



Irina Dallo, Jan Freihardt, Stephanie Remke,
Juanita von Rothkirch, Beatriz Ruizpalacios

Winter School 2020 – The next step is the mental transition to the new municipality of Zurzach

Information brochure resulting from the Winter School 2020

Preface

This brochure gives an overview of the activities developed and the insights obtained in the Winter School 2020, which took place in the municipality of Wislikofen, Switzerland. Its aim is to provide inspiration to community members on potential ways to improve the fusion process of small municipalities into the municipality of Zurzach.

Introduction

The Winter School «Science meets Practice 2020» of the Transdisciplinarity Lab (TdLab) of ETH Zurich aimed to provide participants with an understanding on transdisciplinary methods through practical experience. The two-week course was led by ETH Zurich coaches and experienced practitioners. The participants became acquainted with the fusion process of eight municipalities into the new municipality of Zurzach through a series of lectures and workshops with local residents.

The exchange between participants and members of the community took place in various settings: a presentation about the municipality of Wislikofen including a walk through the village; an encounter with cof-

fee and cake with residents of the different municipalities; and a discussion with the fusion implementation committee.

After interacting with local residents, the participants translated their insights into problem definitions and brainstormed around activities to generate reflection on these problems. These ideas were implemented in a workshop (Fig. 1) that was organized on the last evening of our stay and which was attended by twenty residents from different municipalities. The workshop consisted of four activities: “Confession box”, “Role Play”, “Drawing” and “Treasure hunt” (Figure 1). This brochure summarizes the concept and results of these four activities.

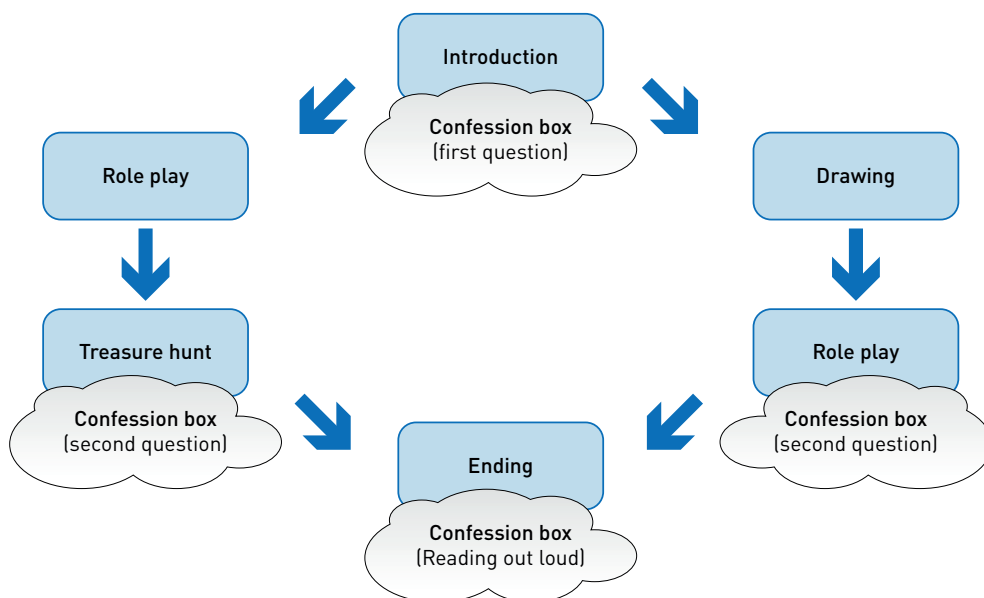


Figure 1

Overview of the workshop course. Two groups conducted different activities through the evening.

Our eight key insights

1. The administrative fusion process is well underway. The mental conception of a new community is still to be made.
2. Cross-municipal events (e.g. summer festival, communal meetings) can strengthen the identity of the new municipality of Zurzach.
3. Residents believe on the importance of maintaining the character and identity of small municipalities.
4. After the fusion, it is important that the residents of municipalities can continue to voice their concerns and participate in decision-making processes.
5. Encouraging the participation of young people and women in municipal meetings is important to include a wide range of perspectives and strengthen the sense of responsibility for the decisions made.
6. A possible first step for the implementation of the measures leading to the "Energy City" label would be the establishment of an energy council.
7. Well-connected residents of the small municipalities could promote the involvement of other people in the new municipality.
8. The fusion process should continue to involve community members in the decision making to include diverse perspectives and create social acceptance.

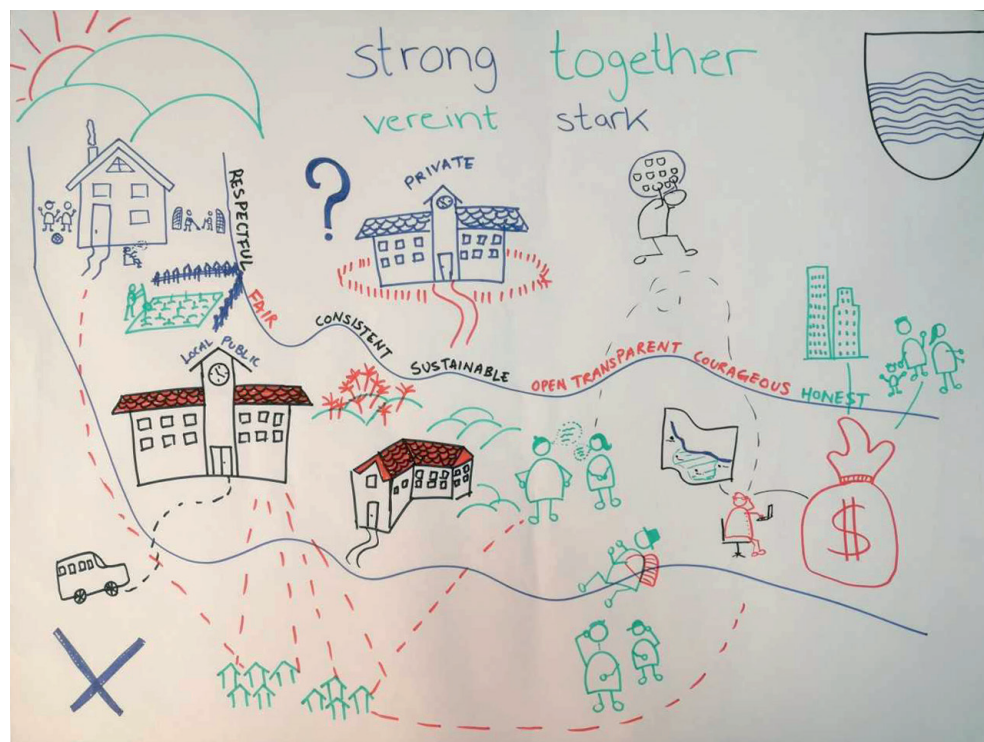


Figure 2

Rich-picture of the dynamics of the region of Zurzibiet –result of the exchange with community members.

Activity I – role play

Talks with community members lead us to observe that members of the fusion implementation committee perceive a lack of shared responsibility in their decisions, experienced by the absence of feedback to their

information talks and discussions. They perceive that this is reflected by the little participation of citizens, particularly women and young people.

Starting point



Our activity intended to make participants reflect on the barriers to attendance and participation of women and young people in the municipal meetings. Also, to recognize the distinction between these two steps: attending to meetings and actively taking part in discussions (Figure 3).

Our activity asked participants to adopt a role of a woman or young person. They were asked to identify whether this person could attend a meeting and actively participate in it. Identified barriers for attendance and active participation were discussed.

Aim + procedure

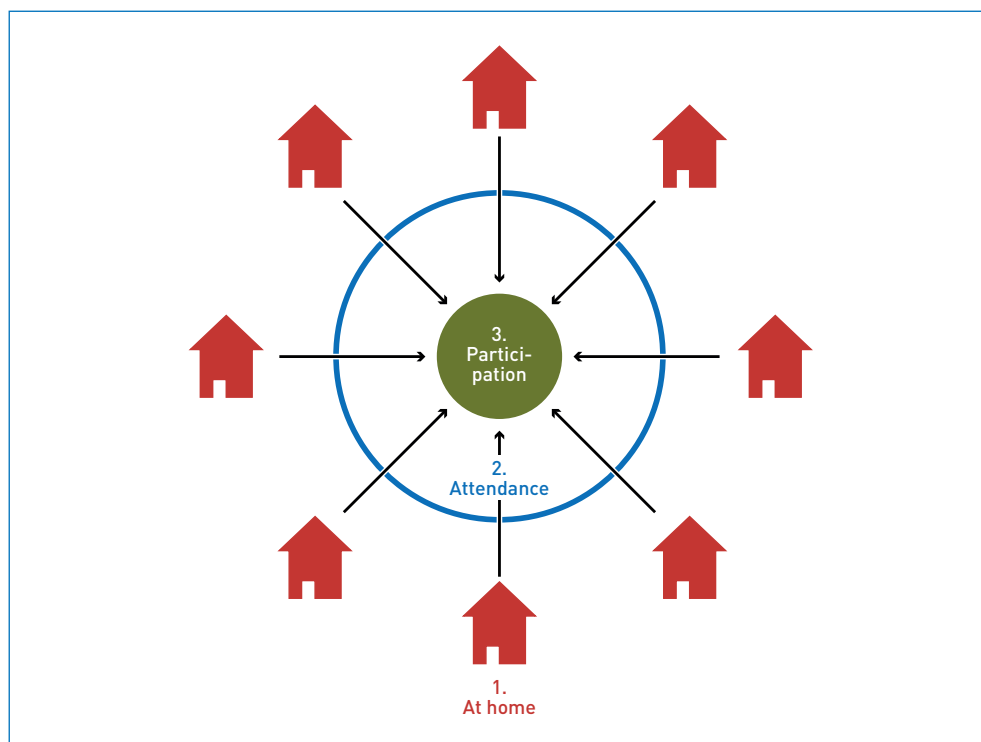


Figure 3
Game carpet for the role play.

Findings



Participants focused on barriers for attendance, rather than on the barriers for actively participating in the municipal meetings. For

each of the identified obstacles, participants identified potential solutions. Some of the mentioned points are the following:

Table 1

A selection of points raised.

Barriers	Potential Solutions
No childcare options	Provide childcare during meeting times
Lack of public transport to come back home after event	Provide extended hours of public transport
Young people do not know meetings are happening	Use young people's information channels
Time of event (e.g. Friday evening)	Change time of event
Lack of courage or confidence	Special events for young people or women.
Lack of personal motivation. No interest in current formats.	Attractive events (e.g. link meeting with a cultural event)

Insights for the further fusion process



- Promoting participation in municipal meetings is important to include a wide range of information from the public and to strengthen the community's ownership of decisions.
- Further investigation of the reasons for the lack of participation of young residents in municipal meetings is necessary as a first step towards developing effective solutions.
- Modifying logistical details such as meeting schedules, childcare alternatives and transportation options could increase the assistance of citizens to municipal meetings.
- To reach young residents, the information channels and format of meetings may need to be adapted.

Activity II – drawing social networks

Residents of the municipality of Zurzach find it important to know their neighbors and build experiences together. This gives them

a sense of belonging, which is an important part of their community identity.

Our activity encouraged participants to think and exchange views about their present and future social contacts. They were also encouraged to reflect on how the municipalities fusion might affect their social networks.

All participants have contacts in all three zones. This shows that the participants are well connected with other villages of the Zurzach municipality, although to varying degrees. Most participants expect that the

During the activity, participants drew their social contacts in three spatial areas: in their hometown, in the new municipality of Zurzach, and outside the new municipality.

fusion of the municipalities will only lead to minor changes in their social network. Figure 4 shows exemplary drawings by six participants.

Starting point



Aim + procedure



Findings



Figure 4
Exemplary drawings made by participants.

Insights for the further fusion process



- In general, participants would like the boundaries between municipalities to become more fluid. A special wish is that the exchange with Bad Zurzach goes in both directions: not only that residents of the small communities go to Bad Zurzach, but also that residents of Bad Zurzach go to events in the small communities.
- At several points it became clear that there are still various uncertainties: What will happen to the municipality of the region that does not belong to the new municipality? How about the fire brigade which is currently organized through a network?

Activity III – treasure hunt

Against the background of climate change, an activity for sustainable development in the region was designed. As only a part of the

new municipality has the label “Energy City”, some citizens would like to extend this label to the whole region.

The aim of the activity was to find out how participants assess the various measures that belong to the “Energy City” label. This enabled a discussion on the measures which are most likely to be implemented in the re-

gion. The discussion was carried out by attributing roles of different community members, in order to gain insights from different perspectives.

The sustainable development in the region requires an interplay of various measures (Figure 5). A central point mentioned by participants was the promotion of participation in community development.



Figure 5

Discussed measures, that would lead to gaining the „Energy City“ label.

- Several measures for sustainable development cannot be implemented separately by each municipality, but only in cooperation with each other.
- The establishment of an energy council was seen as a possible first step towards the implementation of further measures.
- The participation of the population in the implementation of sustainable projects is a central point to achieve sustainability.
- Other measures discussed were markets for local products, local circular economy, organic farming, car sharing stations and an energy cooperative.

Starting point



Aim + procedure



Findings



Insights for the further fusion process



Activity IV – confession box

Starting point



Residents want to have a sense of control over decision-making processes. They fear that the personal relationships of the population in the new, larger municipality of

Zurzach will lose importance and that their concerns will not be considered by decision makers.

Aim + procedure



Participants were able to write down their thoughts and suggestions on cards in a non-judgmental, anonymous environment and throw them into a confession box. We asked participants the following questions: how can I get personally involved? And how can I make it easier for others to partici-

pate? At the end of the evening, the points frequently mentioned were read out loud to the event attendees. Figure 6 illustrates the procedure of the activity. The statements on the letters are some of the answers given by the participants.

Findings



The majority of the answers to the first question referred to technocratic and administrative communication channels (e.g. holding a referendum, municipal assemblies). With respect to the second question,

statements were rather about personal contacts, joint activities and exchange with other people. This shows that sometimes one has to step out of his own perspective in order to understand others' needs.

Insights for the further fusion process



Strategies can be implemented to ensure that people continue to be able to influence decision-making processes. Some of those strategies are the following:

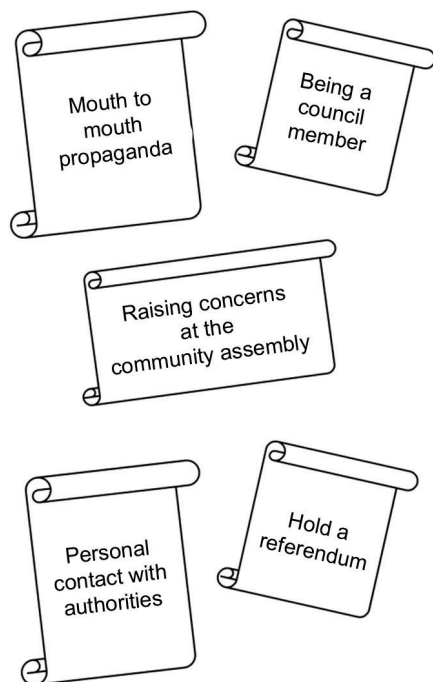
- Involvement of various interest groups in the organization of communal events (e.g. flexible budget).
- Intercommunal events (e.g. annual summer festival, municipal assembly).
- Local council members should be present at informal activities

(e.g. senior excursions, communal spaghetti dinners).

- Have one contact person in each municipality as a mediator.
- Use of different communication channels (e.g. social media, local radio, bulletin board at schools/stores, Crosscity).
- Involve young people in the organization of the municipal assemblies.



Which mechanisms enable you to voice your concerns in your community?



How can you help others to raise their concerns in the new community of Zurzach?



Figure 6

Graphical representation of the procedure of the activity „confession box“.

Closing

For closing, some impressions of our intensive and enriching stay in Wislikofen:



We would also like to thank everyone who accompanied and supported us during the Winter School. A big thank you to the council and residents of Wislikofen and surrounding communities for this inspiring exchange. During the two weeks in Wislikofen we were able to gather experience in interdisciplinary approaches and gain new insights for our own projects.

Thanks also to BinBin J. Pearce, Michael Stauffacher, Patricia Frey and Olivier Ejderyan for their theoretical inputs and stimulating discussions.

Participants

Name	Country	Institution
Silvia Burgdorf	Switzerland	ETH Zurich
Xin Cheng	China	University of Ghent
Victoria Choi	Australia	University of Technology, Sydney
Irina Dallo	Switzerland	ETH Zurich
Brockton Feltman	US	University of Michigan State
Jan Freihardt	Germany	ETH Zurich
Ivo Kashimana	Nigeria	University of Hamburg
Fiona Maager	Switzerland	ETH Zurich
Cédric Middel	Netherlands	VU Amsterdam
Stephanie Remke	Germany	Eawag, EPFL
Beatriz Ruizpalacios	Mexico	National Autonomous University of Mexico
Lucien Schriber	Switzerland	ETH Zurich
Philipp Stadler Benz	Switzerland	SBB Real State
Helena Störm	Sweden	ETH Zurich
Sofia Vargas-Payera	Chile	University of Chile
Juanita von Rothkirch	Colombia	ETH Zurich

Contact
ETH Zurich
USYS TdLab
CHN K 78
8092 Zurich

www.tdlab.usys.ethz.ch

Layout: Sandro Bösch
© ETH Zurich, 2020