is no guarantee that the suggestions and concerns of the participants will truly effect the decision eventually in the stages of ‘informing’, ‘consultation’ and ‘placation’. The top three levels of the ladder – ‘partnership’, ‘delegated power’ and ‘citizen control’ - give citizens the power to negotiate with powerholders, share responsibility and planning and actively influence decisions (Arnstein 1969).

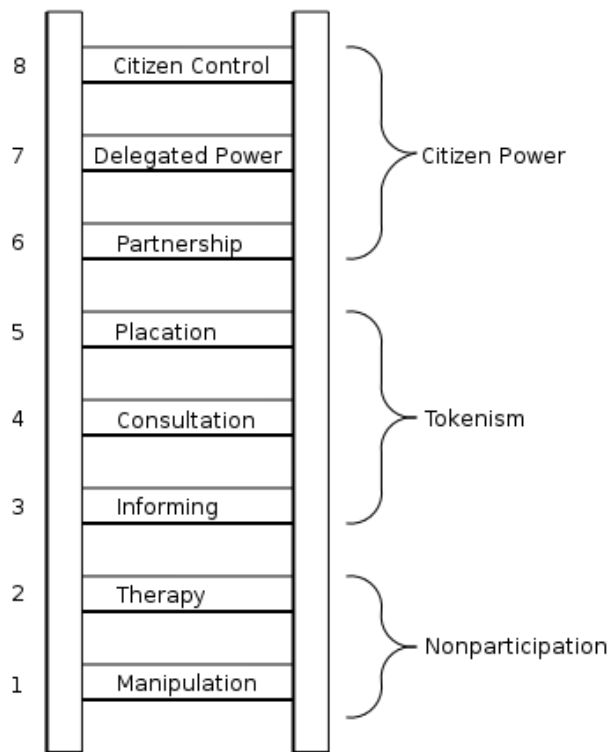


Figure 2: Ladder of citizen participation (Arnstein 1969).

Similar categories for the stages of public participation are simply ‘information’ (e.g., public meeting, inspection of official documents), ‘consultation’ (e.g., citizen panels) and decision-influencing (e.g., citizen juries, round tables) (see Figure 3 below). However, the willingness of those in power to include the ideas and concerns of ordinary citizens in the planning and decision-making process is essential at all stages (Arbter et al. 2007).

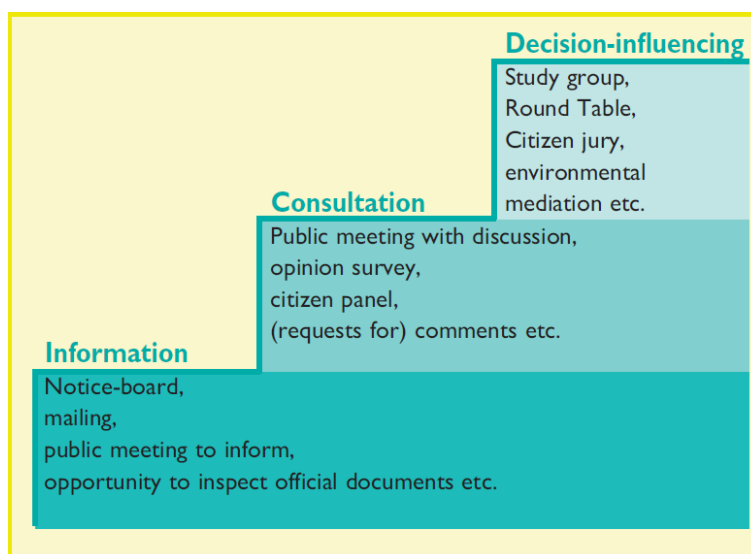


Figure 3: Stages of public participation (Arbter et al. 2007).

There are a lot of guidelines from different institutions, companies, etc. for properly organising a public participation process. In this thesis, the core elements for public participation created by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2 n.d.), the Community Development Society (Community Development Society 2017) and the Co-Intelligence Institute (Atlee 2008) are considered to be the most important elements for a successful outcome of a public participation process regarding positive individual and groups effects of the process on all participants/stakeholders, the final decisions and its legitimacy. Hence, crucial for public participation is:

- Not only to involve those who are affected in the decision-making process, but also to identify and involve those who are interested in the process or potentially affected, to integrate all relevant perspectives;
- to make all the necessary information available that is needed to contribute to the participation process in useful way;
- to make sure there is a high-quality dialogue and an appropriate discussion culture throughout the whole participation process in which participants also feel like they are being heard and appreciated
- to ensure a suitable documentation of the participation process, clear communication and transparency, also to the public and interested people who cannot participate in the process;
- not to focus too early on certain positions and suggestions, but to allow the participation process enough time, so that a wide range of perspectives can be included;
- motivating and engaging citizens to learn about and comprehend different perspectives and to get an idea of how changes can affect their community or personal lives;
- to let the participants know to what extent their input influences the decision;
- the support of sustainable decisions that reflect the interests and needs of all participants, including decision makers and that lead to long-term benefits;
- avoiding decisions that can negatively affect already disadvantaged groups
- to set up continuous participatory processes.

2.2.1 Public participation methods

There are many different methods for public participation that help to structure participation processes efficiently, are conducive to a diversified and attractive process and try to find

creative and innovative solutions. To choose the right method(s) for a certain project depends among other things on the number of participants, the available time for and the extent of the participation process, i.e. informative, consulting or decision-influencing (ÖGUT n.d.). In table 1, Rowe & Frewer (2005) summarised different key mechanism variables for public participation methods, where communication refers to the stage of information in figure 3. In the following, examples for different public participation methods as well as the WC, the analysed method in this thesis, are classified by their stage of participation or relevant type of engagement (Rowe & Frewer 2005).

Table 1: Summary of Key Mechanism Variables for public participation methods (Rowe & Frewer 2005).

<i>Mechanism Variable</i>	<i>Levels of Variable</i>	<i>Aspect of Effectiveness Potentially Influenced</i>	<i>Relevant Type of Engagement</i>
Participant selection method	Controlled Uncontrolled	Maximize relevant participants	Communication Consultation Participation
Facilitation of information elicitation	Yes No	Maximize relevant information from participants	Consultation Participation
Response mode	Unlimited/open Limited/closed	Maximize relevant information from participants	Consultation Participation
Information input	Set information Flexible information	Maximize relevant information from sponsors	Communication
Medium of information transfer	Face-to-face Non face-to-face	Maximize transfer and processing of relevant information	Communication Consultation Participation
Facilitation of aggregation	Structured combination Unstructured combination	Aggregation of participant information	Consultation Participation

Information/Communication:

- Information broadcasts
- Public hearings or public meetings

Consultation:

- Opinion polls or surveys
- Citizen panels
- Internet fora or online consultations
- Wisdom councils (WC) (for a more detailed description see chapter 2.5)

Decision-influencing:

- Citizen juries
- Round tables

2.2.2 Benefits, limitations and potential effects of public participation processes

Public participation has a lot of benefits for citizens, the government, administrators or entrepreneurs, on both a normative (i.e. referring to the opportunity to participate and to influence decisions) and an instrumental or pragmatic level (i.e. regarding the relative costs and benefits of the real factual implementation) (Moynihan 2003; Arbter et al. 2007). In general, it enhances decisions when various people with different backgrounds, experiences, knowledge, perspectives and ideas come together that would otherwise probably never have met. If various potentially affected stakeholders get involved in a public participation processes, the chances that they would identify with the outcome are higher and the general acceptance of the outcome increases. Besides that, the risk to encounter resistance after a decision has been made declines, which can save money and time (Arbter et al. 2007). There are several advantages of public participation processes for citizens. They get informed about a certain project, learn from other stakeholders and can thereby better comprehend technically difficult situations which makes it easier for them to come up with holistic solutions. Citizens have the chance to inform and convince the powerholders of a project about their perspectives and ideas and thereby contribute to more robust decisions. Furthermore, public participation often empowers citizens to get more actively involved in decision-making processes that might affect them. Benefits of public participation processes for governments are learning about the real and diverse citizen preferences which can in turn lead to a better communication between ordinary citizens and governments. Moreover, they can appropriately inform the participants about a project and additionally explain why and how different political decisions are reached. Thereby they can combat distrust and gain higher acceptance for decisions. Public participation processes also help to prevent possible litigation costs and usually contribute to a better, more effective and earlier implementation of decisions (Irvin & Stansbury 2004; Arbter et al. 2007). They provide space for facilitating conflicting interests and encourage a high-quality dialogue and collaboration. Public participation processes can make the whole implementation of a project easier for administrators and entrepreneurs, because they are probably facing less conflicts and complaints (Moynihan 2003; Arbter et al. 2007). Thus, public participation processes help to converge to the ideal democracy by trying to give citizens the right to be actively involved in and influence decision-making processes that affect them. Furthermore, they foster a more direct discourse of governments and especially public administration with citizens and thereby reinforce their relationship and the accountability of the public sector (Moynihan 2003). Nevertheless, public participation has some limits as well. For both the citizens and the governments or entrepreneurs, public participation processes are time consuming and often

cost-intensive. They are not likely to succeed if stakeholders are reluctant to participate due to bad experiences with public participation processes in the past, general distrust in such processes, or other reasons. Furthermore, it can be a disadvantage if participants from certain interest groups or with a rather similar background predominate the participation process, because organisers did not consider the different opportunities for people to have access to participation processes and did not manage to involve groups that are hard to reach, hence social diversity and the proper representativeness are missing. Another obstacle to a successful outcome is if major decisions have already been made and leave almost no applicability for public participation anymore. When there is no political will and decision-makers do not fully back a public participation process and include decisions that have been worked out together with all participants, because they are e.g. afraid of losing power, the process will probably not succeed eventually. Organising a public participation process of course entails costs, that are sometimes higher than originally expected and sometimes leave less budget for the actual implementation of a project (Irvin & Stansbury 2004; Arbter et al. 2007; Coenen 2009).

Hess et al (2015) differentiates between three levels to measure the effects of participatory dialog-oriented processes, that can be ascribed to deliberative theory. The micro level refers to the individual participants of a deliberation process and includes effects like general education (including political skills and issue knowledge), social learning and thereby resulting changes in attitudes (also including changed attitudes and acceptance towards political institutions, decisions and politicians) or behaviour, empowerment, self-determination, and an enhanced community spirit and common good orientation (for a detailed description of these effects see below). The meso level can be related to the whole group that takes part in a deliberation process and linked to effects like an improvement of building social capital, the quality of deliberation (respectful, on eye level, public-oriented, high-quality discussions and rather argumentative interactions including objective information, that enable network building and trust between participants) and to some extent to enhanced (political) inclusiveness (equal participation opportunities within the group of participants), whereby this can also be an effect of the third level (with regards to representativeness of the participant selection), the macro level. In addition, the macro level refers to the impact on policy through deliberation and implies effects such as enhanced sustainable political decisions due to the consideration of citizen needs and suggestions through the participation process (responsiveness and accountability), that can be easier legitimised by decision makers and thus are also likely to lead to an increased identification with and trust of citizenry in political institutions. Hence, on the contrary to the micro level, the macro level effects consider changes in political skills, attitudes and behaviour

of the entire citizenry. There are certainly interconnections between these 3 levels, but this has not been researched enough yet (Hess et al. 2015).

Another way of appraising public participation processes could be to look at 3 different functions. The normative function concentrates on the access and right of individuals to participate (in a democratic process) and thereby having the opportunity to actively influence decisions that affect them which empowers them and lead to higher acceptance of decisions. The substantive function focuses on the evaluation of the quality of decisions and whether it has improved through participation processes considering the different experiences, knowledge, ideas of participants. The instrumental function addresses the legitimacy of the decisions which also includes that participation processes enhance the credibility, the dedication and acceptance of decisions (Fiorino 1989; Stirling 2006; Salter et al. 2010).

When relating the 3 levels to the aforementioned functions for assessing public participation processes, the normative function would mostly comply with effects such as the enhanced political inclusiveness of the macro level, but also with the empowerment aspect of the micro level. The substantive function rather covers effects from the meso level, as both refer to the quality of deliberation. The instrumental function can be associated with effects on both the micro and the macro level in the sense of improved legitimacy and acceptance of decisions and political institutions as well as potential future commitment of stakeholders towards these decisions (Fiorino 1989; Salter et al. 2010; Hess et al. 2015).

This thesis will mainly analyse the effects of a participatory dialog-oriented process (i.e. WCs) on the micro and the meso level, consequently focussing on individual participants and the whole group of participants of a WC. An estimation of the effects on the macro level is not yet possible, because the political decision-making process of the analysed WC is still ongoing. In the following, some of the possible outcomes that are seen to be the most important ones for this thesis are explained to specify their meaning for the analysis.

Social learning

There is no general definition of social learning. It often gets mixed up with methods or situations that enable social learning (such as public participation processes), with additional possible outcomes (e.g., enhanced management of social-ecological systems) and with its purview (only individual level or wider range such as community level) (Reed et al. 2010). Researchers with different backgrounds such as sociology, psychology, political science, natural resource management and economics have varying perceptions of what social learning is, however, a lot of them are overlapping and similarities can be found (Garmendia & Stagl

2010). One crucial aspect which a lot of researchers mention can be summarised as transformative learning. This includes single-loop learning (learning about the consequences of concrete activities), double-loop learning (results in transitions of underlying presumptions and values), and to some extent even triple-loop learning (provokes norms, values and superior cognitive processes that substantiate presumptions and activities) (Reed et al. 2010; Garmendia & Stagl 2010). This transformative learning implies social interaction, collective action and reflection, where not only new facts and other relevant information are learned, but also where a true exchange of conception occurs that alters perspectives, attitudes and ideas by conviction. This can be fostered by bringing together people with various backgrounds, experiences, knowledge and ideologies. For Reed et al (2010) social learning only emerges if the previously mentioned changes “go beyond the individual to become situated within wider social units or communities of practice within society; and occur through social interactions and processes between actors within a social network, either through direct interaction, e.g. conversation, or through other media, e.g. mass media, telephone, or Web 2.0 applications” (Reed et al. 2010). Garmendia & Stagl (2010) regard social learning as a key element of sustainable development (especially at a normative dimension). Hence, to enable sustainable development, social learning implies comprehending the underlying causes of behaviour, getting to know the values, ideas and interests of other people, solidarizing with other groups also including non-humans and future generations and striving for collective benefits instead of personal ones. Social learning encourages holistic reasoning that requires learning about complexity and uncertainties on the individual, group, organisational and institutional level. Furthermore, it helps in how to handle conflicts and how to better collaborate with others, also for achieving an institutional change and collective action. All these elements of social learning should occur on multiple levels, also including location (from local to global) and time (from short term to long term) (Garmendia & Stagl 2010).

Empowerment

There is no universally agreed definition of empowerment. It is a term that is very vague and adopts various meanings depending on its users (Potter 2008; Pettit 2012). However, one general definition of empowerment could be “the capacity of individuals, groups and/or communities to take control of their circumstances, exercise power and achieve their own goals, and the process by which, individually and collectively, they are able to help themselves and others to maximize the quality of their lives” (Adams 2008). Another definition that rather focuses on the process sees empowerment as “a multi-dimensional social process that helps

people gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fosters power (that is, the capacity to implement) in people, for use in their own lives, their communities, and in their society, by acting on issues that they define as important” (Page & Czuba 1999).

With regards to public participation processes the Involve Foundation (Potter 2008) distinguishes between 3 different aspects of empowerment. De jure empowerment refers to the possibility to influence, just based on judicial, or formal legal rights which are written down in legislation, contracts or other official documents. Hence, it (normally) exists anyway and does not need to be performed. De facto empowerment is related to real influence, which means to have the power to actually affect decisions and results, because they are binding. Therefore e.g. a referendum also has de facto power. Subjective empowerment correlates to the sense of influence, i.e. whether people have the impression or perception of having influence and power on an outcome without having de facto power. It especially occurs when there is a strong community cohesion (Potter 2008).

Self-determination

In general, self-determination is often connected with 3 psychological intrinsic needs. In short, autonomy is related to the peoples need to feel like they have options and can decide on their own how to act. Competence describes being able to cope with challenges, contribute to something bigger and doing that in an effective way. Relatedness refers to the need of belongingness and the feeling of being connected to others, to look after each other (Ryan & Deci 2002). In the context of public participation processes, self-determination can be a “subjective psychological feeling that one has sufficient liberty to pursue important goals in ways that align with one’s most deeply held beliefs and cultural values” (Decaro & Stokes 2013).

Community spirit

Community spirit emerges when individuals are willing to engage themselves for the benefit of the community or a certain group (Etzioni 1993; Thompson 2008). Many researchers claim that participation processes lead to an enhanced community spirit and common good orientation amongst the participants (Warren 1992; Chambers 2003; Carpini et al. 2004; Thompson 2008; Coenen 2009).

Social capital

The concept of social capital is very broad and has been researched by several sociologists such as Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman and Robert Putnam for different sectors and reasons (Adler & Kwon 2002; Ferragina & Arrigoni 2016). This thesis rather applies the social capital concept of Robert Putnam who relates it with trust, reciprocity and (voluntary) community life. By social capital he means “features of social life - networks, norms, and trust - that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives. [...] Social capital in short, refers to social connections and the attendant norms and trust“ (Putnam 1995). In the early 2000s, the global organisations OECD and the world bank took up the idea of social capital as generally utilisable and crucial for the political and economic success of modern societies. Moreover, they suggested a measurement of social capital as an instrument for democracy and market economy (Gehmacher 2009), which is criticised by some scholars as in their opinion social capital theory has been widely used “to promote a call to social engagement without questioning the fundamental contradictions of the socio-economic system (Ferragina & Arrigoni 2016). Nevertheless, OECD formulated a, for this thesis, valuable definition of social capital as “networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate cooperation within or among groups” (OECD 2001). However, due to the vagueness of and the variety of disciplines dealing with the concept, a classification of the 2 dimensions of bonding (the trustworthy relationship and cohesion of the community within) and bridging (the openness of the insider community to strangers) as well as the following 3 levels of social capital were developed: the micro level, which refers to especially close, intimate sustaining relationships in the narrower family and circle of friends; the meso level, which includes an extended circle of acquaintances and networks; and the macro level referring to higher ideals, values and affiliations to ideal communities, regardless of personal acquaintances (Gehmacher 2009). If all three levels are well developed and in balance, they foster and complement each other (BMUKK & BMLFUW 2010).

In previous studies, the WC is credited with causing some of the effects described above. Through these effects, the WC is also assigned the potential to initiate a sustainable future development in communities and municipalities, where participation becomes an important element of the communal life and sometimes even in decision-making processes (Büro für Zukunftsfragen 2010). Thus, WCs are a way to enable more sustainable development and, after the process, might contribute to the conception of participation in a community or municipality as being a vital element for sustainable development, which emphasises the empowerment

characteristic of WCs. The next section therefore deals with the coherences and compatibilities of public participation and sustainable development.

2.3 Public participation and sustainable development

Due to the rapid ongoing globalisation and global environmental changes such as climate change, the dynamics of biophysical and social changes require a more conscious orientation towards temporally distanced and interdependent effects. Therefore, new and advanced forms of communication for collective opinion formation, decision-making and planning are necessary. Despite of a wide range of interpretations, the concepts of sustainable development and (public) participation represent a social objective orientation in which environmental sustainability, social cohesion and optimising economic development should be accomplished through citizen involvement. Thereby they symbolise guiding principles for a future-oriented society-environment interaction, that can no longer be controlled only centrally, but require a decentralised design involving diverse civil society and economic actors and citizens (Heinrichs et al. 2006).

Sustainable development and participation are central terms in important (international) legal and political documents, especially since the Brundtland report from 1987, which proposed strategies to induce an international sustainable development path, including that citizens must be involved in several ways, also via public participation, in order to change social values, attitudes and behaviour to guarantee a sustainable transition (WCED 1987). Other relevant policy documents were the Rio Declaration and the Agenda 21, resulting from the UNCED in Rio den Janeiro in 1992. In the Rio Declaration Principle 10 emphasises public participation especially regarding environmental issues (United Nations 1992b). The Agenda 21 provides a detailed action plan on a social, environmental, and economic level to counter further deterioration in the human and environmental situation and to ensure the sustainable use of natural resources. One part of it is the Local Agenda 21 which outlines a programme of action at community level where participation plays a crucial role (United Nations 1992a). In Europe, the ‘Charter of European Sustainable Cities and Towns Towards Sustainability’ also known as Aalborg Charter from 1994 obligates signatory states and communities to develop long-term strategies complying with the Local Agenda 21, and by doing this involving individual citizens and communities on a large scale (European Commission 1994). The Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters usually know as Aarhus Convention from 1998 is a very important document that allows the public rights to access information about the environment, public participation and

access to justice in certain decisions relevant to the environment. In general, it concentrates on the interplay of the public and public authorities (UNECE 1998). The White Paper on European Governance from 2001 relates to the way in which the EU is using the power that is given by its citizens. It establishes general principles for good governmental and administrative practice and underlines the inclusion of the civil society for effective policy shaping and decision-making processes at all EU levels (European Commission 2001). The aim of the Aalborg +10 Conference was to develop a common understanding of sustainability. Hence the Aalborg commitments including ten subject areas such as good governance with a focus on citizen involvement, sustainable management and planning, health, mobility, etc. were created as a framework to better embed sustainability across municipalities at local levels (European Commission 2004). On an international scale, the Agenda Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development particularly focuses on developing countries and solidarity of other countries with them. In order to achieve sustainable development, political participation should be ensured especially for women (United Nations 2015).

Like in (international) legal and policy documents, the terms sustainable development and (public) participation also became common knowledge in scientific papers and research. Many publications imply that (public) participation is a precondition for achieving sustainable development (Kasemir et al. 2003; Garmendia & Stagl 2010; Heinrichs et al. 2011). This is often evident in literature that deals with public participation and environmental decision-making for sustainable development. Several researchers state that citizens should be engaged in debates about environmental risk and policy to achieve sustainable development. They often criticise the information-deficit model by claiming that just informing citizens about environmental risks is not enough to change their perceptions and behaviour (O 'riordan et al. 1999; Owens 2000; Bulkeley & Mol 2003). Thus, participatory approaches can help to "bridge the gap between a scientifically-defined environmental problem and the experiences, values and practices of actors who are at the root of both cause and solution of such problems. [Furthermore,] participation has an important [also social] learning component for the participants which is reflected in the enhanced quality of, and the support for, environmental decision-making" (Bulkeley & Mol 2003) (Newig & Fritsch 2009).

For the general understanding, acceptance and sustainable use of technologies, the involvement of normal citizens in technology assessments is useful, because political decisions about technology control cannot be made solely on the basis of scientific knowledge. Hence, technology assessment also performs social learning processes, which help to mediate between science and the public. Furthermore, the social, ecological and ethical impacts of technology

need to be considered to ensure a sustainable application (Baranek & Walk 2005; Genus & Coles 2006).

Regarding political institutions and public administration, researchers often refer to a changed perception and attitude towards political institutions after a public participation processes. The opportunity to take part in a decision-making process or at least influence a decision to a certain extent, and to gain insight in the daily routine and the complexity of politics is supposed to lead to a higher acceptance of and an increased trust in political institutions among citizens. Furthermore, it not only encourages citizens, but also private and economic actors to autonomously engage themselves for future sustainable development. Moreover, political institutions and public administration profit from an improved quality in decisions and less resistance and complaints about certain decisions (Bloomfield et al. 2001; Irvin & Stansbury 2004; Baranek & Walk 2005; Pincock 2011; Hess et al. 2015).

In the context of development aid the involvement of the local, affected population in development projects is seen as vital to guaranteeing sustainability in development projects. The participation of the locals as stakeholders is supposed to lead to efficiency, effectiveness, longevity and acceptance of the outcomes. In addition, it is a way to empower the population, which enhances self-determination and thereby makes them less dependent from often corrupt government interventions (Baranek & Walk 2005; Lyons et al. 2001).

Gender mainstreaming is very important concerning sustainability, not only regarding development aid projects. The access to social, economic and cultural resources and the opportunity for political participation is still gender-specific and socially unequally distributed. Therefore, it is crucial to stress equal participation possibilities for public participation processes to ensure that all relevant aspects and perceptions, especially the ones of women, are integrated (Baranek & Walk 2005).

Considering the aforementioned policy documents and several aspects of participation and sustainable development, it can be seen that the involvement of citizens takes an essential role in various fields, albeit the reasons and contexts vary. On the one hand, public participation is seen as a way or a method to achieve sustainable development, in other words as means to an end. Due to the vague definition of sustainability, the involvement of citizens is needed to include the society's manifold perceptions of sustainability and to create binding, socially shared values and objectives. The purpose of public participation here is to exchange knowledge and experiences between citizens and governments or other initiators of public participation processes, to foster dialogue and social learning between participants, to engage citizens to get actively involved in decision-making processes as well as to improve the legitimacy of policy

measures. On the other hand, participation is perceived as value in itself and as a fundamental element of sustainability. This refers particularly to concepts that regard inter- and intragenerational justice as well as gender equality as crucial part of sustainability. All in all, participation can be a social design method that is both objective and path of sustainable development (Baranek & Walk 2005).

As already reflected in the above mentioned sections, public participation processes have the potential to enable more sustainable development also by changing attitudes of participants (Owens 2000). So far, analyses rather focused on changes in attitudes on the micro level that included changed perceptions or values of political institutions and politicians, of fellow human beings (in the own community and also globally) and their opinions as well as of their own capability of being (politically) voluntarily active (Nabatchi 2012; Stafinski et al. 2012). However, no literature specifically dealing with how participating in public participation processes might affect the environmental attitude of participants, was found. Many scholars claim that citizens with a positive environmental attitude are more likely to contribute to sustainable development (Iizuka 2000; Hassan et al. 2010; Razman 2012; Crotty & Hall 2013). Therefore, this thesis especially focuses on a possible change of environmental attitudes, referred to as environmental awareness in the next section.

2.4 Public participation and environmental awareness

There is no general definition of environmental awareness. It is often referred to as the understanding and concern about the fragility of the environment and the importance to protect it (Neugebauer 2004; Kuckartz & Anke 2006; Chrebah 2009). There are also multidimensional concepts of environmental awareness, which usually include the elements environmental knowledge (knowledge about ecological coherences), environmental attitude (values towards the environment) and environmental behaviour (individual behaviour in relevant daily routines) (Neugebauer 2004; Chrebah 2009). But what do citizens actually understand by environmentally friendly behaviour? According to surveys that were conducted in Europe, citizens perceive the following actions as environmentally friendly behaviour:

- Separation of waste for recycling;
- Reducing waste (avoiding over-packaged products, choosing products with a longer life or products that are repairable, rechargeable batteries, no plastic bottles or cans, sharing items);

- cutting down energy consumption (turning down air conditioning/heating/lighting, not leaving appliances on stand-by, buying energy efficient appliances);
- cutting down water consumption;
- more environmentally-friendly way of travelling (by foot, bicycle, public transport);
- choosing local and if possible organic products, reducing meat consumption (avoiding products that come from far away or are produced in a way that is harmful for the environment);
- buying environmentally friendly products marked with an environmental label;
- reducing car use for environmental reasons;
- reducing food waste (through smarter purchasing, storage, preparation and use of leftovers);
- considering environmental aspects when making larger purchases (travelling, building a house, heating, electricity, using energy from renewables);
- engaging in environmental and climate protection projects/campaigns (European Commission 2014; BMUB & UBA 2015).

The most common goals of deliberative and participatory democracy are to involve citizens in decision-making processes that affect them, to make them realise how uncertain and complex some issues and decisions are and to generally encourage them to get (politically) active for the common good and participate in solving (local) issues (Papadopoulos & Warin 2007). Insofar, public participation processes may help making participants better aware of environmental risks such as climate change. Perhaps there is even a chance of the public participation processes having an effect on the participants and their attitudes towards the environment change (Heinrichs et al. 2011). Although such attitude changes are not the main objective of deliberative and participatory democracy, one could deduce from the literature about whether public participation processes can improve environmental decision-making, that through better information, social learning, a certain identification with a decision and therefore higher acceptance and better compliance of citizens with a decision, there might evolve an enhanced environmental awareness in participants from taking part in public participation processes. Furthermore, it is often signified that environmental values emerge out of debate, discussion and challenge (O 'riordan et al. 1999; Owens 2000; Bulkeley & Mol 2003; Newig 2007; Garmendia & Stagl 2010). Thus, one aim of this thesis is to analyse in what way WCs influence the environmental awareness of participants. But, it must be noted that this is very hard to measure because there is no causal mechanism behind it. Nevertheless, as environmentally

aware citizens are seen to be more capable of promoting sustainable development (Iizuka 2000), this thesis tries to find out how awareness raising effects can be related to environmental awareness as well.

However, this thesis also takes into account, that environmental awareness on its own does not always lead to environmentally friendly behaviour. Although the two explained concepts below are not used for the analysis, they are considered to be valuable to point out the critical issue of what people say and what they eventually do in real life. This is shortly discussed in the next section.

The Gap Between Environmental Awareness and Action

As stated in the previous section, a transformation of participants into more environmentally aware citizens might occur through public participation processes. Nevertheless, environmental awareness does not necessarily lead to environmentally friendly behaviour. There is still the issue with the value-action gap which means that individual attitudes or (personal, cultural, etc.) values do not correspond with the individuals' actions (Kollmuss & Agyeman 2002; Godemann & Michelsen 2011). Two concepts to explain this gap that are worth mentioning here are the theory of reasoned action (TRA) and its extension, the theory of planned behaviour (TPB), developed by Fishbein and Ajzen. TRA is illustrated in Figure 4 and assumes that behavioural intentions are a function of striking behaviour or beliefs about the probability that performing a specific behaviour will lead to a concrete outcome (= behaviour). The beliefs that underlie the behavioural intention are split up into behavioural (beliefs that influence the attitude of an individual to perform the behaviour) and normative (beliefs that affect the subjective norm of an individual to perform the behaviour).

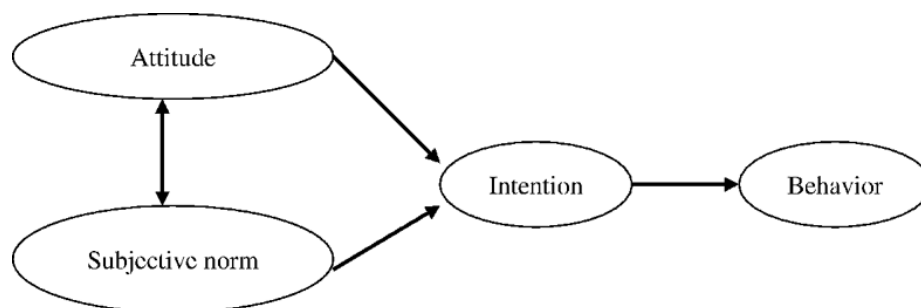


Figure 4: Theory of reasoned action (Fishbein & Ajzen 1975).

Furthermore, Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) describe 3 conditions that could influence the extent of the relationship between intentions and behaviour. Firstly, “the measure of intention and the

behavioural criterion [must] correspond with respect to their levels of specificity” (Madden et al. 1992), which means that to project a specific behaviour, the intention has to be equally specific. The second condition refers to the “stability of intentions between time of measurement and performance of behavior” (Madden et al. 1992) and the third to the extent of which performing the intention is willingly controlled by the individual (Fishbein & Ajzen 1975).

Figure 5 illustrates the concept TPB, which includes the same parameters as TRA, but extends the third condition of the TRA concept with the parameter perceived behavioural control (PBC). This parameter expresses beliefs to have the required resources and possibilities to perform a given behaviour. The higher these beliefs are, the greater should be the PBC over the behaviour. The PBC can either directly affect behaviour (see dashed line), or indirectly through intentions, whereby here PBC has motivational impacts on intentions. The direct effect is substantive when “(a) the behaviour in question is likely to have some aspect not under volitional control and (b) perceptions of control over the behavior are accurate” (Madden et al. 1992).

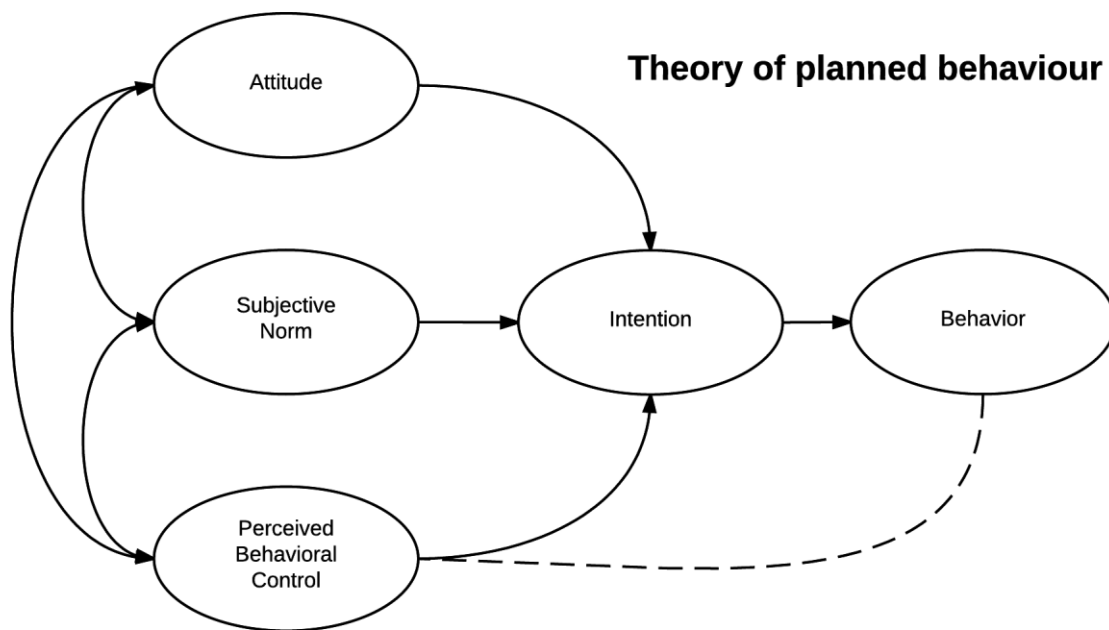


Figure 5: Theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen 1991).

In the context of this thesis, these two concepts can be kept in mind in relation to empowerment and self-determination. If participation processes make participants believe that they have the required capacities, resources, and the possibilities to influence decision-making processes which can lead to a certain outcome, they are more likely to engage themselves in more sustainable development. In the best case, this happens not only on a private, but also on a

political level. Consequently, the next section describes how a WC is organised, conducted and which important elements of a WC might lead to the aforementioned effects, especially on the participants, that enable more sustainable development.

2.5 Wisdom councils in Austria

The WC (in Austria: BürgerInnen-Rat) is a participation method originally developed by Jim Rough (USA) in the 1990s. It is a simple, inexpensive and rapid opportunity to encourage citizens' autonomy, empowerment and self-organisation. 12 to 15 citizens of a municipality or a region are randomly selected and invited to work together for one and a half or two days. The random selection of ordinary citizens without special qualifications or any foreknowledge is crucial to guarantee that only personal individual views are represented and not lobby views. The participants of the WC are encouraged to identify topics and issues they want to discuss within these one and a half or two days (original version of WC), or they discuss a certain, broadly defined topic or question that is given in advance (Creative Insight Council¹). The whole process is moderated and supported by a dynamic facilitator (see dynamic facilitation below) who helps the participants to develop ideas and proposals to solve and enhance the discussed issues. At the end of the WC the results are documented in a collective statement which is then, together with reflections about the WC process, presented to the public in the form of a citizens' café (CC). In the CC the results are once more debated and reflected on by the public and thus again enriched. In an optimal case, the outcomes of the WC and the CC are discussed and reviewed in a responder group, consisting of representatives of politics, administration and the WC, to ensure that the results are integrated in policy-making or the projects in question in a transparent and reasonable way. Thereby decision makers are obliged to consider the results and wishes of citizens and to justify why certain proposals have been integrated in political plans or not (Büro für Zukunftsfragen 2010; Strele 2012; Büro für Zukunftsfragen 2014).

2.5.1 Dynamic facilitation

Dynamic facilitation (DF) is a moderation technique that is especially suited for complicated, tricky and difficult topics because of its specific conversation and discussion culture. It is the centrepiece of a WC, because it takes into account that human thinking is generally not linear,

¹ Please note that in this thesis just the term wisdom council is used, although most of the conducted wisdom councils in Austria, as well as the analysed one in this thesis, can be classified with creative insight councils and are both called 'BürgerInnen-Rat' in Austria (Strele 2012).

but rather erratically follows impulses and emotions. Furthermore, DF better considers that humans do not always think and act rationally, but are often influenced by their subconscious and emotions. Hence, it offers space for spontaneous creative breakthroughs, which are rare in normal moderation techniques that are usually characterised by rational thinking and following the linear structure of defining the issue, the reasons for the issue and then creating possible solutions (Lederer 2009; Büro für Zukunftsfragen 2010). According to the developer of DF Jim Rough, the special conversational style in a DF establishes a process of thinking and talking that he defines as choice-creating, fostering trust, mutual respect, collective thinking and community spirit (Rough 1997).

During a DF session, participants are motivated to actively listen to each other, spontaneously express and exchange various facts, opinions, concerns, wishes and ideas in the discussion, reflect on them and jointly develop often unexpected solutions. The facilitator documents all core statements of the participants and directly assigns them to the following 4 categories: challenges/questions (“How can we achieve ...?”), solutions/ideas, concerns/objections (collection of doubts that were expressed regarding the solutions) and information/perspectives (all kinds of information, no matter if it is true or false) (Büro für Zukunftsfragen 2010; Büro für Zukunftsfragen 2014). The challenges for dynamic facilitators are to always stay objective, to avoid persuading participants to stick to the topic but to assist them in addressing and expressing problems that are bothering them, to listen deeply to all participants and to constantly record all relevant statements in the right category during the DF session. This facilitation style is slowing down the communication in the group and thereby helps to reveal the real concerns of participants, to promote active listening, to give the participants the feeling that they are fully heard by everyone and to create a feeling of connectedness in the group (Zubizarreta 2006; Strele 2012).

2.5.2 Qualities, challenges and effects of wisdom councils

The random selection of citizens usually from the resident registration (based on sex, age, and sometimes also educational level, migration background or place of residence) for a WC ensures a certain representativeness of the participants, which is often missing in other selection procedures such as self-selection, where the participation is open to all citizens who then can voluntarily and consciously participate. However, due to the small group size, it is simply impossible for a WC to be fully representative for the population. Furthermore, it is not absolutely essential to guarantee representativeness in a WC as the results are not binding but rather have a deliberative character. Nevertheless, the heterogeneity of a group is important to

avoid biases in the process. Because the participation of the selected citizens for a WC is voluntary, the response rate often varies. Reasons for denials were mostly a lack of time, a lack of perception regarding the invitation and a lack of interest and distrust. To counteract at least the last two reasons, a better formulation of the invitation in general and more personal calls to explain the aim of the WC and persuade citizens to participate might be useful (Strele 2012). With regards to inclusiveness, quantitative inclusiveness, i.e. the duration of speaking time, is less important in WCs than the qualitative inclusiveness, which refers to the feeling of all participants to have contributed everything they wanted and needed to the process. The results often create basic conditions which would be indispensable for further elaboration of technical solutions. Moreover, also innovative holistic solutions are developed sometimes, that might not always consider technical constraints, but are ideas that sometimes even experts have not thought about. All in all, the quality of WCs is rather the effects of the process than the actual results. Nonetheless, good communication as well as inner and outer transparency of the process and the results, and long-term feedback processes are crucial to ensure that participants of WCs and their effort (as well as the whole community) still feel appreciated and motivated to continue their engagement in the future (Strele 2012; Büro für Zukunftsfragen 2014).

To summarise, a WC can be categorised as a deliberative approach which is conducted in currently existing democratic structures. This is because WCs are dialogue oriented, have a deliberative character, the participation process is central and participants formulate a collective statement but do not make a final decision. Hence, due to the lack of decisional power, WCs can be classified as part of the consultation stage. However, WCs are ascribed to have a great empowerment effect as well, which is an important characteristic of participatory democracy (Büro für Zukunftsfragen 2010). Regarding the public participation key mechanism variables of Rowe and Frewer (2005), the participant selection mode of WCs is controlled, but as stated above, randomly selected citizens who are as representative for a community as possible are chosen. The participation process is facilitated by a dynamic facilitator which implies a face to face information transfer and an unlimited open response mode that aims for creative breakthroughs, choice-creating, fostering trust, mutual respect, collective thinking and community spirit. The information input can rather be classified as flexible, because WCs consist of ordinary citizens, who are usually not representing any interest groups, sponsors etc. If there are already some project plans, they are normally just shortly presented at the beginning of a WC by a politician, sponsor, etc. The facilitation of aggregation is structured by noting down everything what has been said in the WC directly on the 4 flipcharts with the categories

challenges/questions, solutions/ideas, concerns/objections and information/perspectives, which ensures a high quality dialogue and is likely to result in a collective statement including sustainable recommendations (Rowe & Frewer 2005; Büro für Zukunftsfragen 2010).

3. Methodology

At the beginning, a literature review provided information about the fundamental concepts of sustainability, public participation and its potential effects. Furthermore, evaluation reports of WC projects delivered the necessary information about WCs and their procedure.

Based on this literature and my research questions, I made the decision that analysing the effects of WCs on its participants asks for a qualitative approach and can be best done through a case study. Hence, I choose a one-shot case study in order to analyse these effects via semi-structured qualitative interviews. I selected a case in the region Bregenzerwald mainly because of the opportunity to use the method of participatory observation throughout the whole WC process to better understand the dynamics in the process and to comprehend the background, social and regional setting of the specific case. Based on the literature review and the experiences made through the participatory observation, I created a semi-structured qualitative interview guide. Based on that, I tried to elicit which changes (concerning general education, social learning, empowerment, self-determination, community spirit and environmental awareness) do participants perceive and experience by taking part in a WC as an example of a public participation and to find out what the implications of these changes are for enabling more sustainable development. I interviewed more than two thirds of the participants of the WC in the region Bregenzerwald.

After conducting the interviews, I transcribed the recordings and analysed them, using a slightly modified version of the method of Meuser and Nagel (1991).

3.1 Study design

This section describes the study design of the thesis. It includes the selection of the case, the qualitative methods of participatory observation and qualitative semi-structured interviews, it refers to the reliability and validity of the study and outlines the data sources as well.

3.1.1 Selecting a case

A case study is an empirical research approach that “investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin 2009). The detailed contextual examination often led to theoretical innovation in the past and favours descriptive-interpretive elements which helps determining specific processes between causes and impacts (Given 2008). However, the drawback of case studies is that no case equals another case, which makes it hard to generalise

from a single case to others. Due to the fact that one person is generating and analysing all information, there is also the risk of biases in the data collection (Bryman 2012).

The research design of this case study is a one-shot case study design. It is characterised by an investigation of a single group of people after a certain interference occurred. By conducting interviews, the effect of the interference can be evaluated. One pitfall of this research design is, that there is no pre-test and no control group which means that observed changes are not necessarily related to some specific interference (Bernard 2006). Thus, detected changes in attitude or behaviour of participants in this study might not only derive from participating in the WC.

Reasons for choosing the case in the region Bregenzwald were, first, because of the opportunity to observe the whole WC process and thereby better understand the dynamics in the WC and the social and regional conditions. This approach is seen to be preferable to another option i.e. analysing the effects of WCs on participants of different WCs, because it is easier to compare the results of the interviews when all participants attend the same WC, discuss about the same topic and live in the same municipality. Furthermore, the topic of that WC (How can we create an attractive centre in the municipality?) was a common one (in terms of spatial planning and design) for WCs in the state of Vorarlberg, when thinking about this WC as an exemplifying case (see below) (Büro für Zukunftsfragen 2014). Moreover, there was a higher amount of participants in the WC than usual, i.e. 23 in comparison to around 12 participants, which increased the chances of getting enough interview partners (Baker & Edwards 2012) later on.

Regarding the question whether the findings of a case study can be generalised and applied to other contexts, there are different types of cases. The critical one, where a researcher with a good elaborated theory hopes to better understand the conditions in which the assumption will be confirmed or not, by picking a specific case. The extreme or unique case is chosen due to intrinsic interests of a researcher which make the case substantially unique. An exemplifying case is selected because it represents either a wider category of cases or the right context to answer particular research questions. Furthermore, it enables a researcher to investigate crucial social processes. If there is the chance to examine a phenomenon that has so far been unavailable for scientific research, it is called a revelatory case. The longitudinal case is mainly chosen because it can be analysed repeatedly over time and is often part of other types of case (Yin 2009). The case in the region Bregenzwald can be seen as an exemplifying case, as the goal is to roughly represent the effects of WCs on the participants and to focus especially on the social process that occurs. Since a lot of WCs with similar topics were conducted in the

state of Vorarlberg already, this case can be representative to a certain extent. Mainly, because evaluations of WCs show that there is almost always an empowerment, social learning and awareness raising effect. Moreover, because sustainability is an underlying concept of basically all public participation processes (at least in theory), especially in WCs (Büro für Zukunftsfragen 2014). The objective was to elicit the effects of public participation processes on participants such as learning something new, having a better understanding of other views, changing one's own perception of community spirit in the municipality or enhancing the personal commitment for a sustainable development in the municipality. Moreover, there was another objective to investigate how the personal perception of participants regarding environmentally conscious behaviour related to mobility, consumption and energy has changed.

3.1.2 Reliability and validity

Case studies are sometimes criticised and ascribed a lack of quality proof with regards to the social research evaluation criteria reliability and validity. Usually reliability and validity are criteria that are more intensively applied in quantitative research. However, the objective of case studies is not to verify one truth, but rather to get a more detailed view of the explored case and thereby, based on an in-depth analysis, widen and generalise certain aspects of theory (Yin 2009).

In short, reliability questions whether the outcomes of a study are repeatable or not (Bryman 2012). I tried to make this study as reliable as possible through the concretisation of the theoretical concepts, as well as a clear documentation and description of the data collection and the steps in the analysis.

Validity refers to the question of whether a study actually measures what it should measure, implying that the theoretical concepts used in the study have to comply as closely with the empirical findings as possible and vice versa (Given 2008). There are different types of validation. Measurement/construct validity is concerned with the question of whether a measure reflects the underlying concept. In this study, the collection of data is based on a concretisation of concepts deriving from literature about the WCs and public participation processes and the participatory observation. Internal validity is related to the question how trustworthy the conclusions drawn from the empirical data are and how they correspond with reality (ibid). In this study, I tried to prevent any bias in the creation of the interview guide by avoiding leading questions and staying as objective and neutral as possible, also when conducting the analysis. External validity questions whether the findings of a study can be representative for other research contexts. This was reflected in the drawbacks of (one shot) case studies and the

description of this WCs study as an exemplifying case above. Ecological validity evaluates if the social scientific research setting was embedded in the people's 'everyday natural social habitat'(Bryman 2012). This partly applies for the conducted study. That is because the WC was conducted in the municipality of the interviewees, hence, most interviewees did not have to deal with complete strangers, but the discussions were moderated by a dynamic facilitator and thus not reflecting the everyday discussions of the participants.

3.1.3 Qualitative method

The main qualitative method applied in this thesis were semi-structured qualitative interviews with participants of one WC in the region Bregenzerwald. Additionally, a participant observation was carried out at all three stages of the WC: in the WC itself, in the citizen café (CC) and in the responder group.

Participant observation is characterised by the direct involvement of the observer in social processes in the examined social context. The observer participates in this context with a pre-defined social role and acts according to this role. The purpose is to seek immediate insights in the natural behaviour of people in particular situations and to understand the values and norms on which this natural behaviour is based on (Atteslander 2010).

For Atteslander (2010) important dimensions of observation are the degree of structure, openness and participation. The observation strategy applied in this thesis was unstructured, open and passive. Unstructured means that the observer does not follow any pre-constructed observation scheme. Open implies that the participants know that they are being observed and passive indicates that the observer participates only to a very limited degree in the examined social setting (Atteslander 2010).

The data collection for this study happened through field notes taken during the 3 phases of the WC and a more detailed revision of these field notes on the respective following days. I could only conduct the participatory observation in the WC in one of the two workshop groups during the dynamic facilitation process. However, when the two workshop groups were merged again one could see that almost the same problems and solutions were discussed in both groups. While taking field notes, I attempted to document:

- general data such as the number of participants (in the citizen's café only an estimated number), their sex, their estimated age, and detailed description of the setting where all phases of the WC process took place and the dates and times

- the procedure of the WC process, which methods were applied, how these methods were accepted/worked
- the behaviour and interactions of and between the participants
- the social setting
- whether a certain regularity could be detected
- reactions to external influences, e.g. the French documentary film team in the WC workshop
- special circumstances - striking and concise happenings like e.g. disagreements, dominant participants, creative breakthroughs, etc.

Besides the advantages like a detailed description of the examined events, there are also constraints of participant observation such as limited human cognitive ability. Furthermore, personal characteristics of the observer like gender, ethnicity and age can influence the observation. Moreover, a researcher bias might arise due to the interpretive frames of each researcher. As an open participation was applied, it has to be considered, that the presence of an observer will most likely alter the context that is examined which can lead to doubts regarding the plausibility of the data generation (Given 2008; Atteslander 2010; Kawulich 2005).

Semi-structured interviews are a form of interrogation and qualitative data collection, where predefined open-ended questions are asked in an undetermined order dependent of the responses of the interviewee (Given 2008). The questions are based on an interview guide with questions or at least fixed topics that try to cover all fields of interest of the study (Bryman 2012). It is important that the questions are simple and easy formulated without any technical terms, short, concrete, not leading, neutral, avoid hypothetical formulations, one-dimensional and allow both positive and negative response possibilities (Atteslander 2010). The intentions of conducting interviews can either be explorative or hypothesis-testing. An exploratory interview is rather open and has only a sparse structure. The interviewer presents the subject of interest to the interviewee and continues with questions reacting to the responses and insights given by the interviewee and thereby obtains new perspectives. Hypothesis-testing interviews are more structured and standardised and try to check out hypotheses about perceptions about the study subject of the interviewee (Kvale 2007). The purpose of the interviews conducted for this thesis is exploratory, as the aim was to find out in what way the WC affected participants, and not to test certain hypotheses.

The applied interview guide in this thesis is based on the literature review, the final report of the WC, where all the solutions and future measures of the WC, the CC and the responder group are documented, and the field notes and experiences from the participatory observation. It consists of 4 topic areas, one general entry question, several open formulated questions for each topic with main questions, follow-up questions and alternative questions, and one closing question. The 4 topic areas can be summarised as (social) learning, community spirit, environmental awareness and future commitment. When creating the interview guide I tried to consider the criteria of Atteslander (2010) mentioned above for formulating questions.

The objective of interviews in general is to gather knowledge about the research topic from the interviewees point of view. That is why qualitative interviews seemed to be the right choice for this thesis, as the aim of the interviews in this thesis was to analyse the effects of the WC on its participants and to find out how these effects can be related to general education, social learning, empowerment, self-determination, community spirit and environmental awareness. To know how many interviewees are necessary to have representative results for the analysed WC, a proper number of interviewees for this thesis was derived from experienced researchers (Baker & Edwards 2012).

3.1.4 Data sources

I collected the principal data sources for this thesis through semi-structured qualitative face to face interviews with 16 out of 23 participants of a WC conducted in a municipality in the region Bregenzerwald. I contacted them via telephone or e-mail and interviewed them in a local bar in the centre of the municipality. Additional sources are field notes from the participant observations of all three stages of the WC process (WC, CC and responder group), which were conducted to better understand the context of the case. Moreover, the final report of the whole WC process (Büro für Zukunftsfragen 2016) was used as well, in order to have an overview of the results of the WC process and a basis for the interview guide.

I conducted the interviews over 8 days between the 21st and 28th of November 2016. The interviews lasted between 48 minutes and 1 hour and 44 minutes, so the mean length of an interview was 1 hour and 16 minutes. 8 interviewees were female and 8 were male. The youngest interviewee was 20, the oldest 69 years old, the mean age was 48 years. 10 of the interviewees have been living in the municipality since their birth, the rest for decades and only one person below 10 years. 2 of the interviewees have a university degree, 3 have finished compulsory school and the rest has either finished an apprenticeship or have a higher school certificate. 11 of the 16 interviewees have children (see overview in Appendix B). All

interviews took place at the same location, in a bar in the centre of the municipality. I used the same interview guide for all interviewees, the only difference was that in rare cases some alternative questions were not asked to all interviewees, which is noted through photos of the interview guide after each interview. After each interview, short reflections of the interviewer about the flow of the interview and possible improvements for conducting the interviews were digitally recorded. All interviews were done in German.

3.2 Analysis strategy

This section describes the analysis strategy of the thesis. It includes the single steps of the deployed qualitative data analysis method of Meuser and Nagel (1991) and examples to show, how these steps were applied.

3.2.1 Data analysis

In this thesis, I used the qualitative data analysis method of Meuser and Nagel (1991) in a slightly modified version. This evaluation method combines the methods of the documentary interpretation of Bohnsack (1989), the narrative interviews of Schütze (1981) and the objective hermeneutics of Oevermann (1979). It is an interpretative procedure characterised by an easing of the test criteria for the validity of the interpretation, such as the context-dependent interpretation of statements and the sequential text reconstruction. Originally it was developed for expert interviews, but it can be applied for this thesis as well, because it focuses on thematic units and on content-related passages scattered over the texts, and not on the sequentiality of statements per interview (Meuser & Nagel 1991). This is relevant because the aim of the interviews is rather to find out how the WC has affected the participants and not to check whether predestined effects have occurred how many times. Normally the method is based on the six steps transcription, paraphrasing, coding, thematic comparison, sociological conceptualisation (in this thesis – theoretical conceptualisation) and theoretical generalisation (ibid). However, in this thesis, paraphrasing the transcripts is not seen as highly relevant to for the analysis and is therefore skipped. Furthermore, this thesis does not aim for confirming or disproving a certain theoretical hypothesis or to create a certain theory, that is why the last part of the theoretical generalisation is left out. All steps have been done in German, only the terms for the theoretical concepts have always been used in English. In the following, the steps adopted from Meuser and Nagel are explained and exemplified.

A) Transcription

The interpretation of the data requires a transcription of the digitally recorded 16 interviews which I performed with the programme f4transcript. I grammatically adjusted the spoken language to High German and registered breaks as well as disturbances. As the interview intention was explorative, I noted every spoken word (sometimes with abbreviations) so that no possibly important information is left out, except for word repetitions and dialect habits (f.i., “oder”). The names of the municipality and neighbouring towns were not directly mentioned and gesture and facial expressions were not considered (see Appendix C).

B) Coding

This step requires a thematic arrangement of the transcript passages for which the terminology of the interviewees is taken up and in favourable circumstances might even be applied directly. It is possible to ascribe more codes to the same passage, if it covers several topics. It is allowed and sometimes even necessary to dissolve the sequentiality of the transcripts, also within passages, but the reference remains the transcript of a single interview (Meuser & Nagel 1991). For this analysis, I did the coding with the qualitative data analysis & research software atlasti. Sometimes the terminology of interviewees was directly applied as a code, but most of the time the codes rather described the meaning of what the interviewee said in a specific passage. Hence, I attempted to determine the latent (unconscious) meaning of the text in both a deductive and inductive way, mainly following the epistemological approach of objective hermeneutics of Oevermann (Wernet 2006). Codes were not assigned to obvious irrelevant sections, e.g. if an interviewee totally got off the track. I defined the meaning of a code immediately after creating it, and if necessary redefined it after revising the code allocation. Furthermore, I formed code groups that represent codes with a certain coherence between each other. In total, I created 89 codes and ascribed them to 10 code groups.

Example 1:

Quotation:

IP16: „(...) ich wohne einen km von meiner Arbeitsstätte entfernt und ich gehe und fahre jetzt mehr also mit dem Fahrrad, E-bike, also sogar bewusst. Ich bin ja sonst ein bequemer Hund gewesen und es ist eigentlich eine (...) ja reine Kopfsache eigentlich. Vor allem wenn ich so mitbekomme, wie viele von den 23 Teilnehmern ins Land rauspendeln sogar im Bus sitzen,

oder wie sie erzählt haben sie müssen am Morgen um halb sieben oder sogar um sechs fahren, dass sie ohne viel Verkehr rauskommen. Somit ist es eine absolute Bewusstseinsbildung wieder gewesen. Ich will jetzt nicht sagen, dass ich es immer tue, aber eindeutig ein kleines Umdenken.“ #00:38:52-0#

Code: Awareness raising – Mobility

Code group: awareness raising – environmental awareness

Code definition: The WC resulted in raising a person's awareness about mobility. The person more consciously thinks about how he or she moves forward.

Example 2:

Quotation:

IP04: „Eigentlich, dass ich (...) ich habe nicht gedacht, dass ich mich überhaupt traue da mitzumachen, oder (...) je den Mund aufmachen, (...) und in der Runde hast du das Gefühl da gehörst du dazu und man horcht auf dich?! Und (...) das Selbstbewusstsein in dem Sinn, dass man überhaupt solche Themen in Anspruch nimmt und (...) aufgreift ist schon gestiegen.“ #00:06:46#

Code: Political self-confidence

Code group: Motivation - engagement/commitment, personal action

Code definition: WC led to a higher self-confidence in political engagement, and was encouraging / motivating for a person to engage her-/himself more in the political life in municipality.

C) Thematic comparison

At this stage, the analysis goes beyond the single transcripts. The strategy corresponds to that of the coding mentioned above, but at this step thematically similar passages from different interviews are bundled. The coding should still be text-oriented and a constant validation and if needed revision of the thematical assignments is important. The results of the thematic comparison are to be examined continuously by the statements of the interviews on validity and

on completeness. For this thesis, I did this step by creating reports of every single code group with atlasti. This means that the passages of all interviews with the same code that belong to the same code group are bundled and put in one report. Then I inserted these reports in an Excel file, arranged by code groups, where I conducted the coding for the thematic comparison and if necessary also revised the thematical assignments. An illustration of this step can be found in Appendix D.

D) Theoretical conceptualisation

Only now there is a detachment from the texts and the terminology of the interviewees. The common parts in the results of the thematic comparison are once again allocated to categories representing theoretical concepts. The process of this category formation implies on the one hand, a subsuming of parts under a general concept of validity, on the other hand a reconstruction of the general concept applicable to the actual passage as recorded. Hence, the formerly created text based terms and codes are now translated into theoretical concepts (Meuser & Nagel 1991). I did this step in the same Excel file that was used for the thematic comparison, to facilitate the reconstruction of the general concept. I bundled the thematic comparison parts and then assigned them to the theoretical concepts. In the following table, the theoretical conceptualisation for the thematic comparison of environmental awareness is exemplified.

Table 2: Example for the theoretical conceptualisation of environmental awareness

Thematic comparison – environmental awareness	theoretical concept
After attending the WC, a person has become aware of the fact that he/she should consume as much as possible in the municipality and thus strengthen it, and the importance of local added value	<u>MICRO level:</u> - social learning and thereby resulting changes in attitude and behaviour
The WC has made a person more aware of his/her purchasing behaviour (how often, what amounts) and to act accordingly	
The WC made a person aware that he/she could walk and cycle more, use public transport more often and drive less, and to act accordingly	
Attending the WC was a general awareness-raising for a person, how he/she could generally behave more environmentally consciously (and get others to do it as well), above all with regards to mobility	

On the left side, this table shows the thematic comparison parts that reflect the codes dealing with a change in environmental attitudes or behaviour regarding consumption, energy, mobility and general environmental conscious behaviour. The right side of the table represents the theoretical concept of social learning and thereby resulting changes in attitude and behaviour, that can be assigned to these thematic comparison parts. Please note, that this table illustrates only one part of the theoretical conceptualisation of social learning and thereby resulting changes in attitudes and behaviour, because the concept of social learning is very broad and many passages of the interviews can be related to this concept. This is also further explained in the next and 4th chapter, which presents a detailed description of the results of the analysis illustrating the theoretical conceptualisation of the empirical data.

4. Results

In this chapter, the results of the empirical research are presented, referring to the research questions of which changes (concerning general education, social learning, empowerment, self-determination, community spirit and environmental awareness) do participants perceive and experience by taking part in a WC as an example of a public participation and what implications of these changes there are for enabling more sustainable development.

The results are allocated to the three levels to measure the effects of participatory dialog-oriented processes of Hess et al (2015), the micro, meso and macro level. Once again, it must be noted, that there are undoubtedly interconnections between these 3 levels. However, this thesis adopts these levels, as they provide a good overview for the results.

Thus, at first, the effects of public participation processes on participants at the micro level, that can be related to theoretical concepts such as general education (also including political skills and issue knowledge), social learning and thereby resulting changes in attitudes (including changed attitudes and acceptance towards political institutions, decisions and politicians) and behaviour, empowerment, self-determination, as well as enhanced community spirit and common good orientation are presented. Moreover, as one aim of this thesis was to examine in what way the environmental awareness of participants (regarding mobility, energy and consumption) changed, this will be elaborated in greater detail as well. Then, the participants perceived effect on the community spirit in the municipality, that can also be related to the theoretical concept of social capital, is outlined, referring to the meso level. On the same level, the perceived quality of deliberation and political inclusiveness (equal participation opportunities within the group of participants) of the participants in the WC is shown. At the end, the few macro level effects, that mainly consider changes in political skills, attitudes and behaviour of the entire citizenry are presented. It must be considered, that some passages of an interview can be ascribed to more than one code and therefore also more than one theoretical concept sometimes applies. Most of the results are exemplified with quotations that are described in English.

4.1 Effects on the micro level

The micro level refers to the effects of a public participation process which happen on an individual level, hence on the individual participants of a deliberation process. In the following, the effects are assigned to the theoretical concepts that can be ascribed to the micro level.

4.1.1 General education – learning

This section deals with the reflections of interviewees about what they have personally learned through participating in a WC.

A few interviewees specifically mentioned, that they had learned something about moderation or facilitation methods and how they could apply it in their own personal life. Furthermore, the WC helped some interviewees to learn and reflect about their personal qualities or habits. Several interviewees stated that through the WC they have learned more about political approaches, understand better everyday political decisions and are aware of how difficult it is to make decisions with which the majority agrees.

An interviewee describes how he/she learned through the WC process, that it is not easy to initiate a decision-making process and implement measures, also because it is sometimes really hard to find somebody who is willing to be responsible for a certain project. Furthermore, he /she is going to be more careful about questioning why politicians do not act, because maybe they already have a plan but cannot implement it due to a lack of people who help them or other reasons (IP05: #00:11:11-7#).

A few interviewees explicitly stated that they learned how to discuss without being only led by their emotions and thus hurting other people. Furthermore, a number of interviewees stated that they particularly learned how to (actively) listen to other people through the WC.

An interviewee quotes that he/she definitely has learned to listen again [...] (IP02: #00:08:38-4#).

4.1.2 Social learning and thereby resulting changes in attitudes and behaviour

As already explained in chapter 2, social learning implies transformative learning within wider social units or communities. That is why changed attitudes and behaviour of people can also be linked to social learning (Reed et al. 2010). Thus, the theoretical concept of social learning applies to a lot of passages, that can also be assigned to other theoretical concepts, because transformative learning is the basis of a lot of effects in public participation processes or they overlap somehow in another way. To make the results of this section more readable, they are categorised by certain themes.

Awareness-raising

Awareness-raising can be generally linked to social learning in terms of double loop (and sometimes even triple loop) learning, as it is not only learning about the consequences of actions, but implies intensive reflection (Reed et al. 2010). Through the discussions in the WC with other citizens of the municipality, several interviewees more consciously perceive things in the municipality now and see the municipality with different, more open eyes when they walk through it.

An interviewee has the feeling that he/she walks with more open eyes through the municipality. As an example, he/she mentions that a wall in the municipality centre has been repaired, and that he/she would probably not have noticed that one month before the WC took place. The interviewee started to observe what is happening in the municipality after the WC (IP01: #00:03:12-8#).

Furthermore, a couple of interviewees have become more aware of which qualities their personal place of residence and the municipality already have.

An interviewee states that through the WC he/she and many others became aware of what is already there in the municipality and what is not. He/she also realised that there are already a lot of good things in the municipality, that he/she has not noticed before, because he/she just focused on aspects that were bothering him/her (IP06: #00:02:42-0#).

Environmental awareness

One aim of this thesis was to examine in what way the environmental awareness of participants (regarding consumption, mobility and energy supply and energy-conscious behaviour) changed. These changes happened through transformative learning within the social community of the WC, and can thereby be assigned to the theoretical concept of social learning.

There were minor effects on participants concerning consumption and the WC has not influenced the interviewees with regards to energy supply and energy-conscious behaviour in any way. One possible reason for no or only little changes in attitudes towards energy supply and energy-conscious behaviour and consumption could be that they were hardly or only slightly mentioned within the WC discussions. Furthermore, all interviewees mentioned that

they already buy as many local products as possible and that they are doing this because they are aware of the positive impacts on the environment resulting through buying local products.

An interviewee states that he/she and his/her family already live and consume very consciously. They live right next to a farm where they buy cheese, they buy meat and sausages from a butcher or they bake bread by themselves and they have a garden which they use. He/she also mentions that he/she buys in commercial chains that focus on local products. He/she states that nothing has changed, since he/she lived very consciously already before the WC (IP13: #00:39:22-3#).

An interviewee states that buying local products means less CO2 emissions and more jobs in the region. Furthermore, he/she thinks that the farmers are doing a lot for the landscape and region and that they are very important (IP02: #00:50:21-6#).

Moreover, almost all interviewees stated that they already perceive themselves as being energy-conscious and supportive of renewable energies.

An interviewee is convinced that people in the municipality do think about how to produce eco-friendly energy and how to heat in an eco-friendly way. He/she states, that this is also a topic for him/her at the moment, because he/she is building a house. He/she thinks that the central heating plant in the municipality is great and already a lot has been done in terms of energy supply (IP01: #00:52:33-5#).

For an interviewee, it is difficult to understand why not even more renewable energy sources are created, and if somebody wants to do that, the nature conservation agencies are often intervening. He/she knows that he/she is no expert, but thinks that more could be done concerning renewable energies. And if necessary, he/she would also support windmills. The interviewee is aware of the fact that renewable energies sometimes do not look nice, as he/she has a heat pump in his/her beautiful garden herself. Nevertheless, he/she thinks it is reasonable to have it, and that was already before the WC happened, so it has not changed his/her perception towards energy (IP06: #00:37:12-9#).

Nevertheless, after attending the WC, some interviewees have become aware of the fact that they should consume as much as possible in the municipality and thus strengthen it, and the importance of local added value. Moreover, the WC has made a few interviewees more aware of his/her purchasing behaviour (how often, what amounts) and to act accordingly.

An interviewee realised through the WC that everything that he/she needs to buy, he/she can find in the municipality and that he/she does not have to drive to Dornbirn or Bregenz [bigger cities] to shop. The interviewee mentioned that he/she became aware that he/she could and also should buy things in the municipality to strengthen the local added value (IP02: #00:47:50-5#).

Perhaps because traffic was one of the biggest topics in the WC discussions, most effects on interviewees regarding environmental awareness can be detected regarding the attitude and behaviour towards mobility. The WC made the majority of interviewees aware of the fact that they could walk and cycle more, use public transport more often and drive less, and several interviewees already changed their mobility behaviour a bit and act accordingly.

An interviewee walks more often into the municipality centre after taking part in the WC, either in his/her free time, but also for shopping, because he/she realised that it does not take so much longer than using the car. He/she thinks that if he/she is not using a parking space in the centre it is also worth something, and when he/she is talking to others about that, then it might convince them to do the same and thus might lead to a chain reaction in this respect (IP06: #00:03:45-1#).

Most of the interviewees perceived themselves as environmentally conscious already before the WC and mentioned similar reasons for being environmentally conscious. That is probably why not a lot of changes in attitudes or behaviour were detected relating to this.

An interviewee states, that environmental awareness is a general attitude for him/herself. An attitude, where one tries in his/her life, no matter if its regarding traffic, public transport or consumption to be a role model for others and to actually implement this attitude into real life to put pressure on corporations and others. The interviewee states that if he/she does not accept plastic bags in stores, but takes a basket or something else when going shopping, then this will have consequences. He/she believes

that if everybody does such small things in everyday life, then it will have an impact (IP03: #00:49:55-3#).

However, participating in the WC was a general awareness-raising for various interviewees, how they could generally behave more environmentally consciously (and get others to do it as well), above all considering mobility.

An interviewee states that the WC has motivated him/herself to behave more environmentally consciously, because he/she realised that he/she has a job in the municipality and it does not make a big difference in time if he/she walks or drives to his/her work. If he/she compares it to how long it takes for other citizens of the municipality to get to their working place, this is the least he/she can do to make a small contribution (IP16: #00:59:26-2#)

For an interviewee, not only the participants of the WC, but everyone must contribute to an attractive municipality (centre) and must set an example. The WC has motivated him/her to do so and to implement the ideas and solutions of the WC in real life. The interviewee does not know whether others will follow his/her example, but the WC definitely had an impact on him/her with respect to behaving environmentally conscious (IP02: #01:06:21-0#).

Perceptions with regards to politics

This section deals with changed attitudes of interviewees towards politics in the municipality. Please note that some of the effects are also listed in the macro level section, as they reflect the interviewees perceptions of changes in the whole citizenry and municipality. Thus, it reflects the concept of social learning not only in the sense of transformative learning within WC, but also includes the atmosphere in the whole municipality after the WC process.

Through the WC, the attitude of some interviewees towards politicians has changed positively (at the municipality level). Furthermore, lots of interviewees hope that the discussed problems and topics in the WC are taken seriously and will be implemented by the municipality, only a few are very critical about it. This correlates with some interviewees thinking that citizens including themselves are a bit suspicious of whether the WC is really taken seriously or if it was just a kind of policy of procrastination or an alibi event.

An interviewee went to the municipality because it appeared strange to him/her that the CC was not mentioned in the local newspaper and he/she thinks, that it should have been stated there. He/she said that the only thing where it was advertised was a flyer with a hazardous waste disposal add on the other side. The interviewee states that the CC should have been advertised on the local municipality homepage news, so that at least some other citizens know about the event. The lack of advertisement made him/her feel like that the decision-makers are not taking the WC seriously and that it might just has been an alibi event (IP09: #00:27:48-4#).

Positive effects of the WC regarding politics are reflected in the feeling of many interviewees that the WC caused a spirit of optimism, a loosening and opening up in the local politics (also towards more public participation).

An interviewee thinks that the WC led to a spirit of optimism in the municipality politics and believes that this is great (IP14: #00:22:21-0#).

Additionally, almost all interviewees have the feeling that the WC was an impulse and is a good instrument for citizens to contribute to decisions in local politics in the future. A number of interviewees even specifically mentioned that they have the feeling that there will be greater transparency in the municipality policy in the future and citizens will feel sufficiently informed. Moreover, many interviewees believe that the WC was important for sustainable development in the municipality, because it has positively improved the political climate in the village (also in terms of public participation and transparency).

An interviewee states that in the political turmoil situation of the municipality, the WC led to an improved political climate, a climate where it is possible to work again. He/she generally thinks that WCs or similar processes would be a valuable contribution for the future. The interviewee believes that the WC was an important and the right step towards more sustainable development (IP03: #01:00:04-2#).

Various interviewees feel like the WC was crucial for (and is an instrument for) strengthening the (direct) democracy in the municipality in the future. Furthermore, through the WC, the majority of interviewees have the feeling or hope that citizens will be granted a say to a greater extent than before in future decision-making, that they would be taken more seriously and that

citizens would also accept the opportunity to participate. What is more, lots of interviewees have the feeling that with the occurrence of the WC, opinions and views of citizens are valued more by the municipality.

An interviewee thinks that the WC was an important step for making citizens believe that they have a say, because there was the criticism of presenting the citizens with a fait accompli and in this case nobody should wonder why there is such a reaction against this in the population. He/she thinks that now the decision-makers have realised that they cannot do that again and that they must involve the citizens of the municipality in decision-making processes. The interviewee also believes that many people do not really want to change anything, but that they just want their opinion to be appreciated. Then they have the feeling of being asked and it is therefore easier for them to live with the final decision. The interviewee states that not ignoring but informing each other makes it easier for both sides (...) And the feeling of citizens that the decision-makers not only do what they want, but also listen to citizens (IP14: #01:20:26-3#).

Generally, many of the interviewees have the feeling that citizens in the municipality are interested in the WC and want to know about it and are curious.

Community spirit

This section can be linked to social learning especially when looking at the effects of the WC on the wider social unit i.e. the whole municipality, and with regards to solidarizing with other groups including future generations. In addition, it also reflects the concept of striving for collective action aiming for collective benefits.

Several interviewees believe that the WC brings together citizens who normally would not meet each other and that people get to know other citizens of the municipality (better) which they see as a positive experience. Furthermore, almost all interviewees have the feeling that the WC fosters communication between the citizens in the municipality, especially between the participants of the WC, and hence also ascribe WCs to cause a certain multiplier effect.

An interviewee says that if he/she is meeting someone, or when somebody is approaching him/her, it felt very pleasant to know that you were there, you have talked about it and that is just good and conducive for the communication in the municipality (IP03: #00:18:58-6#).

The discussions in the WC made various interviewees think about future generations and how they could live and probably will live in the municipality.

An interviewee states that what was discussed in the WC is rather for the future, because their descendants should still have some nature around them not just paved streets, that is why something needs to happen. Because the interviewee is already a bit older, and it would need some time to get rid of the traffic, he/she thinks that is crucial for their descendants that something happens in relation to that (IP04: #00:44:10-4#).

Almost all of the interviewees, except for one, think that many citizens of the municipality have similar opinions, imaginations and ideas about the future municipality centre after the whole WC process. This shows, that not only the social unit of the WC has similar imaginations about the future centre, but also a lot of citizens in the municipality, which fulfils the requirement of social learning which happens in wider social units, i.e. at the whole municipality level (Reed et al. 2010). Moreover, almost all of the interviewees, except for one express the feeling that the village community can be strengthened through the WC.

An interviewee states that a WC process could definitely strengthen the village community, because everybody is talking about it and through talking people get together. It doesn't matter if it is in the neighbourhood, in clubs and associations, through ideas or experiences, through talking people get together (IP07: #00:25:43-5#).

Learning

This section deals with social learning in terms of double and triple loop learning, involving reflections on personal attitudes and behaviour.

Through the WC, lots of interviewees have (again) learned to empathise with other people in the sense of being open and accepting, respecting and understanding other opinions, views, etc.

An interviewee states that the WC contributed to a mutual understanding among the participants. Everyone has heard opinions that were different to their own ones and has learned to accept that and to try to understand why somebody has a certain opinion and try to understand different aspects (IP03 #00:13:42-5#).

Furthermore, the WC helped a few interviewees to learn and reflect about their personal qualities or habits. Several interviewees have the feeling that through the WC they have learned more about political approaches, know better about everyday political decisions and are aware of how difficult it is to make decisions with which the majority agrees.

Something that was decisive for an interviewee in the end was, that he/she thought that there were 23 persons that worked on a topic for one and a half days and each one of these persons had his/her own and different opinion. If it is already difficult to find a solution which can be confirmed by 23 people, how is it possible for a municipality to find a solution for 3000 people? That is something that made the interviewee realise how difficult it is to make decisions that are good for the majority of the citizens (IP08: #00:08:36-6#).

Moreover, a few interviewees specifically learned how to ‘democratically’ discuss, meaning to discuss without being totally led by their emotions and thus possibly hurting other people and some interviewees have the feeling that they particularly learned how to (actively) listen to other people through the WC.

4.1.3 Empowerment and self-determination

In this section, the effects on interviewees related to their own perception of feeling more empowered and free to personally or collectively act, either on a private or public level, and to improve their quality of life, are presented.

Several interviewees perceive the WC as a motivational push to pay more attention to what happens in the municipality and to what they themselves can contribute to a sustainable development of the municipality.

An interviewee thinks that the experience was similar for the others as it was for him/her, meaning that it makes the interviewee aware that there is a necessity to get active, because most times you are only a witness or a spectator when it comes to communal policies and now there is this wake-up call to get active and the interviewee thinks that people kind of want that. And that`s what the interviewee believes made people aware of the fact that they want to be part of it, that they want to have a voice, that they want to be allowed to participate (IP14: #00:11:39-1#).

The WC led quite a few interviewees to feeling more self-confident regarding political engagement, and it was encouraging and motivating for the interviewees to get more involved in the political process of the municipality.

Through the WC an interviewee is motivated to engage for more sustainable development, because he/she feels like that one should and could have the courage to do so. He/she states that citizens should not hide their opinions, but should inform others about it, not only on a private level, but also to the public (IP04: #00:26:58-4#).

Through the WC, many interviewees have the feeling that citizens themselves should take over more responsibility in the community by setting a good example

An interviewee states that everybody in the municipality should take over responsibility for the municipality, not only the local councilmen. He/she says that everyone who belongs to the municipality should contribute his/her part – no man is an island (IP02: #01:11:42-8#).

After the WC, the willingness of all interviewees to engage themselves more in the municipality, also on a political level, has increased, except for one, who is already doing a lot in the municipality.

An interviewee states that he/she is motivated through the WC to engage him/herself for a nice future municipality centre, because a lot of his/her ideas are reflected in the concept [that was created after the WC, CC and responder group] and that is motivating and interesting for him/her (IP13: #01:04:50-8#).

4.1.4 Community spirit and common good orientation

This section deals with the perceptions of interviewees on how the WC influences the village community and their personal willingness to engage themselves for the public good.

The majority of interviewees have the feeling that the WC fosters communication between citizens in the municipality, especially between the participants of the WC, and hence also ascribe WCs to cause a certain multiplier effect. Furthermore, almost all of the interviewees, except for one, have the feeling that the village community can be strengthened through the WC.

An interviewee thinks that, because so many different opinions are represented, a WC can strengthen the village community. He/she hopes that through the WC and the CC process, people will become aware of the fact that other people have similar opinions which are now expressed to decision-makers which will strengthen the community (IP02: #00:24:35-2#).

The discussions in the WC made several interviewees think about future generations and how they could live and probably will live in the municipality. Moreover, the WC led some interviewees to feel more self-confidence regarding political engagement, and was encouraging and motivating the interviewees to get more involved in the political process in the municipality. Through the WC, many interviewees have the feeling that citizens themselves should take over more responsibility in the community also by setting a good example.

An interviewee feels encouraged to engage for more beautiful municipality centre, because he/she thinks that it is important that everyone should start with him/herself. For him/her it is necessary that everyone helps and should stop talking and start doing something (IP05: #00:42:19-7#).

After the WC, the willingness of all interviewees to engage themselves more in the municipality, also on a political level, has increased, except for one, who is already doing a lot in the municipality.

After the WC, an interviewee can totally imagine to engage him/herself for the municipality and is open for everything. He/she states that in his/her job she is dealing with organisational matters, so he/she would like to work with projects that are just emerging and help to organise them (IP16: #01:02:57-5#).

4.2 Effects on the meso level

The meso level can be related to the whole group that takes part in a deliberation process. In the following, the effects are assigned to the theoretical concepts that can be ascribed to the meso level.

4.2.1 Social capital

This section addresses the perceptions of interviewees about which effect the WC had with regards to trust, reciprocity and community life (on a voluntary basis), as well as shared norms, values and understandings in the group of participants and the whole village community.

Several interviewees believe that the WC brings together citizens who normally would not meet each other and that people get to know other citizens of the municipality (better) which they see as a positive experience. Furthermore, lots of interviewees have the feeling that the WC fosters communication between the citizens in the municipality, especially between the participants of the WC, and hence also ascribe WCs to cause a certain multiplier effect. With respect to shared norms, values and understandings, all interviewees, except for one, realised through the whole WC process that many citizens of the municipality already have similar opinions, imaginations and ideas about the future municipality centre. Moreover, they feel that the WC contributed to a shared vision of a municipality centre that is supported by many citizens.

An interviewee states that it is obvious that many of the citizens in the municipality have similar visions about the future municipality centre, especially regarding the traffic issue. All citizens want a solution for the traffic issue and a few ways to address that were worked out. But the interviewee thinks that the mission for the decision-makers is very clear after the WC and the CC (IP13: #00:27:16-4#).

All interviewees, except for one, have the feeling that the village community can be strengthened through the WC and evaluate the number of participants in the CC as positive (especially for a community spirit). However, some interviewees believe that the number could have been higher or that some of the participants should have been younger.

An interviewee thinks that the community was strengthened in the CC, especially because of the high number of participants. He also states that walking from one table to another fostered the community spirit, because you got to know new people and their opinions. However, he also states that many old people remained seated at their table and actively encouraging them to switch tables as well might have been better in terms of community spirit (IP16: #00:34:47-8#).

4.2.2 Quality of deliberation and political inclusiveness within the group

This section describes how interviewees perceived and experienced the WC and how they evaluate the public participation method considering the quality of the discussions, interactions, information and participation opportunities within the WC group.

A couple of interviewees specifically mentioned that participants acted in a committed, constructive and active way in the WC. Almost all interviewees evaluate the WC as being very good to develop great solutions, especially the moderation method dynamic facilitation. All interviewees think that the conversational atmosphere in the WC was good, pleasant, respectful, open, honest and not chaotic.

An interviewee states that it was a nice experience and he/she very much enjoyed and liked how committed and sensitive the moderation team acted and how discreet and yet determinedly they have moderated the WC (IP03: #00:03:04-3#).

For an interviewee, it was a valuable experience to observe how people could communicate with each other in the setting of the WC. A setting, where nobody explodes but just normally talks to each other. And he/she thinks it was fascinating that in the end almost all came to the same conclusion. He/she very much appreciated and thinks it is positive that one could say his/her opinion, without being interrupted immediately by others (IP04: #00:01:46#).

For an interviewee, it was a valuable experience that so many different people were in the WC who did not interrupt each other in the discussions and nobody behaved loudly or aggressively. Everyone could express his/her opinion, also if it was very spontaneous or simple, without thinking too much about what one wants to say. Everybody accepted everything, that is what the interview very much liked (IP06: #00:02:42-0#).

In the WC, the majority of interviewees feel that they can better empathise with other people in the sense of being open and accepting, respecting and understanding other opinions, views, etc.

An interviewee states that through listening to each other, one could better empathise with another person, because one is excited to hear about the ideas of others (IP15: #00:14:25-4#).

Almost none of the interviewees (and if so then only partly) had the impression that in the WC only personal interests in the sense of personal benefit and a selfish way of behaving was predominate. This correlates with the feeling of almost all interviewees, that the WC process generally focuses on public welfare.

An interviewee states that in the WC process it was essential for him/her, that not the biggest advantage for individual persons, but the common good was priority and not just capitalism (IP11: #00:36:46-9#).

Some interviewees specifically mentioned that the number of participants in the WC was appropriate for developing solutions. Almost all interviewees think that the active listening in the WC (allow everyone to finish, listen to each other in a focused way) took place and classify this as valuable.

An interviewee states that for him/her the discussion culture was excellent. Not only because of the moderation, but also because the participants did not interrupt each other, but did actively listen to each other (IP03: #00:03:35-7#).

Lots of interviewees perceived the atmosphere in the CC as good and feel that the solutions were advocated by many citizens, because they have similar issues with the municipality centre (especially concerning the traffic situation) and similar values and ideas about what elements the future municipality centre should include. They also feel that this is probably the reason for not many dissenting voices to the solutions. Furthermore, the procedures and the group work involving all present citizens are seen positively. Partially, however, some interviewees believe that many citizens came with the expectation that the participants together with the municipality have already made decisions in the WC and just inform the public about it in the CC.

4.3 Effects on the macro level

The macro level generally refers to the impact on the entire citizenship, policy and politics through deliberation processes. When looking at the results on this level, it must be considered that only the evaluation of the interviewees, that can be related to the entire citizenship of the municipality, is taken into account, as there were no interviews conducted with politicians or citizens who didn't participate in the WC. In addition, as the political decision-making process of the analysed WC is still ongoing, no impacts on political decisions and policies can be

detected. In the following, the effects that were determined are assigned to the theoretical concepts that can be ascribed to the macro level.

4.3.1 Political inclusiveness

This section presents how interviewees evaluate the participant selection of the WC considering political inclusiveness, i.e. the representativeness of the participants on the municipality level. Lots of interviewees have the feeling that the participants in the WC represented the population from the municipality (young, old, different backgrounds), and their views, however, some of the interviewees would have liked more young people to participate.

An interviewee thinks that the selection mode of the WC is good, but he/she would have expected more young people. He/she knows that it is a random selection and that it was mixed quite well, but he/she would have liked 2 more young people (IP05: #00:03:48-6#).

All interviewees believe the participant selection process of a WC is very good and suitable for a public participation process without any kind of lobbyists or representatives from certain interest groups, especially because different age groups have participated, and people with very different backgrounds.

An interviewee likes the selection mode of the WC because everyone has the chance to get selected and can then decide whether he/she wants to participate or not. If it would not be a random selection then only the affected people would participate and this would lead to a totally different direction than in the WC, where politics and money are involved (IP07: #00:38:03-7#).

An interviewee thinks that the selection mode of the WC is ideal, because then also people get chosen that would otherwise never say something or state their opinion. With the random selection mode, there are people involved that are more affected or less affected, that are living closer to the centre or more far away (IP11: #00:06:25-9#).

Several interviewees believe that the WC brings together citizens who normally would not meet each other and that people get to know other citizens of the municipality (better) which they see as a positive experience.

4.3.2 Responsiveness and accountability

This section outlines the perceptions of interviewees about the impact of the WC process on future decision-making as well as on the trust of the entire citizenry in political institutions and persons in the municipality.

The CC concerns the whole municipality, that is why the perceived effects regarding the CC are also listed here. Some interviewees criticise the WC process regarding the presentation of the results, interviewees feel that suggestions for solutions and the atmosphere in the WC were not presented in sufficient detail and that citizens were not exactly informed about the WC process, especially about what the CC is for.

An interviewee thinks that many in the CC were disappointed because it looked as if the participants of the WC did not work a lot. He/she states that maybe it would be a good idea to show all the solutions in a fast mode, so that the rest of the municipality knows how many ideas the participants of the WC had. The interviewee states that in the online municipality news there was a comment saying that the WC did not come up with a new solution and that everything they worked out has already been discussed for decades. That made him/her feel that many citizens might have come to the CC with the expectation that the WC already made a decision about the future centre, which was then not the case (IP08: #00:13:30-1#).

This correlates with almost the same number of interviewees thinking that the number of participants in the CC could have been even higher. Nevertheless, most of the interviewees evaluate the number of participants in the CC as positive (especially for a community spirit), however, some of them would have like more young participants.

An interviewee states that the number of participants in the CC was good, however, there were a lot of old people which is also relevant, but he/she would have liked more young people to come so that it is more mixed and that also the ideas of more young people are expressed. He/she says that the idea about democracy for him/her is to participate in such events in order to be able to influence something, but he/she is also aware that this idea might vary from others of his/her age (IP13: #00:12:10-2#).

A couple of interviewees think that citizens including themselves are a bit suspicious of whether the WC is really taken seriously or if it was just a kind of policy of procrastination or an alibi event.

An interviewee states that in their municipality it might be a bit more complicated than in others. As an example, he states that decision-makers initiated a public participation process where people can discuss about a certain project. But next to this process, there is already another process going on where decision-makers or important people in the municipality already specify how the topic should be implemented. So the first group discusses how to tackle this project and the second group is already one step ahead and has a clear image of how this project should look like and what the details are. This makes citizens feel like they have a say, but in the end, they do not (IP15: #00:28:31-7#).

Many interviewees have the feeling that the WC caused a kind of a spirit of optimism, a loosening and opening up in the local politics (also towards more public participation). Furthermore, almost all interviewees have the feeling that the WC was an impulse and is a good instrument for citizens to contribute to decisions in local politics in the future.

An interviewee thinks that the WC had a positive impact on the village community, because there was this mayor change and a lot of citizens did not think very positively about that. The interviewee believes that it was also a good step for the new mayor to involve citizens more in decision-making processes. Generally, it was a good decision, because citizens now have the feeling that they have a say which relaxes the political atmosphere in the municipality a bit (IP05: #00:07:52-5#).

Additionally, through the WC, a few interviewees have the feeling that there will be greater transparency in the municipality policy in the future and citizens will feel sufficiently informed. Lots of interviewees believe that the WC was important for sustainable development in the municipality, because it has positively improved the political climate in the village (also in terms of public participation and transparency).

An interviewee states that it was very important to conduct a WC process, because without that nothing would have been discussed with the public, which therefore would

have had less impact on the decision-making process. So, this bottom up process was good for enabling more sustainable development (IP06: #00:49:05-7#).

Many interviewees feel like the WC was crucial for (and is an instrument for) strengthening the (direct) democracy in the municipality in the future and almost all interviewees have the feeling or hope that citizens will be granted a say to a greater extent than before in future decision-making, that they would be taken more seriously and that citizens would also accept the opportunity to participate.

An interviewee believes that through the WC, citizens have the feeling that people want to get more active and are willing to contribute to projects in the municipality. That is why he/she is more motivated and feels like he/she should collaborate with the municipality (IP02: #01:07:29-3#).

The majority of interviewees have the feeling that with the occurrence of the WC, opinions and views of citizens are valued more by the municipality. What is more, lots of interviewees have the feeling that citizens in the municipality are interested in the WC and want to know about it and are curious, implying an effect of the WC on the entire citizenry.

5. Discussion

In this chapter the results from the empirical research presented in the previous chapter are interpreted and put into a context. This is done by relating the results to the research questions, the literature review and to previously published knowledge of similar studies.

Subsequently, the most important limitations of the methodologies used are specified.

5.1 Discussion of results

One objective of this thesis was to find out about the effects of a WC on its participants with regards to general education, social learning, empowerment, self-determination, community spirit and environmental awareness (regarding consumption, energy and mobility). Thus, the first research question was:

1. Which changes (concerning general education, social learning, empowerment, self-determination, community spirit and environmental awareness) do participants perceive and experience by taking part in a WC as an example of a public participation?

In the following, only significant results referring to the above mentioned concepts are discussed. Furthermore, results that are not significant but seem necessary to be discussed are presented as well.

The results show that social learning happened in several ways in the WC process. This can be seen by various examples in which transformative learning occurred, where the format of the WC was fundamental. F.i., most of the interviewees learned to empathise with other people in the sense of being open and accepting, respecting and understanding other opinions and views. This can be attributed to DF, the way of moderation in WCs. Important aspects that contribute to empathising with other people, etc. are active listening and the good conversational atmosphere through DF, which were highly appreciated by the interviewees. This was also a result in the evaluation study of WCs in Austria of Strele (2012), that assigns long active listening a crucial role for a mutual learning and understanding within the group. Hence, by honestly exchanging not only facts and information about the municipality centre, but also their true values and beliefs about their wishes and perceptions of the future for themselves and the whole municipality, there certainly occurred transformative learning among the participants. The random selection mode of the WC can also be considered to foster transformative learning

through choosing the most representative citizens as possible and thus guaranteeing social interaction between people with different backgrounds, experiences, knowledge and ideologies. As already mentioned before, theory states that through transformative learning, more specifically double and triple loop learning, social learning can be the reason for changed attitudes in various ways (Reed et al. 2010; Garmendia & Stagl 2010). Regarding changed attitudes towards political institutions and decision-making processes in the municipality, a number of significant results were detected. Most of the interviewees feel that the WC was very important for strengthening the (direct) democracy and that it could be a useful instrument for future citizen involvement in the municipality. That is perhaps because the WC was the first public participation attempt ever that has been initiated by the municipality. Thus, interviewees have no comparison to other public participation methods or public participation processes in general in the municipality. This can be related to the optimistic impression of lots of interviewees that through and after the WC, opinions and views of citizens are valued more by the municipality. Furthermore, this corresponds with the perception of many interviewees that citizens will be granted a say to a greater extent than before the WC took place. However, there are some interviewees who believe that citizens including themselves are a bit suspicious of whether the WC is really taken seriously or if it was just a kind of policy of procrastination or an alibi event. One reason for that could be, that most of the participants did not or just partly read the final report when the interviews were conducted. In this final report, it is mentioned that there will be an article about the WC in the next edition of the local newspaper. Furthermore, it is stated that there will be a follow up meeting one year after the WC took place, in order to evaluate together with the participants, what has happened in the municipality until then. Not being aware of that might have diminished the initial motivation and hope for a change in the political decision-making process in the municipality for some interviewees. This general lack of concrete liability is a weakness of the WC process, that influences the trust in potential outcomes. Other studies also show that transparency, communication and public relations of the results and the way in which public participation processes are implemented are very important aspects, to maintain or enhance the trust of the population in political institutions (Nanz & Fritsche 2012; Strele 2012).

The results show that the WC definitely led to empowerment and an increased self-determination among the participants. This can be demonstrated by the increased willingness of almost all interviewees to engage themselves more in the municipality, either in their private everyday lives, or most importantly also on a political level. It also correlates with many

interviewees stating that they feel more self-confident, motivated and encouraged to get more involved in the political process in the municipality. The cause for this expressed willingness to get active for maximizing the quality of life for themselves and the whole municipality can most likely also be affiliated to the fact that the municipality actively involved its citizens for the first time in a decision-making process. Furthermore, it might have raised the awareness of participants that ordinary citizens actually have the opportunity to inform the municipality about their concerns and wishes. Other aspects that contributed to that are certainly the community cohesion within the WC group. Participants know that 23 persons of the WC, if not more citizens of the whole municipality due to the CC, endorse the same or at least similar solutions that should be implemented by the municipality. This is supported by the result showing that, almost all of the interviewees, except for one, think that many citizens of the municipality have similar opinions and ideas about the future municipality centre after the whole WC process, which implies certain shared norms, values and understanding. That knowledge strengthens the feeling of participants of being able to accomplish certain goals in the municipality, also on a political level, because of the backing of other citizens. This especially reflects the subjective empowerment level where people have the impression of having influence on an outcome without having de facto power. This feeling of empowerment in the sense of an increased capacity of participants for future public involvement can be found in several other studies about the effects of public participation processes on participants (Martineau-Delisle & Nadeau 2010; Buckwalter 2014).

Theory states that public participation processes can lead to an enhanced community spirit and common good orientation amongst the participants. This can be confirmed by almost all interviewees feeling that the village community can be strengthened through the WC. Additionally, many interviewees feel like the WC enhances communication between the citizens in the municipality, especially between the participants of the WC, and hence also ascribe WCs to cause a certain multiplier effect. This can be attributed to the random selection mode of the WC, which aims for a high heterogeneity of the WC group. Through the different backgrounds of the participants, the discussions and the atmosphere during the WC held aspects from various walks of life. Furthermore, the manner of moderation (DF) helped to give everybody in the group the chance to express his/her personal concerns, opinions, values and beliefs. These were then revisited and discussed by other participants, which resulted in mutual understanding and a better discussion culture. Moreover, participants were trying to find the best possible solution for the whole municipality and not just to pursue and represent one's own

interest anymore. This can be reflected by the feeling of almost all interviewees, that the WC process generally focuses on public welfare. The fact that the two different groups in the WC identified the same problems and came to almost identical solutions for the municipality centre also shows, that the participants were quite representative for the municipality population (Büro für Zukunftsfragen 2016). Related to that is that all interviewees, except for one, realised through the whole WC process that many citizens of the municipality already have similar opinions and ideas about the future municipality centre. Furthermore, they feel that the WC contributed to a shared vision of municipality centre that is supported by many citizens. This implies shared norms, values and understandings in the group of participants and the whole village community and can therefore be related to an increase in social capital. Other studies state as well that through public participation processes there is the development of a collective capacity for collaboration and relationships among participants, and that citizens become more public spirited (Warren 1992; Martineau-Delisle & Nadeau 2010).

One objective of this thesis was to find out in what way the WC changes the environmental awareness of the participants. This was investigated by looking at three aspects which are considered vital for behaving in an environmentally conscious way: mobility, energy (meaning the attitude towards energy supply and energy-conscious behaviour) and consumption. Crucial for awareness raising in WCs is social learning and its transformative learning processes. This is again promoted by DF. In this WC, significant results were only detected regarding the mobility awareness and behaviour of participants. Through socially interacting and collectively reflecting about the traffic issues and the mobility behaviour of citizens in the municipality, not only the information of it, but also an honest exchange of concepts about how the future mobility and traffic situation can be tackled and solved, occurred. This altered the perspectives, attitudes and the behaviour of the majority of interviewees towards mobility. The results show that they became aware of the fact that they could walk and cycle more, use public transport more often and drive less, and several interviewees already changed their mobility behaviour a bit and act accordingly. One reason for these changes is certainly that traffic was a very dominant topic in the discussions, whereas consumption was rather indirectly covered as a topic and energy hardly ever. Despite the heterogeneity of the participants, at least regarding their educational and professional backgrounds, most of the interviewees perceived themselves as environmentally conscious already before the WC and mentioned similar reasons for being environmentally conscious. That is probably because a lot of interviewees were above 50 years old, have the time and the financial resources for more environmentally friendly consumption.

This is also mentioned in studies which investigated whether public participation processes often over-represent well-educated people and people who have enough time to participate such as retired persons or students (Nanz & Fritsche 2012). It must also be noted that Vorarlberg was the wealthiest federal state in Austria in late 2015 (Statistik Austria 2015). Due to the geographical and natural conditions, the main energy supply for heating is based on wood, which is a renewable energy resource (Gemeinde X 2015). Hence, not a lot of changes in attitudes or behaviour were detected relating to consumption and energy. However, this roughly reflects already existing research stating that environmental values emerge out of debate, discussion and challenge, which is often the case in public participation processes (O'riordan et al. 1999; Owens 2000; Bulkeley & Mol 2003; Newig 2007; Garmendia & Stagl 2010). In addition, environmentally aware citizens are seen to be more capable of promoting sustainable development (Iizuka 2000; Hassan et al. 2010; Razman 2012; Crotty & Hall 2013), which is, as well as the other detected effects, are important for the second research question:

2. What are the implications of these changes for enabling more sustainable development?

By looking at the above mentioned effects of a WC on its participants, it can be seen that there are various aspects that are necessary for enabling more sustainable development. One crucial factor is, that through a WC participants become more oriented for the common good again. This is fundamental, because it implies that they do not only act in favour of their own interest, but also become active for improving the quality of life for others and for future generations as well. That can be supported by the results showing that lots of interviewees believe that the WC was important for a sustainable development in the municipality, because it has positively improved the political climate in the village, also in terms of public participation and transparency. This can be related to the increased willingness of interviewees to engage themselves also on a political level in the municipality due to the feeling of this improved, more open political climate.

Another critical aspect is that these effects contribute to an overall awareness raising on many levels. Generally, it helps participants to realise how uncertain and complex issues and decisions are (Papadopoulos & Warin 2007). Regarding environmental awareness, the results show that if the discussions in a WC deal with complex issues that can also be related to environmentally conscious attitudes and behaviour, an awareness raising effect is likely. This is important because, as stated before, environmentally aware citizens are considered to be more

capable of promoting sustainable development (Iizuka 2000; Hassan et al. 2010; Razman 2012; Crotty & Hall 2013).

5.2 Discussion of methodology

In this section, potential limitations and weaknesses of the study design and the analysis strategy are discussed. Moreover, the importance of these to the interpretation of the results, and how they may affect the validity and generalisation of the findings are addressed as well.

5.2.1 Discussion of the study design

As already stated in chapter 3, I chose a case study because it was the best option for answering the research questions of this thesis, and getting in depth knowledge about the effects of WC processes on participants within a real-life context. Since the research design of this thesis was a one-shot case study, the detected changes in attitudes or behaviour of participants might not only derive from participating in the WC, because there was no pre-post comparison. However, due to the fact that the topic of the analysed WC was quite a common one, some aspects can be exemplifying for other WCs. This rather applies to effects reflecting the concepts of social learning, empowerment, self-determination and an enhanced community spirit. Nevertheless, I am aware that no case study equals another case and therefore a generalisation from the results of this thesis is limited, especially regarding changes in environmental awareness.

Although WC do have a certain awareness raising effect, which is based on social learning, local top issues and the major topics of discussion in a WC are considered to be the decisive factors for specifically affecting the environmental awareness of participants. In the analysed WC, traffic was a crucial topic, that is perhaps the reasons why there was an increase in the environmental awareness of participants towards mobility.

The interview guide is generally seen as appropriate to answer the aim of the study and includes questions that try to collect all relevant subjective norms, ideas and preferences on an individual level. The selection of the 16 interviewees is considered to be adequate for the intention of the thesis. Semi-structured interviews were valuable for conducting the interviews, as it made it easier to compare results and acquire sufficient in depth knowledge. However, due to a lack of experience in interviewing, I did not always exactly use the questions of the interview guide while interviewing, which sometimes resulted in questions which the interviewee answered yes or no to, or leading questions. Furthermore, especially in the earlier interviews, I did not ask the interviewee to repeat the meaning of what was said. Later on, I improved a bit, which

correlates with the increased length of the later interviews. Generally, I could have chosen the timing of interviews a little bit later, after the interviewees got the final report of the WC via mail and after an article about the WC was published in a local newspaper. This might have resulted in a different perception and trust of interviewees in WC effects with regards to the appreciation of their engagement and the feeling that the WC had more impact on the politics and the citizenry of the municipality in general. However, a later timing would have been shortly before Christmas, when people are normally stressed out about Christmas preparations. That is why I conducted the interviews only 2 weeks after the last stage of the WC, the responder group and around 10 weeks after the WC took place.

5.2.2 Discussion of the analysis strategy

The code assignment in atlasti could have been better, first and foremost in the sense of using a rather deductive approach. This implies deviating from the Meuser and Nagel method by using the exact terminology of the interviewees less and relating the passages earlier to theoretical concepts. Furthermore, it would have been advantageous to use more code hierarchies such as positive and negative effects, high or low perception of the number of participants in the WC and the CC, change of just attitude or even behaviour and so on. These steps could have made the theoretical conceptualisation and further analysis steps easier and more clear.

6. Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to find out about the effects of a WC on its participants with regards to general education, social learning, empowerment, self-determination, community spirit and environmental awareness, and to better understand if and how the effects of WCs on its participants can be meaningful for enabling more sustainable development. This was done through a case study of one WC process in the region Bregenzerwald.

Based on the analysis of the empirical research and the discussion above, it can be concluded that WCs have various effects on participants that can be related to the concepts mentioned above. When using these concepts, the results indicate that most of the effects can be referred to on the micro level. Many of these effects are based on the quality of deliberation, which belongs to the meso level. Effects on the macro level could only be investigated to a certain extent, as the political decision-making process of the analysed WC is still ongoing. The findings show that:

- General education only occurred to a minor extent.

The only general education that occurred for several interviewees was that through the WC they have learned more about political approaches, know better about the everyday political decision-making and are aware of how difficult it is to make decisions with which the majority agrees.

- Social learning can be considered as a fundamental concept for a lot of detected changes.

The main reason for social learning to occur is transformative learning. It implies social interaction, collective action and reflection, where not only new facts and other relevant information are learned from and between participants about their life in the municipality, but also where a true exchange of conceptions and contentions occur that alter perspectives, attitudes and ideas by conviction. This was fostered through the WC by bringing together people with various backgrounds, experiences, knowledge and ideologies through the random selection mode. Hence, social learning happened in the WC in the sense that lots of interviewees could better empathise with other people. Furthermore, many of them changed their attitudes towards political institutions and decision-making processes in the municipality. Concerning that, it must be noted that the WC was the first public participation processes ever that has been

initiated by the municipality. This might explain the predominant positive feeling about more open future political climate in the municipality.

- Empowerment and self-determination arose from the WC for almost all interviewees.

The majority of interviewees are more willing, self-confident, motivated and encouraged to engage themselves more in the municipality, either in their private everyday lives, or most importantly also on a political level. This can mainly be attributed to the subjective empowerment level, where people have the impression of having influence on an outcome without having de facto power.

- The WC led to an increased community spirit in the municipality.

The majority of interviewees have the feeling that the village community can be strengthened through the WC. Moreover, participants were trying to find the best possible solution for the whole municipality and not just to pursue and represent one's own interest anymore. This can be reflected by the feeling of almost all interviewees, that the WC process generally focuses on public welfare. Furthermore, lots of interviewees have the impression that the WC led to a shared vision of the future municipality centre implying joint norms, values and understandings in the group of participants and the whole village community and can therefore also be linked to an increase in social capital.

- Through the WC, changes in the environmental awareness of interviewees just happened with regards to their attitude and behaviour towards mobility.

These changes in attitude and behaviour can also be attributed to social learning. It must be noted that this environmental awareness raising is strongly connected to the main topic and issue of this analysed WC, which was the traffic situation.

Implications from the above-mentioned effects and changes through the WC on its participants can be summarised as follows. A more common good oriented attitude of citizens, the feeling of having the individual capacity and opportunity to generally participate in decision-making processes and to get active for improving the quality of life for others and for futures generations are vital elements that can foster sustainable development (Lyons et al. 2001; Carpini et al.

2004; Leggewie & Nanz 2016). However, crucial for these effects to happen is the political will to include the civil society more in decision-making processes. A lack of information and transparency about the whole WC process could therefore lead to negative effects such as heightened distrust against political institutions and decision-makers. This could then affect the willingness and motivation of citizens to engage themselves for more sustainable development (Nanz & Fritsche 2012). Thus, a formulation of concrete liabilities might enhance the WC process and its effects and outcomes. The findings also show that WCs have the capability to change the environmental awareness of citizens through transformative learning to some extent. This can be considered as valuable, because environmentally conscious citizens are seen to be more capable of promoting sustainable development (Iizuka 2000; Hassan et al. 2010; Razman 2012; Crotty & Hall 2013). With regards to that, public participation processes such as the WC and its effects on participants can be a path towards enabling more sustainable development. On the other hand, many interviewees mentioned that for them the involvement of citizens in decision-making processes is now a crucial element of a sustainable development in the municipality. Thus, public participation can also be considered as a social design method that is the objective and a fundamental element of sustainable development (Baranek & Walk 2005).

Hence, I can conclude that it seems as if there are certain effects that WCs can deliver for enabling more sustainable development in municipalities.

6.1 Perspectives and possible contributions for further research

This thesis shows that the concepts of social learning, empowerment, self-determination and community spirit can be useful for analysing the effects of WCs on participants in relation to enabling more sustainable development. For further research validating the conclusions from this thesis and obtaining more knowledge about the generalisation options of the applied concepts on WC effects on participants, also with regards to environmental awareness, it is necessary to conduct several case studies. Additionally, the definition of these concepts can be even more specific so that they better match each other and in order to reduce overlapping. The micro, meso and macro level to measure the effects of WCs are considered to be valuable. However, it would enrich further studies if a certain control group of citizens, politicians or local administrators, who did not participate in the WC, were interviewed as well, to better assess the effects on the whole citizenry. Furthermore, it would be of importance for the macro level effects, to investigate what happened on the political and policy level one year after the WC took place in a municipality. The focus would still be the effects of WCs on participants.

Nevertheless, to better understand the reasons for certain answers, this further knowledge would be beneficial. Another way for further analyses could be to interview participants of a WC before and after the WC took place.

To investigate if and how WCs can contribute to more sustainable development, there are of course many other concepts that can be applied. The topic of a WC and more specifically, the major issue discussed within a WC is considered to be the determining factor for promoting awareness raising. Thus, when aiming for an instrument that can facilitate an enhanced environmental awareness, the WC can be a useful tool, but only to a certain extent. If the predefined topic or the main discussed aspect is somehow related to environmental issues, then it is more likely that environmental awareness raising occurs. However, as described in chapter 2.5, there are also WCs where participants agree on a certain topic that they want to discuss. If this topic is then not at all related to environmentally friendly awareness or behaviour, there might be no effects in respect to that. Nevertheless, most of the WCs have a predefined topic that can almost always be somehow related to future sustainable development including the environment (Büro für Zukunftsfragen 2014).

Many effects of WCs on participants were detected in this thesis. Thus, the findings can be of interest for municipalities (or decision-makers in general) dealing with complex issues that need to be solved. Here it is of great importance, that there is the political will for conducting a public participation process. With respect to research, this thesis contributes to already existing studies about the effects of WCs, but takes a closer look on the interrelations between public participation, sustainable development and environmental awareness. Hence, the findings might contribute to further research, knowledge about the effects of public participation processes on participants, and if and how they can enable more sustainable development.

7. References

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8. Appendixes

The field notes of the participatory observation, the interview transcripts and the analysis document are available upon request.

Appendix A: Interview guide

Ziel und Funktion der Interviews:

- Analyse der Effekte von Bürgerräten auf Teilnehmer und Teilnehmerinnen
- Herausfinden, inwiefern diese Effekte auch in Zusammenhang mit sozialem Lernen, Umweltbewusstsein und zukünftigem Engagement zu bringen sind

Methode:

qualitative halbstrukturierte (leitfadengestützte) Face-to-Face Interviews; Dauer ca. 60-90 Minuten pro Interview; anschl. Transkription und Auswertung (qualitative Inhaltsanalyse)

Zielgruppe:

Teilnehmer und Teilnehmerinnen des Bürgerrates in X (Workshop: 30.09./01.10.2016)

Untersuchungsfrage:

Welche Veränderungen empfinden und erfahren Teilnehmer und Teilnehmerinnen hinsichtlich ihrer individuellen Einstellung zu Bürgerbeteiligung/Partizipation (soziales Lernen, Bildung, Empowerment, Verantwortung, Eigenverantwortung, Autonomie und Selbstbestimmung), Gemeinschaftsgefühl und Umweltbewusstsein nach der Teilnahme an einem Bürgerrat?

Sachthemen:

- A) Gefühl, etwas Neues gelernt zu haben, mehr Verständnis gegenüber anderen Sichtweisen aufzubringen (zur Methode des Bürgerrats, Dialog unter den TeilnehmerInnen, soziales Lernen)
- B) Veränderte Wahrnehmung von Gemeinschaft in der Gemeinde (soziales Lernen, Gemeinschaftsgefühl)
- C) Veränderte Wahrnehmung hinsichtlich umweltbewusstem Verhalten – Mobilität, Konsum, Energie (Umweltbewusstsein)
- D) Neue Bereitschaft, sich zukünftig persönlich mehr für eine nachhaltige Entwicklung der Gemeinde einzubringen (Empowerment, Verantwortung)

Vor Beginn des Interviews:

- Alles anonym (Person, Ort)
- Aufnahme ok?

Ende des Interviews - Soziodemografische Daten:

Geschlecht:

Alter:

Wie lange Wohnort in X:

Kinder:

Höchster Ausbildungsabschluss:

Job:

Einstiegsfrage:

Du warst ja Teilnehmer/Teilnehmerin beim Bürgerrat (Workshop) am 30.09. und 01.10.2016, der die zukünftige Gestaltung des Xer Zentrums zum Thema hatte.

Bürgerbeteiligung/Partizipation wird als wesentlicher Bestandteil von nachhaltiger Entwicklung sowohl auf sozialer und wirtschaftlicher, als auch auf ökologischer Ebene gesehen. Was waren für dich wertvolle Erfahrungen beim Bürgerrat?

A)

- Wie hast du das Gesprächsklima im Bürgerrat wahrgenommen?
 - ➔ Inwieweit hast du das Gesprächsklima in den Diskussionen als offen und ehrlich empfunden?
 - ➔ Inwiefern wurden deiner Meinung nach persönliche Interessen von Teilnehmern und Teilnehmerinnen vorangetrieben, oder eben nicht?
 - ➔ Wie findest du das Auswahlverfahren vom Bürgerrat? (Erklärung: Zufällig ausgewählte Bürger und Bürgerinnen von X, möglichst repräsentativ bez. Geschlecht, Alter, etc.)
- Inwiefern kannst du dich nach dem Bürgerrat in andere Xer und Xerinnen besser hineinversetzen?
 - ➔ *Welche Standpunkte von anderen Teilnehmern und Teilnehmerinnen des Bürgerrates kannst du nach dem Prozess besser nachvollziehen?*
 - ➔ *Welche Aspekte anderer Teilnehmer und Teilnehmerinnen gab es, die dir vor dem Bürgerrat gar nicht bewusst waren?*
- Bitte erzähle mir ob und was du während des Bürgerrates über dich selbst gelernt hast.
 - ➔ *Was war aus deiner Perspektive deine Rolle im Bürgerrat? einschätzen*
 - ➔ Welche Funktion hatte für dich das aktive Zuhören im Format des Bürgerrates?

>Inwiefern hast du das Gefühl, dass im Bürgerrat aktives Zuhören stattgefunden hat?

- Inwiefern hat der Bürgerrat deiner Meinung nach das voneinander Lernen gefördert?
→ *Was haben andere Teilnehmer und Teilnehmerinnen deiner Meinung nach vom Bürgerrat gelernt/mitgenommen?*
- Was ist dein Verständnis von direkter Demokratie?
→ Inwiefern hat sich dein Verständnis von direkter Demokratie nach dem Bürgerrat verändert?
→ In welcher Form/Was hast du etwas über politische Vorgehensweisen gelernt?
→ *Inwieweit kannst du dich nun besser in Entscheidungsträger und Entscheidungsträgerinnen hineinversetzen?*
- Wie ist deine Einstellung gegenüber Politikern und Politikerinnen?
→ Inwiefern hat sich deine Einstellung gegenüber Politikern und Politikerinnen nach der Teilnahme am Bürgerrat verändert?

B)

- Welche Auswirkungen hat der Bürgerrat deiner Meinung nach auf die Dorfgemeinschaft insgesamt gehabt?
→ *Wie viele Leute vermutest du waren über die Durchführung eines Bürgerrats in X informiert?*
→ *Wie viele Leute wussten von deiner Teilnahme am Bürgerrat?*
→ Welche Stimmung hast du bezüglich des Bürgerrates nach dem ganzen Bürgerrats-Prozess in X wahrgenommen?
- Wie viele Personen aus dem Bürgerrat hast du davor schon aus X gekannt?
→ *Mit welchen Personen bist du auch nach dem Bürgerrat noch in Kontakt?*
→ *Wie viele Leute aus dem Bürgerrat hast du danach noch zufällig getroffen?*
→ Welches Gefühl hast du, wenn (im Nachhinein) du Leute aus dem Bürgerrat triffst?
- Wie hast du das Bürgercafé erlebt?
→ Was sagst du dazu, dass relativ viele Xer und Xerinnen beim Bürgercafé anwesend waren?
→ *Wie hast du die Vorschläge aus dem Bürgercafé gefunden?*
→ Inwieweit würdest du nach dem Bürgerrats-Prozess sagen, dass viele Xerinnen und Xer ähnliche Vorstellungen über das zukünftige Zentrum von X haben?
→ *Welchen Stellenwert hat die Zentrumsentwicklung in X deiner Meinung nach bei den Xern und Xerinnen nach dem Bürgerrats-Prozess bekommen?*
- Bei der Resonanzgruppe hat man sich unter anderem auf die Arbeitsgruppe „Gemeinschaft“ geeinigt. Wie findest du diese Idee?
→ Was verbindest du mit einem Gemeinschaftsgefühl in der Gemeinde?
→ *Dem Bürgerrat war es auch wichtig, sich zuerst einmal die Frage zu stellen, warum man etwas plant und umsetzen will. Inwiefern verbindest du dieses WARUM mit Gemeinschaft?*
→ *Welche Rolle spielt ein gutes Gemeinschaftsgefühl in der Gemeinde für dich?*

- ➔ Was können deiner Meinung nach Folgen eines guten Gemeinschaftsgefühls in der Gemeinde sein?
- Kann ein Bürgerrats-Prozess deiner Meinung nach die Dorfgemeinschaft stärken und wenn, auf welche Art und Weise?
 - ➔ Wie beurteilst du die einzelnen Schritte/Phasen des Bürgerrats-Prozesses in Bezug auf Gemeinschaftsbildung?
 - ➔ Inwiefern wird deiner Meinung nach ein Fokus auf Gemeinwohl in Bürgerrats-Prozessen gelegt?

C)

- Inwiefern hat dich die Teilnahme am Bürgerrat dazu gebracht darüber nachzudenken, ob es dir gefällt, in X bzw. dem Bregenzerwald zu leben?
 - ➔ Welche Elemente verbindest du mit einer hohen Lebensqualität?
 - ➔ Wie wichtig ist dir die Nähe zur Natur als Teil einer hohen Lebensqualität? (Also, dass du z.B. einen Garten hast, wo du etwas anpflanzen kannst, dass du es nicht weit zu schönen Spazier- oder Wanderwegen hast, dass du in der Nähe von Wäldern lebst, welche zu einer besseren Luft in deiner Umgebung beitragen, etc.)
 - ➔ Wenn dir die Nähe zur Natur wichtig ist, warum ist es dir wichtig?
 - ➔ Inwiefern hat sich der Stellenwert von der Nähe zur Natur als Teil hoher Lebensqualität für dich nach dem Bürgerrat noch einmal verstärkt?
- *Wenn du die Ergebnisse des Bürgerrates betrachtest – inwiefern denkst du dann an zukünftige Generationen?*
 - ➔ *Welche Lebensbedingungen werden zukünftige Generationen deiner Meinung nach in X vorfinden?*
- Beim Bürgerrat in X ging es ja viel um Verkehrsberuhigung sowie die Verbesserung und den Ausbau von Fuß- und Radwegen. Auf welche Art und Weise hat sich die Teilnahme am Bürgerrat auf dein Mobilitätsverhalten ausgewirkt?
 - ➔ Inwiefern musst du bei der Wahl deines bevorzugten Verkehrsmittels an den Bürgerrat und dessen Ergebnisse/Lösungsvorschläge denken? beeinflussen
 - ➔ Wie ist dein Verhältnis zu öffentlichen Verkehrsmitteln?
 - ➔ Inwieweit hat dich die Teilnahme am Bürgerrat bestärkt oder nicht bestärkt, in Zukunft mehr auf das Auto zu verzichten?
- Die Diskussionen im Bürgerrat drehten sich besonders um Zukunftsvisionen. Inwieweit hat dich die Teilnahme am Bürgerrat zum Nachdenken angeregt, wie und wo du in Zukunft leben willst?
 - ➔ Was schätzt du (besonders nach der Teilnahme am Bürgerrat) an deinem persönlichen Lebensumfeld bzw. deinem Wohnort?
 - ➔ Wie ist es für dich im Grünen zu wohnen? Nicht großstadt
 - ➔ Was sind Elemente an deinem Wohnort, die du auch in Zukunft nicht missen möchtest?
 - ➔ Wie kannst du deiner Meinung nach diese Elemente erhalten oder sogar verbessern? (Maßnahmen)
- Inwiefern ist nach dem Bürgerrat in deiner persönlichen Zukunftsvision z.B. Energieversorgung relevant?

- Wie sollte deiner Meinung nach die Energieversorgung von dir und anderen Xern und Xerinnen aussehen? (Also wo euer Strom herkommt, wie geheizt wird, etc.)
 - *Welche Rolle spielen erneuerbare Energien in deiner Zukunftsvorstellung?*
 - Wie würdest du reagieren, wenn du siehst, dass (in deinem Haus) z.B. ein Fenster sperrangelweit offen und die Heizung darunter voll eingeschaltet ist? Oder wenn überall im Haus das Licht brennt, obwohl keine Person die Räume benutzt?
 - Inwiefern hat der Bürgerrat dich bestärkt oder demotiviert, in Zukunft gleich oder anders auf so eine Situation zu reagieren?
 - Warum bestärkt/demotiviert?
- Inwiefern hat dich die Teilnahme am Bürgerrat dazu angeregt, über deinen alltäglichen Konsum nachzudenken – z.B. bezüglich Lebensmitteleinkauf?
 - Inwieweit hat dich der Bürgerrat ermutigt oder nicht ermutigt, Lebensmittel aus der Region zu kaufen?
 - Was für Auswirkungen hat deiner Meinung nach der Kauf von regionalen Lebensmitteln auf die Umwelt?
 - Was bedeutet Naturschutz für dich?
 - Wie hast du im Bürgerrat die Einstellung gegenüber/zu Naturschutz empfunden?
 - *Inwiefern hast du das Gefühl, dass Teilnehmenden die Erhaltung der Natur in und um X wichtig ist?*
 - Welchen Stellenwert würdest du anhand der Ergebnisse des Bürgerrates Naturschutz und Wertschätzung von Natur einräumen? (nachfragen)
 - Was bedeutet Umweltbewusstsein für dich?
 - *Wenn du die Zukunftsvision des Bürgerrates vom Zentrum betrachtest (entspannter Ort der Begegnung mit wenig Lärm und Grünzonen, der lebhaft ist – für Jung und Alt, etc.), inwiefern glaubst du kann diese Vision dazu beitragen, dass sich Leute in der Gemeinde zukünftig umweltfreundlicher verhalten?*
 - Auf welche Art und Weise hat dich die Teilnahme am Bürgerrat motiviert oder demotiviert, dich umweltbewusster zu verhalten? Wie hat sich deine Motivation gegenüber umweltbewusstem Verhalten nach der Teilnahme am Bürgerrat verändert?

D)

- Warum hast du beim Bürgerrat in X mitgemacht? Was war deine Motivation dafür?
- *Inwieweit hat die Teilnahme am Bürgerrat deine ursprünglichen Erwartungen erfüllt oder nicht erfüllt?*
- Was bedeutet eine nachhaltige Gemeindeentwicklung für dich?
 - Es wird verschiedene Arbeitsgruppen geben, die an der weiteren Planung und Umsetzung der Lösungen des Bürgerrats-Prozesses arbeiten werden. Könntest du dir vorstellen, in einer Arbeitsgruppe mitzuwirken und wenn, in welcher Form?
 - Könntest du dir generell vorstellen, dich zukünftig persönlich für eine nachhaltige Gemeindeentwicklung einzusetzen, und wenn auf welche Art und Weise?
 - *In welcher Form wäre es für dich möglich, zusammen mit der Gemeinde zu arbeiten?*
 - *Mit welchen anderen Personen könntest du gemeinsam etwas für die Zukunft von X tun?*

- Wie hast du dich gefühlt, als du den Abschlussbericht des gesamten Bürgerrats-Prozesses gelesen hast?
 - Falls du ihn noch nicht erhalten hast, wie neugierig bist du auf die Ergebnisse?
- *Wie beurteilst du die bisherigen Resultate aus dem Bürgerrats-Prozess (z.B. Mauer beim Gemeindeamt repariert)?*
- Inwieweit interessiert es dich, wie es mit den Resultaten aus dem Bürgerrats-Prozess weitergeht?
- Inwiefern hast du das Gefühl, dass Bürgerinnen und Bürger in Zukunft mehr mitreden können, wenn es um zukünftige Projekte in der Gemeinde geht?
- Inwiefern hat dich die Teilnahme am Bürgerrat ermutigt oder demotiviert dich persönlich für ein schönes Zentrum in X einzusetzen?
 - ➔ Was sind die Gründe für deine Demotivation?

Abschlussfrage:

Wir haben im Interview nun viel über die Effekte vom Bürgerrat auf dich und weitere Personen in Bezug auf gegenseitiges Lernen, Gemeinschaft, Umweltbewusstsein und zukünftiges Engagement gesprochen. Abschließend möchte ich dich noch fragen, inwiefern du glaubst, dass der Bürgerrat wichtig für eine zukünftige nachhaltige Entwicklung der Gemeinde X war bzw. auch weiterhin sein wird?

Appendix B: Sociodemographic data of interviewees

interviewee	IP01	IP02
sex	male	female
age	58	39
How long have you been living in X?	for 58 years	for 39 years
children	2	none (but lives together with his/her nephews)
highest level of education	technical high school	commercial high school
profession	sales in software	Head of personnel accounting in a local supermarket

interviewee	IP03	IP04
sex	male	female
age	66	58
How long have you been living in X?	for 44 years	for 32 years
children	4	2
highest level of education	study degree in physics and mathematics	secondary school
profession	teacher, headmaster, now retired	seller in an electrical shop, now retired

interviewee	IP05	IP06
sex	female	female
age	21	48
How long have you been living in X?	for 21 years	for 25 years
children	none	2
highest level of education	commercial high school	apprenticeship chef/waitress
profession	Health and nursing school	seller in a fashion shop

interviewee	IP07	IP08
sex	female	female
age	51	57
How long have you been living in X?	for 51 years	for 30 years
children	none	3
highest level of education	commercial apprenticeship	secondary (textile) school
profession	café owner	vacation house management

interviewee	IP09	IP10
sex	male	female
age	62	69
How long have you been living in X?	for 62 years	for 69 years
children	2	1
highest level of education	industrial management apprenticeship	secondary school
profession	school caretaker, now retired	gastronomy, now retired

interviewee	IP11	IP12
sex	male	male
age	46	60
How long have you been living in X?	for 46 years	for 60 years
children	3	3
highest level of education	master craftsman electrician	master craftsman electrician
profession	electrician and energy consulting	electrician and electrical retailer

interviewee	IP13	IP14
sex	male	female
age	33	45
How long have you been living in X?	for 7 years	for 20 years
children	2	1
highest level of education	study degree for elementary school	Commercial high school, electromechanics and mechanical engineering apprenticeship
profession	special education teacher	electrical mechanic

interviewee	IP15	IP16
sex	male	male
age	20	34
How long have you been living in X?	for 20 years	for 34 years
children	none	none
highest level of education	Craftsman in agriculture and forestry	commercial high school, but no final exams
profession	carpenter	bank assistant, back office

Appendix C: Rules of transcription

- dialects are translated into high German
- switching on of the voice recorder and the anonymity guarantee is not mentioned in the transcripts
- no word repetitions are considered
- no dialect habits like "oder" at the end of a sentence are considered
- breaks and pauses for reflection are illustrated with (...)
- disturbances are considered, for example if a mobile phone is ringing
- laughing is considered, but gestures and facial expressions are not considered
- time is inserted via #hours:minutes:seconds:decisecond#
- I = interviewer
- IP = interviewee
- laughing of the interviewer is considered, gestures and facial expressions of the interviewer are not considered
- Dorf = municipality X
- Öffis = public transport
- AG = working group

Appendix D: Thematic comparison – example

Example – civic/political education:

I: „Du hast vorher irgendwie so das Lernen irgendwie erwähnt.“ #00:07:31-9#

IP02: „Politische Bildung (lacht).“ #00:07:33-1#

I: „Hast du dich besser... Inwiefern hast du dich irgendwie besser in die Rolle eines Politikers hineinversetzen können, also in der Hinsicht über politische Vorgehensweisen, Quasi, warum man gewisse Dinge so macht in der Politik. Inwiefern verstehst du das jetzt besser?“

#00:30:19-2#

IP02: „Schon das Ding, dass man halt. Allen recht machen kann man es nicht. Also das ist etwas schwierig. Und (...) ja, wenn man dann halt einmal (...) einen Entschluss gefasst hat, dass die dann halt auch dazu stehen müssen und teilweise sicher Leute dagegen sind. Das muss dann halt auch, dann musst du halt dann auch dastehen und argumentieren. Und das Problem ist dann sicher, wenn sie die Argumente nicht hören wollen. Es hat ihnen jetzt sicher auch geholfen, wenn da 24 Leute zusammenkommen und sie sagen können, ja jetzt schaut einmal das haben die gesagt, und dass ihnen das auch hilft. Und von daher, ja... also ich möchte es nicht machen (lacht).“ #00:31:12-6#

I: „Inwiefern hast du jetzt, hast du irgendwie mehr über politische Vorgehensweisen und was es eigentlich alles für so eine politische Entscheidung braucht, gelernt durch den Bürgerrat?“

#00:16:41-9#

IP04: „Hat man schon, dass das (...) die ganzen Abläufe zu einem Thema, hat man anders im Gefühl als vorher. Vorher hat man halt ein Thema gehört und (...) aber eigentlich nie selbst damit befasst. Und darum, das wird in der großen Politik nicht anders sein, als es da schon anfängt im Kleinen. Und da wäre vielleicht auch das Miteinander nicht nur, weil die Ebene, die im Parlament zum Beispiel, dass nur geschimpft und, dass die vielleicht eher an einem Tisch sitzen sollten und diskutieren, wäre vielleicht besser als nur das böse Reden?!“

#00:17:31-9#

I: „Hast du während des ganzen Bürgerratsprozesses das Gefühl gehabt, irgendwie was über politische Vorgehensweisen, wie eine politische Entscheidungen zustande kommt, gelernt zu haben? In irgendeiner Form?“ #00:10:12-4#

IP05: „(...) Ja... und zwar, mir hat das am Schluss noch sehr gut gefallen, mit dieser Resonanzgruppe, da wo wir noch die Sitzung gernehabt haben. Das habe ich so richtig interessant gefunden. Dass man einmal sieht, dass es eigentlich nicht so einfach ist, solche Entscheidungen nachher in die Wege zu leiten. Dass man da auch überhaupt jemanden findet, der das tut, tun will. Der sagt, ok ich organisiere da alles und wenn man so, so als Bürger so Sachen mitkriegt, die in der Politik passieren, dann sagt man immer ja, die tun nichts, die machen nichts, die sind nur faul und reden groß, aber da hat man dann auch wirklich gesehen es ist auch echt schwierig, dass man jetzt was weiterbringt. Auch wenn man schon den Plan hätte. Aber der Plan und die Umsetzung sind halt zwei Paar Schuhe. Ich glaube, dass ich da jetzt ein bisschen vorsichtiger bin, was das anbelangt, dass ich nicht mehr so leicht sage, ja, warum tut der nichts? Vielleicht kann er einfach nicht.“ #00:11:11-7#

I: „Also inwiefern hat sich deine Einstellung gegenüber Politikern und Politikerinnen verändert nach dem Bürgerrat?“ #00:11:18-6#

IP05: „Positiv (lacht)! Ja ich glaube ich bin offener und ja... Nicht mehr so. Man hat nicht mehr so die Forderungen.“ #00:11:26-7#

I: „(...) Inwiefern hat sich denn jetzt dein Verständnis von direkter Demokratie nach dem Bürgerrat geändert, oder hast du das Gefühl, dass du irgendwie etwas gelernt hast so über politische Vorgehensweisen, warum sich Politiker manchmal so verhalten und irgendwie wie Entscheidungen getroffen werden, hast du das, also inwiefern...?“ #00:20:49-3#

IP06: „Ja das habe ich ganz interessant gefunden, weil ich habe unseren Bürgermeister habe ich absolut überhaupt nur vom Hören und Sagen gekannt, und vom Hören und Sagen hört man meistens negative Sachen, und ich muss sagen, das hat mir ganz gut gefallen und mir hat es auch gut gefallen, wie er das gemacht hat, und wie er geredet hat... Ja und ich glaube (...) dass man schon was sagen dürfte, also ja, das hat mir gut gefallen und (...) ja... ich glaube da haben wir schon was (...) gelernt, ja...“ #00:21:28-8#

IP08: „...was für mich eigentlich entscheidend war am Schluss habe ich mir gedacht, jetzt waren wir 23 Personen, haben eineinhalb Tage gearbeitet und doch (...) sind sehr viele neue Sachen dazugekommen und doch hat eigentlich jeder eine andere Meinung und dadurch ist es auch für die Gemeinde so schwierig eine Lösung zu finden, wenn wir zu 23igst schon jeder eine andere Meinung hat. Wie sollen dann die es machen, wenn sie auf 3000 hören sollen? (lacht). Das war für mich eigentlich schon (...) da habe ich gedacht, ja es ist einfach schwierig, solche Entscheidungen zu treffen und dass sie doch für die Mehrheit dann gut wären...“ #00:08:36-6#

I: „Also in Bezug auf (...) dass du etwas gelernt hast über politische Vorgehensweisen, würdest du das als das bezeichnen irgendwo?“ #00:21:30-1#

IP13: „Ja also im Zuge des Bürgerbeteiligungsverfahrens schon ja, dass das... dass man einfach sich auf irgendetwas geeinigt hat und für das, da hat man sich dann auch klar ausgesprochen, das muss man vertreten in diesem, oder das vertreten wir die Bürgerräte, das ist einmal klar rübergekommen.“ #00:21:53-1#

I: „(...) Hast du durch die Teilnahme am Bürgerrat irgendwie etwas über politische Vorgehensweisen gelernt, oder hast du das jetzt irgendwie mitbekommen, wie Entscheidungen getroffen werden, dass man irgendwie Verantwortung übernehmen muss für gewisse Entscheidungen und so weiter?“ #00:22:43-9#

IP15: „(...) Ja und nein (lacht). Also das ist auch, die Frage könnte man jetzt natürlich wahnsinnig aufspalten. Was hat man gelernt, was hat man nicht gelernt. Gelernt habe ich ganz einfach, du siehst wie kann man es machen. (...) Auf der anderen Seite weißt du, also weiß ich selber, wie schnell kann man etwas machen. Also zum Beispiel, wie schnell könnte man einen Tunnel zum Beispiel umsetzen. Auf der anderen Seite siehst du aber auch, welche politische Frage das eigentlich ist an sich Also da ist meistens immer so eine zweiseitige Ansicht meistens...“ #00:23:22-9#

I: „(...) Inwiefern hast denn du jetzt das Gefühl, dass Bürgerinnen und Bürger aus dem Dorf persönlich, oder halt in Zukunft mehr in Entscheidungen eingebunden werden oder mehr mitreden können, wenn es um zukünftige Planungen im Dorf geht oder zukünftige Entscheidungen?“ #00:06:03-1#

IP16: „(...) Es ist also schon so, dass aus dem Bürgerrat heraus zwei Personen in diesem Gremium (...) involviert sind. Einerseits ist das für mich schon einmal schon eine Praxiserfahrung was ich mitbekommen habe, dass das so ist, und andererseits finde ich ist es auch ganz wichtig, dass man in einer Situation in der das Dorf ist, auch diese Seiten einmal angewendet hat, weil so bekommen auch alle Bürger einmal mit, wie schwierig es ist Entscheidungen herbei zu führen. Und darum ist es wichtig viele Multiplikatoren zu haben. Und diese, ich bin nicht der Meinung, dass der Bürgerrat das Rad neu erfinden wird, aber ein

guter Multiplikator nach außen hin (...) um eine positive Grundstimmung hinauszubekommen.“ #00:06:53-5#

I: „Inwiefern hat denn sich deine Einstellung gegenüber Politikern nach der Teilnahme am Bürgerrat verändert, wenn du jetzt siehst, oder gesehen hast, was die eigentlich so machen müssen?“ #00:11:37-8#

IP16: „(...) Ja für die Gemeindepolitiker habe ich (...) oder ich muss ausholen. Durch das, dass in dem Bürgerrat so viele verschiedene Personen gewesen sind und so viele verschiedenen Ansichten und so viel Zugänge gewesen sind, kann ich mir vorstellen wie das in der Gemeindevertretung drinnen ist. Dass da ein jeder irgendeine Idee hat und das sicher ganz schwierig ist, das zu vereinen, dass es eine gute Lösung ergibt Und Somit habe ich ein Verständnis dafür, dass es schwierig ist da etwas zu bündeln. Also für Gemeindepolitiker habe ich viel mehr Verständnis, als für die großen mächtigen Politiker.“ #00:12:21-5#

I: „Also ich will einfach die Prozesswirkung auf dich herausfinden. Also ob die Teilnahme am Bürgerrat für dich bedeutet hat, dass du mehr oder weniger (...) gelernt hast, was Politiker so in ihrem alltäglichen Leben machen müssen, über politische Vorgehensweisen und so weiter?“ #00:13:06-2#

IP16: „Ich habe sicherlich einiges dazugelernt, vor allem was ich auf, ja wie verschieden die Personen sind und wie sie komplett verschiedenen Zugänge haben und das ist natürlich für den jeweiligen Spitzenpolitiker, nehmen wir es jetzt bei uns, Bürgermeister oder Gemeindevorstand, enorm schwierig das zu bündeln. Also das ist interessant gewesen das wahrzunehmen.“ #00:13:27-6#

Thematic comparison code:

The feeling of a person that he or she has learned more about political processes and better know about the political daily routine, that he or she has a better understanding of politics, how difficult it is to make decisions with which the majority agrees.

Appendix E: Overview of figures and tables

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Appendix F: List of abbreviations

CC	Citizens' café
DF	Dynamic facilitation
EIPP	European Institute for Public Participation
IAP2	International Association for Public Participation
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
PBC	Perceived behavioural control
TPB	Theory of planned behaviour
TRA	Theory of reasoned action
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
WC	Wisdom council
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development