

Bringing the Backstage to the Front. The Role of Citizen Forums in Local Development Planning in Switzerland

Nico VAN DER HEIDEN* and Paul KRUMMENACHER**

* Institute for Political Science, University of Zurich, Mühlegasse 21, CH - 8001 Zürich,
email: nico.vanderheiden@zda.uzh.ch

** Frischer Wind AG, Bruderholzstrasse 14, CH - 4102 Binningen,
email: paul.krummenacher@frischerwind.com

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Abstract

The Swiss political system is widely known for its extensive direct democracy. At the local level, direct democratic instruments are particularly elaborate. Citizens have numerous occasions to participate in decision-making and to influence communal policies. Therefore, citizen participation in Swiss local politics has long been considered unproblematic. However, innovative forms of citizen participation in local politics have become increasingly common throughout Switzerland in recent years, particularly so in the field of local development planning. The aim of this paper is to explore this phenomenon. The empirical basis for this paper consists of 48 citizen forums in the field of urban planning in Swiss communes, implemented by Frischer Wind AG since the year 2000. Ultimately, our goal is to understand in what way the use of new forms of citizen participation in Swiss communes originates and/or responds to deficits in the existing procedures of democratic decision making in the field of local development planning.

1. Introduction

The political decision making process in Switzerland is characterized by a high level of direct democratic impetus. It is a longstanding tradition that the people have the last say in the political process. Direct democracy concerns both sanctioning political decisions ex post but also bringing new ideas into the political process. On the input side¹, this means that people can enter the political process with new proposals through initiatives, on the output side there exist referenda that allow people to overturn a proposal that has already passed the political process. These strong possibilities of direct-democratic decision-making procedures are not only carried out on the national level but on all state levels in Switzerland.

Direct democratic impetus is particularly elaborate at the local scale and especially in small communities, where one can often propose an issue at the local assembly (Gemeindeversammlung) without the necessity to formally deposit the demand beforehand. If a proposition finds a majority at the local assembly, the municipal council (Gemeinderat) has to go along with it. Most Swiss communities have a system where local politicians work only part time for their public mandate (the so-called Milizsystem)². The fact that they have another job beyond their political mandate fosters the contact with the broader public. The contact is especially close in small communities. Given the fact that almost one third of Swiss communities have less than 500 inhabitants and more than half of Swiss communities have less than 1000 inhabitants (Horber-Parpazian 2007: 237), one would expect close ties between the local political elite and the broader public, giving the latter numerous possibilities to directly engage in the political process.

However, there are also critical arguments on this form of direct democracy at the local scale. The critique concerns the percentage of people participating in local assemblies. There are hardly more than 10% of the registered voters showing up for local assemblies. Usually, the percentage is even lower (around 2%) and only in the case of very important decisions for the community, participation rates raise over 20%. This has led to the critique that a very small minority can decide over a silent majority that does not use its possibility of direct-democratic impetus. Local assemblies were called a form of "gymnastic club democracy" ("Turnverein-Demokratie, Schneebeli 2009) meaning that only the people still active in local sports clubs participate in local assemblies, whereas the large majority is absent in those assemblies. Why, one could ask, should thus be the need for an additional form of

¹ See Scharpf (1970) for the distinction between input and output legitimacy.

² This is not the case for larger cities where at last part of the municipal council works full time.

participation when not even the ones that are provided are used by the people? We would also not suspect the need for other (time-consuming) possibilities to participate in local politics for the broader public when we see the increasing debate in medium-size communities about replacing local assemblies by ballot votes or by parliaments.

It is thus particularly puzzling that over the last few years, public forums at the local scale are mushrooming in Switzerland, especially in the policy domain of planning. The general idea of such a public forum is to openly debate an issue of local politics with the interested people from the community. One would suspect that the necessity for such new forms of local direct-democratic decision-making procedures is much lower in countries that already have well-established forms of direct-democratic decision-making structures. Nevertheless, we can see this new form of participation emerge at the local scale in Switzerland as in other countries (see e.g. Crosby et al. 1986 for the USA, Dienel 1999 for Germany, Groenewald and Smith 2002 for South Africa or Klijn and Koppenjan 2002 for the Netherlands). The question of this paper is thus *why such new forms of public inclusion have emerged in a system with traditionally strong direct-democratic possibilities.*

The general feature of deliberative policy-making, as stated by Klijn and Koppenjan (2002: 148) is therefore not true for the case of Switzerland: "Through interactive policy-making, an institutional regime of roles and rules, based on views of democracy that emphasise direct participation and interaction between government and citizens, is introduced into a system dominated by representational democracy in which decision-making power is concentrated in elected representatives and where the primacy of politics is an important feature". Switzerland is a political system with a longstanding tradition of interaction between government and citizens that. One of the main reasons for the introduction of more deliberate ways of policy-making was to overcome the frustration of many not willing to participate in a political system that only marginally allows for inputs from the broader public. This reason might be invalid for Switzerland. However, one could also argue that the tension between deliberative policy-making and representative democracy (Klijn and Koppenjan 2002: 148) is smaller in a country where politicians are already used to a high level of interaction with the broader public at different stages of the policy process. This would explain the diffusion of deliberative policy-making instruments in a direct-democratic country as Switzerland.

The aim of this paper is thus to position the (at least for Switzerland) new phenomenon of deliberative planning in the traditional (direct-democratic) political decision making process

and to find out what the reasons are for the emergence of this new phenomenon. We take up Papadopoulos and Warin's (2007: 460) claim that "the issue of the [...] coupling of new [deliberative] policy-making tools with the well-institutionalised processes of representative democracy (perhaps also in a country like Switzerland with direct democracy) has to be examined". Before analysing the ways of deliberative planning in Switzerland, let us first turn to the theory of deliberation.

2. *Deliberative Democracy*

There are two strands of literature that deal with the increasing interaction between politics and the people. On the one hand, there is the bottom-up approach of social movements (see e.g. Castells 1993). These social movements usually have a grassroots democratic approach, they try to achieve their goals by opposing traditional politics and use alternative methods as strikes or protests to get attention and to achieve their goals (Hutter 2009). On the other hand, there is the idea of deliberative policy-making going back to Habermas' (1992) notion of political deliberation. Deliberative democracy can be defined as a "normative democracy model, which sets on the persuasive power of systematic considerations and conclusions in public debates and on communication-oriented acting of the citizens" (Schultze 2002: 119, my translation). The basic idea is to intensify the relation between politics and the broader public through discourse. This participative element of democracy is seen as a more top-down approach to increase the range of people participating in the political process. Politics itself should establish and eventually institutionalise deliberative elements in the policy-making process. There is a lively debate about which approach (grassroot movements or deliberative policy-making) is more purposeful (see e.g. Jouve 2005) that we will not take up here.

Proponents of deliberative democracy see public forums as an important step that gives the inhabitants the possibility to participate in the decision making process (Lowndes 1995). Papadopoulou (2005: 10) argues that deliberation is aggravating democracy and that it gives democracy credibility back. The basic idea here is that the input side of politics has had a lack of democracy that could be overcome by instruments of deliberative democracy. Deliberation does not only involve, but "empower" citizens and therefore enhances democratic procedures (Fung and Wright 2001; Groenewald and Smith 2002: 37; Jouve 2005; Sørensen 1997).

Critics of deliberative democracy however see it as a possibility for politicians to achieve their goals by pretending to involve citizens in the decision-making process although

decisions have been made long before. Blondiaux (2008: 74) summarises this critique: "it is more about signalling the intention to let participate than to really let participate" (my translation). Critics of deliberative democracy thus point to the fact that there might be more top-down steering involved in these deliberative processes than openly admitted. Blakeley (2002: 86) states that "mobilizing citizens around a local government project [...] implies defining participation in a way that is congruent with that project as well as a certain degree of control over that participation, especially where it is seen to run counter to, or to jeopardise that project". Politicians will therefore try to keep a certain control over the deliberation process so that it does not produce outcomes that are unintended by the political elite. Deliberative politics thus runs the risk to just "shadow the local administration and become a sort of auxiliary of local government action" (Blakeley 2002: 87) and that in the end, deliberative policy making is nothing more than a window-dressing instrument for politicians (Papadopoulos and Warin 2007: 459).

The concept of the planning cell (Planungszelle, Dienel 1999) is the implementation of deliberative policy making in the domain of planning in Germany. Dienel (1999) argues that through the process of deliberation, the broader public gets a say in a traditionally technocratic policy field where the possibilities for input-legitimacy have been low. This paper looks at the question if these premises are correct for deliberative planning processes in Switzerland. Let us now derive two hypotheses from the theoretical controversy above. I propose two contradictory explanations how deliberative planning processes fit into our traditional understanding of public policy making. The positive one highlights the additional possibilities for the broader public to engage in the policy-process. The negative one emphasises the strategic use of deliberation as a means for the local elite to realise their goals.

2.1 A Positive Hypothesis about Deliberative Planning in Switzerland

On the one hand we can argue that these forums bring a new form of input legitimacy to the system (Papadopoulos and Warin 2007: 450). The line of reasoning here is that these forums provide a possibility for people to express their ideas that are generally excluded from the political decision making process. This brings up new ideas that would not have been considered by the political system even if there are direct-democratic instruments at hand. To launch an initiative is still a hurdle not many people are willing to attack, even on the local scale where it should be particularly easy. Not everyone is willing to formulate a proposal and to put forward the argument at the local assembly. This needs certain political

courage. However, public forums provide a platform where even people who would not take the burden of launching an initiative can speak up and bring in their ideas. In this line of argument, public forums would thus strengthen the input legitimacy of the political system (Papadopoulos and Warin 2007) even if it already contains strong elements of direct-democratic inclusion. The hypothesis from the positive perspective on deliberative planning is thus:

- H1) Public forums are an additional form of direct-democratic influence in the political decision making process and they provide new possibilities for the broader public to give impetus into the political system (bottom-up)³.

In this line of argument One would also suspect that public forums substitute local parliaments to a certain extent. In the communities where there is no parliament (usually the smaller ones), the need for new forms of input possibilities is higher than in communities where the parliament takes up this role.

- H1a) Public forums are more often used in communities without a local parliament.

The literature on deliberative policy-making also stresses the importance of the question who actually participates in these forums (see e.g. Andersen and Hansen 2007; Hendriks 2006; Papadopoulos and Warin 2007; Sintomer and de Maillard 2007). If deliberative policy-making should increase the influence of the broader public, one would expect that people that otherwise do not participate in the political process would show up at the deliberation and bring in their opinion.

- H1b) Public forums attract people that otherwise do not participate in the political process.

2.2 A Negative Hypothesis about Deliberative Planning in Switzerland

On the other hand, one could argue that these public forums do not meet the claim they promised. They are not devoted to the idea of bringing new ideas into the political process but to the will of the traditional political players and the political establishment (see also Hendriks 2006). Political elites use public forums to legitimize already established decisions through a pseudo-inclusive process. The proposal of the political establishment thus seems to be the result of a public debate, and as such emerging from a bottom-up process. This increases the changes of the proposal in a later public vote. Whereas, if the proposal from the elite fails to pass the test of the public forum, the elite will not be blamed for the

³ See also Fung and Wright (2001: 18).

proposal as it was never officially announced as coming from the local elite. According to this view, public forums serve the purpose of legitimizing already established decisions from politicians. They (ab)use the deliberation process as a test for the direct-democratic decision to come. They also try to influence the decision with the deliberation process in their terms.

It might also be that public forums are just a form of "me-too-ism". This means that the increasing use of participatory instruments in local planning in other countries has led to a policy diffusion process (Berry and Berry 1990; Gilardi et al. 2009). Local politics in Switzerland just does what their counterparts in other countries do. According to this view, deliberation is thus much less reflected in an actual need for the increase of public. It is rather "doing what your neighbour does".

This more negative approach to deliberative planning leads to the following hypothesis:

H2) Public forums are used by the political elite to legitimize already established decisions through a pseudo-deliberative process (top-down).

Klijn and Koppenjan (2002: 141f.) distinguish between three motives of politicians for the introduction of deliberative processes: Creating support, improving the quality of policy formation and improving democracy as such. The first motive clearly has elements of a top-down use of deliberation. Politicians would only attempt deliberative processes to "diminish the opposition to policy proposals" (Klijn and Koppenjan 2002: 145, see also McLaverty 1999: 23). The third motive is more devoted to the bottom-up idea of deliberation. The goal of this paper is thus to see which motive is predominant in Swiss deliberative planning.

Before turning to the analysis of all public forums in Switzerland, we want to look at the forms that these deliberation processes can take and give an example of such a deliberative planning process at the local scale in Switzerland.

3. Four Types of Public Forums

In order to classify the deliberation forums in Switzerland, we distinguish four types of them (see Holman and Devane 1999):

(1) The "Future Search Conference" (FSC) is the most open form of a public forum. The idea behind this forum type is that there is no given question beforehand but that the people freely and openly debate about the future of their community. There are no constraints on the policy areas for the debate and no solutions are mentioned before the conference. The outcome therefore is highly unpredictable.

(2) The "Open Space Technology" (OSC) has a more structured outline because the policy field that is going to be discussed is predefined. However, the Open Space Technology is still a relatively open method of deliberation as there is no clear question that guides the discussion, possible solutions are not discussed beforehand and the results of the debate are rather unpredictable.

(3) The "World Café" (WoC) is quite similar to the Open Space Technology. However, in this form, not only the policy area but also the question to be discussed is defined before the public forum takes place.

(4) The "Real Time Strategic Change" (RTSC) is the most structured of the four forms of public forums. There is a concrete problem that needs to be solved and the public forum is discussing predefined possible solutions.

4. One Example: Deliberative Planning in Horw

Horw, a mid-size agglomeration community with about 12'000 inhabitants, situated next to the city of Lucerne, held a Future Search Conference in 2006. The municipal council wanted to discuss its new development plan (Entwicklungsplan) with the inhabitants of the community. There was neither a policy-crisis nor a polity-crisis at the time in Horw. The municipal council wanted to deliberate with its inhabitants the general development path of the community. There was thus no clearly predefined question for the deliberative process and the process was open concerning possible results of the Future Search Conference.

The municipal council gave Frischer Wind a mandate to hold the conference. The project leader from Frischer Wind met with the municipal council and they together selected the people that should participate in the sounding board (the so-called Spurguppe). These people were selected to represent the main interest groups within the community. The major was part of the sounding board. These people met several times in 2005 to discuss the deliberation. The members of the sounding board were responsible to contact the inhabitants of Horw to motivate them to participate in the Future Search Conference. Additionally, the news was spread in the local newspaper and on the webpage of the community.

More than 200 people participated in the Future Search Conference that took place in January 2006. It started on a Friday late in the afternoon and went on until Saturday evening. The major inaugurated the debate and presented the goals of the meeting. Thereafter, the participants discussed various questions of the development of their community in small groups of eight to ten people. They rotated from time to time so that the composition of each

group changed several times. They went on to discuss current strengths and weaknesses of Horw. The participants then discussed theses on the development of Horw that were prepared by the municipal council before the conference. Participants could however critically discuss the preset aspects and bring up new points. They then went on to develop an idea how Horw should look like in 2020. From this, they filtered the most urgent issues at stake for Horw. They finished the conference with concrete policy suggestions and changes as well as amendments for the development plan.

The municipal council took these guidelines and prepared a draft for the development plan. The participants of the Future Search Conference were then invited to participate in a follow-up conference in April 2006. This meeting was called the "outcome conference" and the municipal council in corpore presented what each of them wanted to do in his/her policy domain to follow the guidelines that were developed by the Future Search Conference. The participants could then again discuss changes and amendments to the development plan. This second conference was held on a Saturday morning.

The discussion in the two conferences was in Swiss German which excluded the foreign population from the debate to a certain extent, although some of them participated. Young people were also clearly underrepresented. Horw has a communal parliament and the members of the parliament were invited to participate in the conference and many of them did so.

After this example how deliberative planning in a Swiss community looked like, let us now turn to the analysis of all public forums we examined.

5. Data and Methods

To test the contradictory hypotheses mentioned above, 48 public forums that have been taking place in Swiss communities over the last ten years. The data set is provided by Frischer Wind, a private consulting agency that is specialised in organising and moderating discussions of large groups (Grossgruppendifkussionen). We looked at the following questions that are linked to the hypotheses mentioned above for all 48 public forums:

- (1) In which year did the public forum start?
- (2) Why was the public forum initiated? Was it a policy-crisis (a project that had problems), a polity-crisis (nobody comes to the local assembly? No candidates for the local council?), or was the goal deliberation per se?
- (3) Was the goal/the question of the public forum pre-given before it took place?

- (4) How many people participated in the public forums?
- (5) How are the people participating characterised? Are they rather people that participate in politics anyway or are they people that have previously not engaged in politics?
- (6) Who participated in the sounding board? Were these people from the city council, from the local elite or from the broad public?
- (7) Does the community where deliberative planning took place have a parliament or not?
- (8) Finally, which of the four types of public forums mentioned above describes best the public forum in the respective community? FSC, OST, WoC or RTSC?

Additionally to the quantitative analysis of all 48 communities with a process of deliberative planning, we conducted qualitative expert interviews with the people in charge of the organisation from Frischer Wind.

6. Deliberative Planning in Switzerland

6.1 Top-Down or Bottom-Up?

Looking first at the time dimension of deliberative planning processes in Switzerland, we would expect no correlation between place and time when the politicians come to the conclusion that deliberation per se is needed. If however, we would see a clustering in place and time where deliberation took place, this would support the "me-too-ism"-hypothesis. Looking at the year in which the public forums started, we can see that the first deliberative planning process accompanied by Frischer Wind took place in 2001. In an international comparison, this is clearly late as other countries have experienced deliberative processes already back in the 1990s (see e.g. Klijn and Koppenjan 2002). We can also see a rather clear trend over time that shows an increase in two phases of the deliberative planning processes in Switzerland: Soon after they were introduced, their number went up and remained steady until the second increase in 2007 (see table 1).

Table 1: The Increase over Time of Deliberative Planning in Switzerland

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Communities	1	1	5	6	5	4	11	11

The time dimension is thus a first hint that policy diffusion might have led to the dissemination of deliberative planning processes in Switzerland. Looking at the geographical dimension of this diffusion, this notion gets even stronger. The dissemination

of deliberative planning happened more or less in clusters. This means that the deliberative processes started in one community and then spread over to communities in the same area. Later, other clusters started. Policy makers learned from other close-by communities about the instrument of deliberative planning. There are clearly aspects of "me-too-ism" in the outspread of this instrument in Switzerland.

Looking at the motives why the communities started a deliberative process, the bottom-up hypothesis would be supported if we find a lot of communities without a concrete problem as a kick-off for the deliberation process. If however, most communities started deliberating only after a crisis, this would be a hint that this is more of a top-down process. We can see that almost half of the communities started a deliberative process with their inhabitants because there was a concrete policy-crisis, as e.g. the development of a new home for elderly people (see table 2). Only in seven cases, a crisis of the political system initiated the deliberation process. 19 communities discussed very broad questions how their community should develop in their near future. Those were the ones that had the clearest interest in the deliberation process as such whereas in the other cases, the outcome was at least equally important as the process.

Table 2: The Motives for Deliberative Planning in Switzerland

Motive	Policy Crisis	Polity Crisis	Deliberation as Such
Communities	22	7	19

The results here are thus mixed. If we take additional information from the qualitative interviews into account, this picture changes slightly. As the project leaders admitted, even in the cases where there is no crisis as such, there was usually a concrete problem that led to the idea of a deliberation process. Only very few communal leaders introduced deliberative processes just for the sake of deliberation. We also assessed whether the deliberation process had a clear question to start off. This would support the top-down hypothesis. As we can see in table 3, this was the case in slightly less than half of the analysed deliberation processes. In the other 26 communities, the discussion was open and no clear question stood at the beginning of the process.

Table 3: Type of the Deliberation Process

Type of Deliberation	Clear question	Open Discussion
Communities	22	26

To determine whether the deliberative process is a new bottom-up instrument or rather a strategically used instrument of politicians, we also need to know which of the four forms of deliberative planning was dominant for Switzerland. If there were a lot of Future Search

Conferences with an open framework for the deliberation, this would support the bottom-up hypothesis. If, on the other hand, the form of Real Time Strategic Change dominates with its clearly defined setting, this would support the top-down hypothesis. The analysis shows that Future Search Conferences were the most used form of deliberation (see table 4), 31 of the 48 communities under scrutiny used this open method of deliberation. Only 12 communities used the approach of a Real Time Strategic Change.

Table 4: Form of the Deliberation Process

Form of Deliberation	FSC	OST	WoC	RTSC
Communities	31	0	5	12

There are thus twice as many communities that use the bottom-up approach as there are ones using the top-down approach. This was confirmed by the experts in the interviews. They approved that, although most communal leaders have a clear question in mind when approaching Frischer Wind to start a deliberating process, they nevertheless choose the more open form of a Future Search Conference. Real Time Strategic Change is, according to the project leaders, more a method that is used in deliberation processes in the private sector. Political processes tend to be more open.

It is thus not easy to answer the question whether deliberative processes are really a bottom-up process that adds an input-component to the Swiss political system or if they are rather a strategic instrument of the communal political elite to achieve their goals. There are indicators for both aspects and this is what people confirmed in the interviews. To see deliberative planning processes as a pure basis-democratic bottom-up process seems to be naive. Clearly, politicians have their interests and goals when they demand a consultancy agency to conduct a deliberative process in their community. Hardly any community started deliberating just for the sake of deliberation as such. There has to be a driving factor that brings politicians to the idea of deliberating. This can be a policy crisis or the anxiety to lose a later public vote. Local politicians also do not get the idea of deliberation "out of the blue", they learn from close-by communities that already use this instrument. There are thus in almost all cases strategic considerations involved in deliberation processes at the local scale in Switzerland.

However, to describe deliberation as a purely strategic instrument used by the local elite only to push through their own policy agenda would be misleading. Not only did the quantitative analysis show that many communal leaders entered the debate with the broader public without a clear-cut question, the majority of them also chose the most open form a deliberative process can take, the Future Search Conference. This implies a certain openness

of the political elite to unexpected outcomes. This notion was confirmed by the qualitative interviews where the project leaders pointed to the fact that they advised communal leaders that were not open for other solutions as they had in mind not to start a deliberative process. This biases the dataset used here to a certain extent as communities were excluded where communal leaders wanted to use deliberation as a means to push their policy goals through. This however happened only very rarely according to the interview partners. Deliberative processes at the local scale thus seem to follow a two-step process: Communal leaders need a crisis or open question to start a deliberative process. The introduction of the deliberation has thus a starting point in a top-down first move. Thereafter, communal leaders leave the deliberation relatively open and they accept solutions and answers they did not predict. The deliberation then takes up many aspects of a bottom-up approach.

Let us now turn to the two sub-hypotheses to shed a light on the question if deliberation is substituting the work of local parliaments and who actually participates in the deliberative processes.

6.2 Substituting the Local Parliament?

Theoretical reflections that see deliberation as a new bottom-up process led us to hypothesise that mostly communities without a parliament would use this instrument. The input-function in the political process is traditionally taken by the parliament. If such an institution is missing (as it is the case for the majority of communities with less than 10'000 inhabitants in Switzerland), the municipal council might use deliberative processes to substitute the parliament. As Table 5 shows, this seems to be true. An overwhelming majority of 37 communities that took use of a deliberative process do not have a parliament. Only seven with a parliament did so.

Table 5: Form of the Local Democratic Process⁴

Local Democracy	With Parliament	With Local Assembly
Communities	7	37

This thus strengthens the bottom-up hypothesis. Deliberative debates can indeed substitute the missing local parliament in small communities. The municipal council in communities with a parliament seem to rely on the latter to assume that their decisions in the policy-making process are correct. If the control function of the parliament is missing, the municipal council is much more uncertain about the needs of the broader public. They can

⁴ In four cases, more than one community was involved in the deliberative process. These cases were excluded from the analysis here.

thus use deliberative processes to strengthen the link between the municipal council and the broader public whereas in communities with a parliament, the latter has a bridging function between them.

6.3 Who Participates?

Unfortunately, no data is available about the composition of the deliberative body. We do not know the percentage of females, foreigners, young people or other demographic aspects. We do however know how many participated in the deliberative conferences: The range of the number of participants is between 37 and 200. On average, 108 people participated in the deliberation. The information gathered from the qualitative interviews confirmed the notion from the case study of Horw (see again above) that young people and foreigners are underrepresented in the deliberation process. Cook et al. (2007: 42) hypothesise that young people rather use the internet than public forums for political communication. Although the project leaders of the deliberation process try to get people into it that are otherwise not interested in politics, they admit that this task is difficult to achieve and that they are only marginally successful in doing so. In general, the notion that those participate in the deliberation process that are interested in politics anyway, is correct. Through a careful selection of the sounding board and wide dissemination of the announcement of the deliberation process, a few people that otherwise do not show any interest in politics, participate.

Rosenberg's (2007: 14) concern that social criteria might hinder a full representativeness of the deliberative body is thus partly confirmed by the analysis of deliberative planning in Switzerland. It is indeed very difficult to get people to deliberative processes that are at the social margins. This result is confirmed by investigations in other countries, where an overrepresentation of those that are already engaged in the traditional political process was noted in deliberative processes (Groenewald and Smith 2002; Klijn and Koppenjan 2002). Deliberative policy-making in Switzerland has not brought many new people to the table of politics. The people participating in the deliberative process are not representative for the inhabitants of the community. Deliberation is more open than the traditional political process but this additional openness (to foreigners and young people not able to vote) is hardly used by those who get this offer. In small Swiss communities, only few people participate in the local assembly and only few more participate in the deliberation process. They are very often the same people.

7. Conclusion

Our quantitative analysis of 48 deliberative planning processes revealed five things:

- Deliberative processes in planning came to Switzerland relatively late. They are regionally clustered which means that "me-too-ism" explains the diffusion of this instrument to a certain extent.
- 29 of the 48 communities had a crisis that led to the initiation of the deliberative process. Still, in 19 communities, the interest in deliberation per se was the starting point.
- 22 communities had a clear question to start the deliberation, 26 had not.
- The most open form of the Future Search Conference was used by 31 communities. Only 12 communities used the most restricted form of a Real Time Strategic Change.
- 37 communities with a deliberative process do not have a local parliament, only 7 have. This means that deliberation with the broader public could be a substitute for the missing bridging function between the municipal council and the broader public that parliaments have.

The positive hypothesis on deliberative policy-making stated that this process is an advancement of democratic governance even in those countries where democracy is firmly established (Rosenberg 2007: 1). This is to a certain extent true even for direct-democratic countries as Switzerland which are traditionally seen as the ones where the interplay between politicians and the broader public is already strong. Introducing elements of deliberation into a direct-democratic system thus adds a component instead of replacing one. It allows citizens besides their strong possibilities to vote on referenda and initiatives to participate in the early stages of the policy-process. Rosenberg's (2007: 8) notion that "given the broader conception of autonomy and equality, the emphasis on the design of institutions such as selection or referenda that allow individuals to freely pursue their personal interests by equally contributing to collective decision-making are regarded as inadequate" has thus some relevance for Switzerland. Citizens appreciate the possibility to engage early in the policy process and to deliberate. This at the same time increases the acceptance of the choices made by deliberating people by the ones succumbed.

However, the analysis of deliberative planning in Switzerland revealed a close connection between the traditional political process and the new instrument of deliberation. They are much closer interlinked than one might have expected. Future research should thus draw more attention to forms of deliberation that are initiated by and thereby closely attached to

the traditional political process. Fung (2007: 160f.) defines four types of deliberative processes: The educative form, the participatory advisory panel, the participatory problem-solving collaboration and participatory governance. For the Swiss deliberations under scrutiny here, we can see that deliberation takes place with and not against politics. In all the cases analysed, the initiation for a deliberative process came from politics. This guaranteed at the same time that the impact of the decisions taken by the deliberative assembly was immediate and that the voice of the citizens determined the policy agenda directly. Swiss deliberative planning processes are thus a form of participatory democratic governance according to Fung (2007), the strongest form of deliberation in his categorisation.

This however reveals a core problem of the relationship between politics and the public concerning deliberative processes. The closer the deliberative process is to the "normal" political process, the better the chances that the decisions of the deliberative body will be transformed into the political system but the higher the chances that the deliberative process is biased by the goals of politicians as well.

Clearly, our approach has its limitations and should be seen as the starting point for a more in-depth analysis of deliberative policy-making at the local scale in Switzerland. Our data set has certain limitations that could only be overcome by a more intensive analysis. In this paper, we looked at 48 deliberative planning processes that were all managed by the same private consultancy agency. We did however not participate on our own in the deliberative processes and we did also not interview any of the participants of the deliberation or the local politicians that initiated the deliberative process. We intend to do so in a next step, especially to shed more light on the question who participates in these deliberative processes. Obviously, this is an essential question for deliberative policy-making but one that could only be touched on here. It would be interesting to test Rosenberg's (2007: 4ff.) notion that deliberation contradicts the basis of the rational choice theorem of political behaviour. He states that participants in deliberative processes change their preferences during the debate (see also Dryzek 2007: 245f.). Public choice theorists however assume stable preferences that cannot be altered by deliberating with others. Although the project leaders from Frischer Wind state that there is usually almost unanimity after deliberative processes, (as mentioned by Andersen and Hansen 2007 as well), further in-depth qualitative research would be needed to clarify this point.

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