

The interrelation between collective participation and sustainable decisions – a qualitative assessment approach

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11.09.2012

Paper for the special session on 'Evidence-based approaches to researching the impact of collaborative and participatory governance on sustainable development', organised by the Working Group Governance and Sustainability, Leuphana University Lüneburg at the 2012 Berlin Conference on 'Evidence for Sustainable Development', 5-6 October 2012

Abstract

The theoretical claim for stakeholder participation in order to achieve sustainable policy outcomes is prominent in the literature. Empirical evidence substantiating this claim is, however, lacking. The complex characteristics of the concepts of sustainability and participation demand a systematic approach in which method develops from theory. We propose a qualitative assessment approach based on theoretical considerations. We deliberately restrict our approach not to prove causalities but to demonstrate tendencies. Our methodological starting point refines the complex interrelation between collective participation and sustainability by qualitatively assessing the value of the two concepts separately before looking for mutual or opposing trends. Based on theory, both concepts are re-split into two dimensions. Collective participation is re-split into 1. inclusion and 2. influence and sustainability is re-split into 1. the external impact of decisions and 2. the internal capacity to face pressures. For each dimension the approach combines an abstracting point-based scaling system with explanatory narratives. This ensures the comparability of different cases and at the same time the transparency and reliability of the assessment. By matching and comparing the previous scaling results in the end, the assessment procedure explores whether the degree of collective participation and the degree of sustainability are rather synchronic or opposite. We exemplify our approach with an example of local level non-governmental neighbourhood governance in India and review primary data on the agitation for green spaces and slum eviction in Hyderabad. This application outlines the disregard for diversity among stakeholders and the cost-benefit assessment of sustainability as remaining theoretical and methodological items for the amendment of our assessment approach in its current version. After refinement the presented approach is intended for the application on diverse cases of direct decision-making and for the meta-analysis and comparison of secondary case-studies as well as for the analysis of primary qualitative data.

1. Background and goals

Since Agenda 21 the call for more participation in environmental decision-making is gaining influence and prominence. Nonparticipatory approaches are increasingly criticised as illegitimate and ineffective (Bulkeley, Mol 2003, pp. 144, 147; Newig et al. 2011; Paavola, Adger 2006; Paavola 2007; United Nations 1992a). Recent approaches and research initiatives are starting to investigate the interrelation between participation and environmental outcomes striving for scientific evidence; see, for example, 'EDGE - Evaluating the Delivery of Participatory Environmental Governance Using an Evidence-Based Research Design' at the Leuphana University in Lüneburg, Germany (INFU-Institute for Environmental Communication 04.2012; Newig, Fritsch 2011).

In this paper we¹ introduce a methodological approach which tries to supplement these approaches by generalising the questioned interrelation and by deliberately restricting the scope of its explanatory power. The presented approach does not limit itself to the evaluation of participation in the governance of environmental resources but attempts to be able to assess implications of participatory decision-making on a more general level and to be applicable to a broader range of cases. This claim accounts for the complexity of the phenomenon of sustainability. This complexity simultaneously makes us restrict the approach in other respects. Given the variations, complexity and often looseness in defining sustainability and sustainable development, there is no scientific consensus on how to best to measure sustainable development. When a phenomenon cannot be clearly defined as to where it starts and ends, setting exact quantitative reference values for this phenomenon is an infeasible challenge (Azar et al. 1996, p. 108). Approximate values can be achieved but not more. Thomas M. Parris and Robert W. Kates point out with regard to sustainable development that ‘there are no indicator sets that are universally accepted, backed by compelling theory, rigorous data collection and analysis, and influential in policy (...) due to the ambiguity of sustainable development, the plurality of purpose in characterizing and measuring sustainable development, and the confusion of terminology, data, and methods of measurement’ (Parris, Kates 2003, p. 559). Our approach does not try to fill this measurement gap but it replies to the scientific conditions, given the plurality of the concept. The plurality and opaqueness of concepts is the core methodological challenge when measuring sustainability. We face this challenge by stepping back and restricting our explanatory claim; we deliberately use the term assessment and not measurement. Our approach allows for an assessment of policies and outputs as more or less sustainable and for a qualitative comparison of various policies. The presented approach does not allow for a quantitative evaluation of policies. Thus, we do not join the large compendium of initiatives for quantitative indicators for sustainability (Parris, Kates 2003, p. 561; Azar et al. 1996, p. 89). we acknowledge that our definition of sustainability necessarily directs our assessment (Bossel 1999, p. 3). The presented measurement approach assesses sustainability and not sustainable development, even though the concept of sustainable development (Lélé 1991b; World Commission on Environment and Development 1987) is incorporated into our understanding of sustainability (see p. 4). The assessment approach scientifically defines sustainability as the adjustment of the social and ecological system (Bossel 1999, p. 2; Gatzweiler, Hagedorn 2002) based on the regard for two dimensions; first, the external impact of behaviour on others and second, for the internal capacity to face pressures (Chambers, Conway 1992). Just as we restrict our definition of sustainability to focusing on the claim for systems adjustment and on its two dimensions, we limit the scale of the assessment simultaneously and neglect other indicators that do not tackle these two dimensions. In

¹ Notice: The text applies the plural subject ‘we’ on the ground of stylistic reasons. The text was written by a single author only.

addition we follow further scientific criteria that have been originally generated for quantitative measurements of sustainability. In his report for the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) in Canada, Hartmut Bossel lists several requirements for finding indicators of sustainable development. His list is orientated towards a quantitative measurement. We agree with several of his postulations for the measurement of sustainability and apply these propositions to our approach of assessing sustainability even though our approach does not attempt a comprehensive quantitative measurement. Among other points, we agree with his neglect of ad hoc approaches and with his call for a systematic approach (Bossel 1999, p. 7). By taking our theoretical framework for exploring the capability of participative and collective governance in sustainable outcomes and the corresponding concepts as bases for our levels and criteria of assessment we systematise our approach and keep it traceable (see p. 4ff). A detailed explanation of the underlying theoretical framework for exploring the capability of participative and collective governance in sustainable outcomes is written up in a submission of the author to the *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*. Bossel further claims for a participatory selection of indicators to find a set of indicators that 'encompasses the visions and values of the (respective) community or region' (Bossel 1999, p. 7). For our qualitative assessment of sustainability we call to pick up and use the assessment of the affected people in review processes. Thereby, we claim it to be essential to study the assessment of various groups of stakeholders and to incorporate not only the views of the decision-making group but also the views of outsiders who are nevertheless affected by the respective policies (Bossel 1999, p. 7). In our example this requires inter alia an incorporation of the evicted slum dwellers living in Tarnaka (see p. 18ff).

The proposed qualitative assessment method not only assesses the sustainable character of policies and outputs but also assesses the degree of participative governance and collective action, according to appropriate organisational forms and at various levels and tries to estimate the interrelations between collective participation and sustainable decision-making. We attempt to assess the sustainable character of certain policies of respective organisations (be they formal organisations of people such as registered cooperative societies or registered resident welfare associations) or informal groups (such as neighbourhood groups that are not registered). Our approach can, however, encompass organisations at various levels (local, regional, state, global). The next chapter briefly outlines the underlying theoretical concepts and assumptions. Chapter 3 gives a detailed layout of the assessment approach before chapter 4 applies the approach to a case of urban neighbourhood governance in India. This application illustrates the need for amendments of the approach which are summarised in the conclusion.

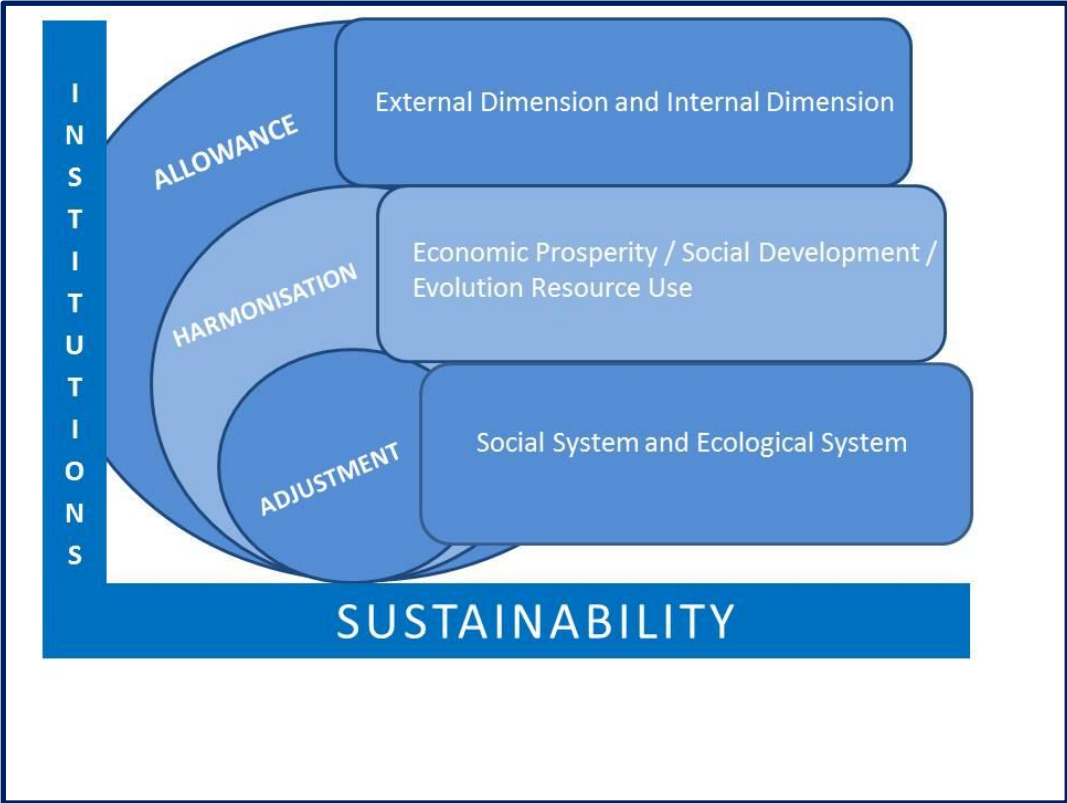
2. Constitutive concepts and assumptions

a. Sustainability

Referring to Harmut Bossel, Franz Gatzweiler, Konrad Hagedorn and others we define sustainability as the *adjustment of the social (human) system and the ecological system* (Bossel 1999, p. 2; Gatzweiler, Hagedorn 2002). This definition of sustainability is linked to scientific concepts of institutions as ‘the rules of the game in a society’ with major relevance for the configuration of human interactions (North 1990, p. 3). Institutions encompass rules-in-form (e.g., formal laws) as well as rules-in-use (e.g., social norms) and might serve as resources or restrictions for the actors shaping the strategies of the actors whose actions in turn impact and shape the institutions (Diekmann, Voss 2004, pp. 15ff; Ostrom 2005, p. 20; Mayntz, Scharpf 1995; North 1990). We employ this idea of institutions to the Brundtland definition of sustainability (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987) and thereby cope with its weakness of weak conceptualisation (Beckerman 1994, p. 194; Lélé 1991a, pp. 607ff). We claim that institutions need to harmonise the elements of sustainable development (economic prosperity, social development and the evolution of resource use) in order to accommodate the social and ecological system. Following the livelihood conceptualisation of the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) in the UK and the ideas of Robert Chambers and Gordon R. Conway and others we also allow for two dimensions of sustainability (Scoones 1998, p. 5; Chambers, Conway 1992). The first dimension pertains to the external impact of behaviour and its impact for inner- and intergenerational fellows and the ecological system. Chambers and Conway call this dimension ‘environmental sustainability’. The second dimension pertains to actors’ internal capacities to face pressures and to ‘maintain an adequate and decent livelihood’ (Chambers, Conway 1992, p. 9). In the light of these two dimensions of sustainability we specify our claim for the harmonisation of the three elements of sustainable development to achieve an adjustment of the social and ecological system. We contend that economic prosperity, social development and the evolution of resource use can only be traced simultaneously, and the social and ecological system can only be adjusted when behaviour and decisions are beneficial along both dimensions, thereby maintaining or enhancing the livelihood prospects and the subsistence of fellow humans, of the ecological system and of the respective actors themselves.

With this scientific framing of the Brundtland ideas which constitute the background of all internal negotiations since Rio (United Nations 1992b; United Nations 1992a) and which are also represented by various development and environmental agencies such as the World Bank or the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) (Lélé 1991a, p. 611) we regard the scientific quality as well as for the policy relevance of our conceptualisation and operationalisation of sustainability.

Figure 1: Conceptualisation of sustainability



Source: Author

b. Participatory governance

Considering the political sciences’ focus on regulation (Mayntz 2004) as well as the economics’ focus on limiting transaction costs (Williamson 2005) we define governance as the entire coexisting forms of the intended regulation of common issues and transactions at various levels of organisation. With regard to participatory governance we adhere to Heike Walk’s definition and define participatory governance as all those forms of governance which incorporate the actors which are affected by a decision into the processes of planning and decision-making (Walk 2008, p. 52). Our review of participation and participatory governance does not pertain to ‘the participation of ordinary citizens in the public policy process’ (Andersson, van Laerhoven 2007, p. 1090) but to participation within various organisational forms (e.g., within non-governmental organisations or within co-operatives) and at different political levels (local, regional, national, global). Nevertheless, we incorporate various fundamental approaches on participation and participatory governance with multiple perspectives in terms of the conditions, purposes, modes and outcomes of participative decision-making in our framework for exploring the capability of participative and collective governance in sustainable outcomes (Arnstein 2007; Brady et al. 1995; Dachler, Wilpert 1978, p. 20; Fung, Wright 2003, pp. 15, 24; Geißel 2008, p. 228; Walk 2008, p. 20). Thereby, mainly fundamental approaches on participation and participatory governance are incorporated, and the comprehensive group of participatory

governance approaches within the wider discourse of development is not directly incorporated (see inter alia Blair 2000; Gaventa 2004; Hickey, Mohan 2004; World Bank 1997).

c. Collective action

We subscribe to Mancur Olson's classical definition of collective action that 'a number of individuals have a common or collective interest—when they share a single purpose or objective—[and when] individual, unorganised action [...] will either not be able to advance that common interest at all, or will not be able to advance that interest adequately' (Olson 1965, p. 7). The widespread literature on collective action, especially in natural resource management, identifies various factors and combination of factors to affect the successful management of (common-pool) resources. Our framework incorporates various approaches, concentrating on Elinor Ostrom's work (Agrarwal 2001; Baland, Platteau 1996; Baland et al. 2007; Meinzen-Dick 2007; Ostrom 1990, 2007; Ostrom, et al. 2009; Wade 1988). Within our framework we concentrate our attention as well on the interrelation between social capital and collective action, referring mainly to Robert Putnam (Putnam et al. 1993; Putnam 1995). Thereby, we avoid circular argumentation and restrict all implications to specific, defined and bounded communities and on one directional functional chain, that is, how social capital advances collective action.

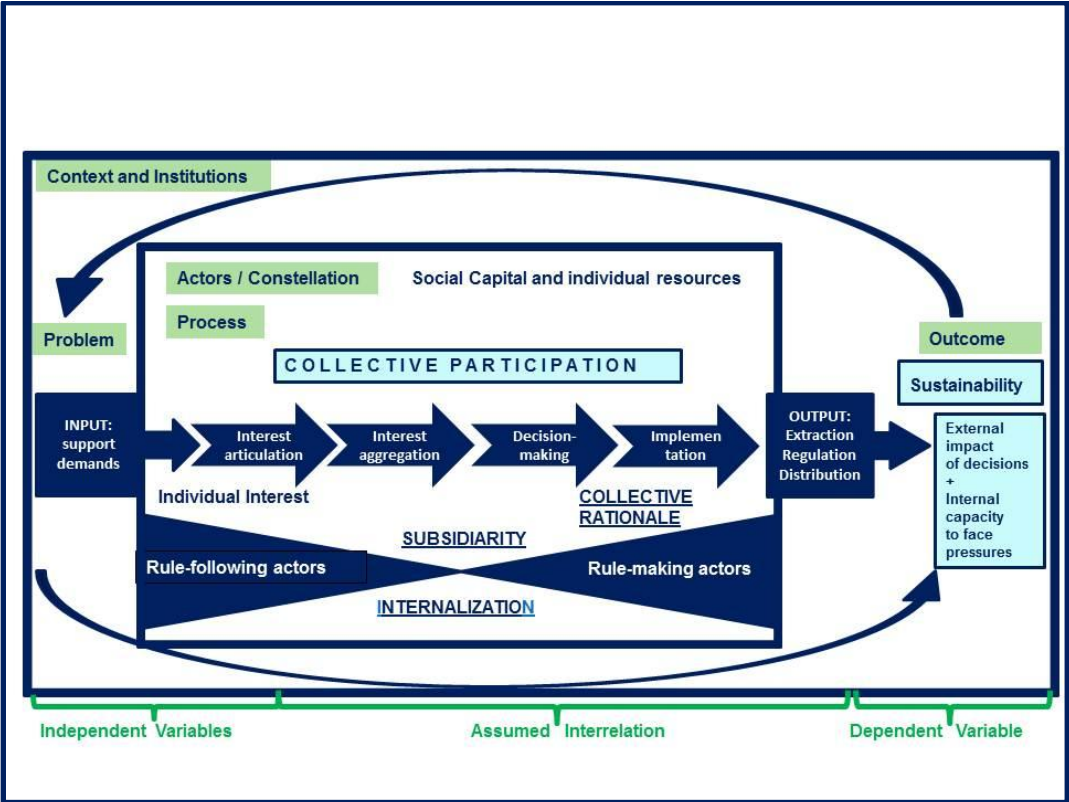
d. Intermediate concepts

Our theoretical framework consults the concepts of integrative institutions, subsidiary, participative theories of democracies and social learning as intermediate concepts interlinking collective participation and sustainable outcomes. Firstly, Konrad Hagedorn develops his concept of integrative and segregative institutions on the assumption that sustainable development requires the balance of the costs of integration and segregation by institutions. Thereby, integrative institutions are characterised by an internalisation of both the transaction costs of decision-making and the positive and negative effects of decisions and by the protection against costs resulting from the activities of other agents. Some segregation can keep a system's capacity for innovation but generally integrative institutions rather than segregative ones comply with the principles of sustainability and especially account for the external impact of behaviour on inner- and intergenerational alters (Hagedorn 2008). Aside from this, in participative institutions, the overlapping of decision-making actors and decision-affected actors corresponds with the socio-political principle of subsidiarity. Subsidiarity is beneficial to sustainability in various ways, thereby especially promoting the internal capacity to face pressures, see the adjustment to the specific ecological, social and cultural environment, the regard for community needs and coping strategies and the initiation of learning processes and identification of people with rules and resources (Bulkeley, Mol 2003, p. 151; Geißel 2009, p. 404; Hagedorn et al.

2002, pp. 13f, 18f; Ostrom 2005, pp. 3, 22; Meinzen-Dick et al. 2002, p. 650; Newig 2007, p. 61; Schmidt 1995, p. 949; Schubert et al. 2007, p. 295; Stöhr 2001, pp. 41f). With reference to participative theories of democracies and to the ideas of Jean-Jacque Rousseau, it is assumed that via collective participation and by discussion and discourse based on trust and norms of reciprocity, individual interest can be accumulated and transformed into a collective rationale (Rousseau 1977; Walk 2008, pp. 74, 79). This assumption is very much in line with theories of social learning which assume public participation to initiate social learning processes ‘which translate uncoordinated individual actions into collective actions that support and reflect collective needs and understandings’ (Webler et al. 1995, p. 460).

Based on the concepts summarised above we have created a framework which considers collective participation as an independent variable and sustainable decision-making as a dependent variable (see submission to the *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*). We design our framework according to system theoretic approaches by David Easton (Easton 1965) and Gabriel A. Almond (Almond, Powell 2003) and arrange our sub-variables in categories inspired primarily by the actor-centred institutionalist approach of Renate Mayntz and Fritz Scharpf (Scharpf 2006; Mayntz, Scharpf 1995).

Figure 2: Draft design - a theoretical framework for exploring the capability of participative and collective governance in sustainable outcomes



Source: Author

Our framework features similarities with specific approaches in the field of environmental governance. Jens Newig, for example, designs a more comprehensive model which arranges variables into three categories: Context (also covering Problem Structure, Actors and their Constellation or 'Social Structure'), Process and Results (Newig 2007, pp. 57–58). The proposed qualitative assessment procedure is intended to provide a sound methodological footing for these and similar kinds of theoretical approaches which link (collective) participation and sustainability.

3. The qualitative assessment approach

Our approach attempts to qualitatively assess the interrelation between the mode of decision-making and its output with reference to sustainability. We thereby acknowledge critical features of qualitative research which apply to our assessment approach: e.g., the question of generalisability, the difficulty of predictions, insufficiency in testing hypotheses, lower credibility with policy makers, and the time-consuming character of collecting and analysing the data and the risk of personal bias influencing the results (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie 2004, p. 20). However, because sustainability is a complex phenomenon and because we want to refer to the local context, qualitative research is an appropriate tool for our purpose, if we regard its weaknesses (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie 2004, p. 20). We do not want to test hypotheses or to make predictions, and we do not aim for the generalisability of our results. Instead we aim for the disclosure of trends. The basic idea is to refine the complex interlinkage between collective participation and sustainability by assessing the value of the two concepts of collective participation and sustainability separately before looking for mutual or opposite trends. This approach does not allow for proving causalities but allows for demonstrating tendencies. The approach can be used for the meta-analysis and comparison of secondary case-studies as well as for the analysis of primary qualitative data.

Our qualitative assessment approach combines an abstracting point-based scaling system with explanatory narratives. This combination ensures the comparability of different cases and at the same time the transparency and reliability of the assessment of each individual case. The scaling is conducted on theoretical lines and represents the core analytical procedure in our approach. Narratives are employed for explaining this classification and ensuring the reliability of the findings.

a. Narratives

Narrative inquiry is a prospering yet still evolving method in the social sciences (Riessman 2008, p. 5; Chase 2011). There are multiple definitions of narratives (Riessman 2008, pp. 3–4). We agree with the definition of Horace P. Abbott, who describes a narrative as 'the representation of an event or a series of events' (Abbott 2008, p. 13). We do not employ narratives as 'the objective of the research' (Lieblich et al. 1998, p. 2) and do not inquire about interpretations of things (Bruner 1986, p. 51) but

we employ narratives as ‘the means for the study of another question’, using the narratives ‘to learn about a social phenomenon’ (Lieblich et al. 1998, p. 2). The systematic study (‘narrative analysis’) of decision-making processes (‘narrative data’) thereby substantiates our scaling approach (Riessman 2008, p. 6). Therefore, we proceed differently than with, for example, the analytical narrative approaches. They ‘employ game theory to discipline their narratives’ (Hanisch 2003, pp. 130f) whereas our approach employs narratives to explain its classifications. The narratives will support the analytical procedure along all the steps: The narratives will be firstly employed to explain the classification of cases along the concept of collective participation with references to the supporting or limiting roles of social capital and individual resources. Secondly, the narratives will be employed to explain the classification of cases along the concept of sustainability, and thirdly, they will be employed to explain the interrelation between both concepts and the synchronic or a-synchronic tendencies, thereby referring to the intermediate concepts of integrative institutions, subsidiarity and social learning. This way, the narratives are guided by theoretical considerations and are simultaneously used to empirically substantiate our classifications and to review our theoretical assumption. Similar to the analytical narrative approach our approach ‘goes back and forth between the model and the data’ and keeps testing the model against reality (Bates et al. 2000, p. 700; Hanisch 2003, p. 131).

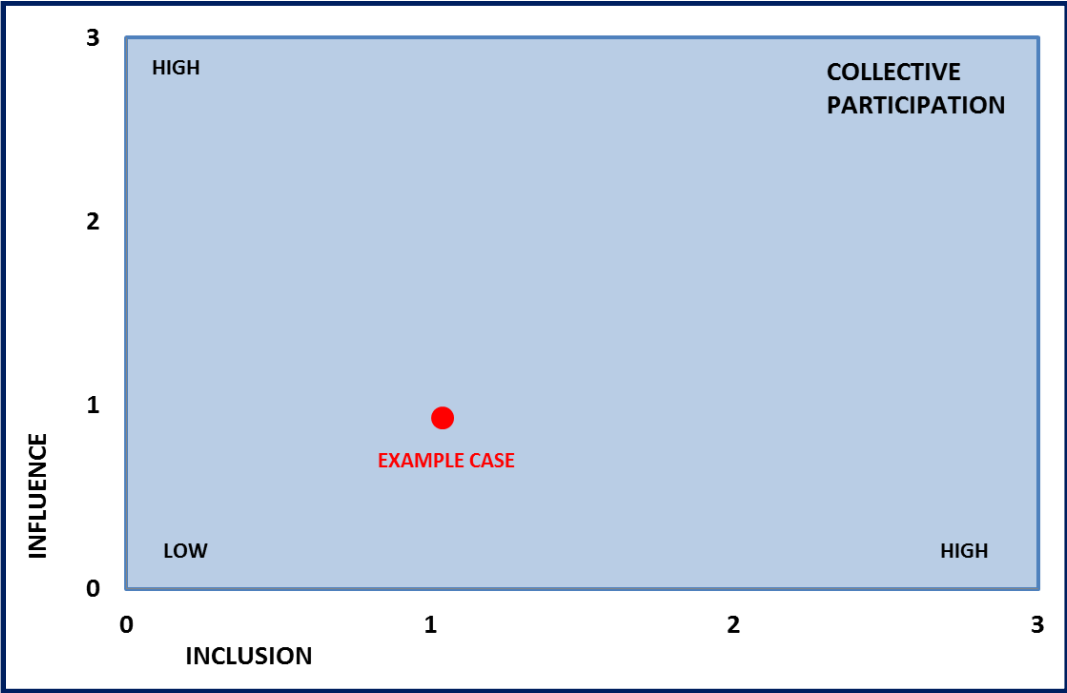
b. The scaling system

Our point-based scaling system is inspired by an existing software tool for the analysis of public policy processes designed by a Swiss group of political scientists from the University of Zurich. The Actor-Process-Event Scheme (APES) uses qualitative case study data to link different chronological phases of a decision-making process with the actors participating in this process.² Similar to APES our assessment approach deploys a point-based scaling system. The ordinal steps are theoretically founded. The scaling and assessment is thereby done via dimensions. The concept of collective participation is re-split into two dimensions:

1. Inclusion and maximisation of participation (who of the affected stakeholders gets to participate in the decision-making) and
2. Influence (how much the stakeholders have to say)

² APES transforms and visualises the data and prepares it for employment in standardised procedures such as network analysis. APES differentiates between ‘leading influence’ in decisions as the highest possible degree, followed by ‘active participation’ as the second highest degree, ‘passive participation’ as the lowest degree and ‘non-participation’. The different degrees are associated with points. Leading influence is associated with three points, active participation with two and passive participation with one. (Serdült et al. 2004; Serdült et al. 2007, 2008).

Figure 3: Two dimensions of collective participation

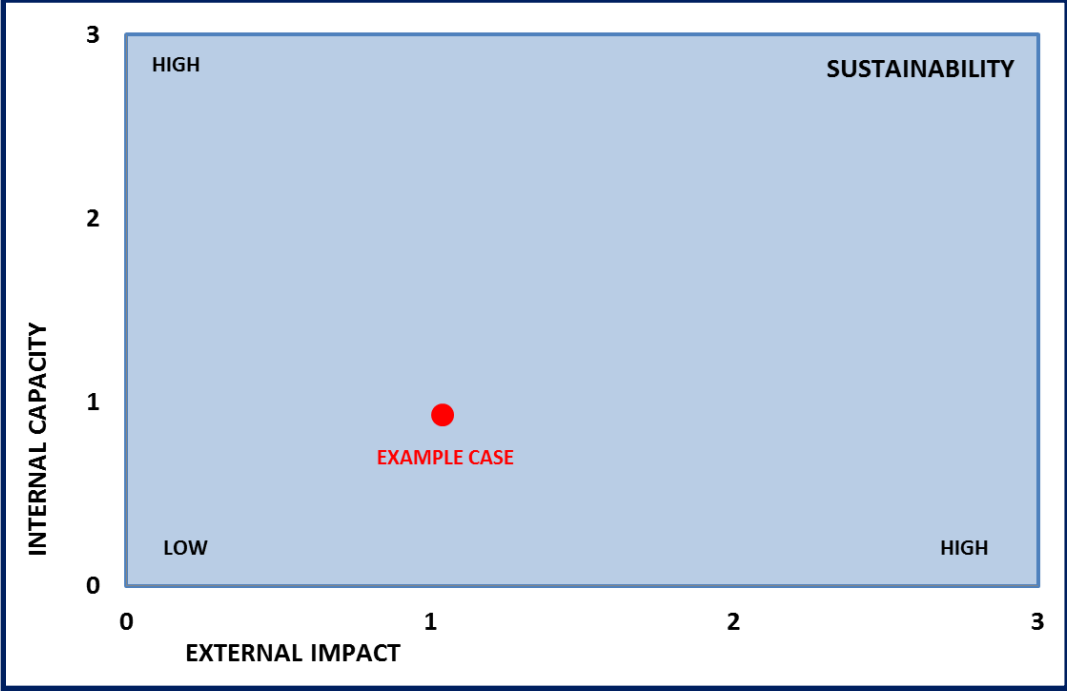


Source: Author

Similarly, and according to our definition of sustainable development, we also split the concept of sustainability into its two dimensions:

- 1. The external impact and
- 2. The internal capacity to face pressures.

Figure 4: Two dimensions of sustainability



Source: Author

c. Assessment collective participation

The scaling of influence can be traced back to the models of Sherry Arnstein and her successors (Arnstein 2007; Wilcox 1994; Rowe, Frewer 2005) and the dimension of inclusion and maximisation of participation links the ideas of collective action and participation and is inspired by the ideal of 'Empowered Participatory Governance' by Archon Fung and Erik O. Wright (Fung, Wright 2003) and Heike Walk's starting points for the analysis of participative governance (Walk 2008, p. 118):

Table 1: Classification of inclusion - dimension of collective participation

Grading	Translation	Definition
3 Points	Comprehensive Group	All of the most affected stakeholders are included in the decision-making process
2 Points	Representative Group	Representatives from all subgroups of the most affected stakeholders are included in the decision-making process
1 Point	Elite Group	Only a small group of the most affected stakeholders is involved in the decision-making process
0 Points	One Leader	Only one leader is actually making the decisions
Narrative		
Explanation of classification via comments and documents, including references to the supporting or limiting roles of social capital and individual resources		

Table 2: Classification of influence - dimension of collective participation

Grading	Translation	Definition
3 Points	Leading Influence	All of the most affected stakeholders have decisive impact on the project/output
2 Points	Co-determination	All of the most affected stakeholders have co-determining impact on the project/output and their views are incorporated
1 Point	Consultation	All of the most affected stakeholders get noticed but do not have any impact
0 Points	No Influence	The views of all of the most affected stakeholders are neglected
Narrative		
Explanation of classification via comments and documents, including references to the supporting or limiting roles of social capital and individual resources		

Conjoint assessment of collective participation

For the conjoint assessment of collective participation incorporating both dimensions (inclusion and influence) we employ a 7er scale summarising and arranging the values of the two dimensions. This step goes along with a considerable loss of information reflected in the scaling because the scales represent different combinations of the two dimensions. This loss increases the meaning of our narratives which supplement the scale.

Table 3: Conjoint classification of collective participation

Grading	INCLUSION of stakeholders	INFLUENCE of stakeholders
6	Comprehensive Group	Leading Influence
5	Comprehensive Group	Co-determination
	Representative Group	Leading Influence
4	Representative Group	Co-determination
	Comprehensive Group	Consultation
	Elite Group	Leading Influence
3	Comprehensive Group	No Influence
	Representative Group	Consultation
	Elite Group	Co-determination
	One Leader	Leading Influence
2	Representative Group	No influence
	Elite Group	Consultation
	One Leader	Co-determination
1	Elite Group	No Influence
	One Leader	Consultation
0	One Leader	No Influence
Narrative		
Explanation of classification via comments and documents, including references to the supporting or limiting roles of social capital and individual resources		

d. Assessment of the sustainable character of decisions

The ordinal scaling along the two dimensions of sustainability results from Konrad Hagedorn's considerations on integrative institutions and his regard for the costs and benefits of decisions and transactions (Hagedorn 2008). However, our scaling does not strictly follow his concept. Hagedorn concentrates on the antithesis of the internalisation versus the externalisation of costs and benefits. We concentrate on the antithesis between benefits and costs along both the internal and the external dimensions. Costs are supposed to contradict resilience and sustainability along both dimensions and benefits are supposed to consolidate them.

Table 4: Classification of external impact - dimension of sustainability

Grading	Translation	Definition
3 Points	Prominence of Benefits	Benefits of the decision for others and the environment are more prominent than the costs
2 Points	Balance of Benefits and Costs	The costs and benefits of the decision for others and the environment are largely balanced
1 Point	Prominence of Costs	Costs of the decision for others and the environment are more prominent than the costs
0 Points	Only Costs	Others and the environment only suffer from the decision and lack any benefits
Narrative		
Explanation of classification via comments and documents		

Table 5: Classification of internal coping capacities - dimension of sustainability

Grading	Translation	Definition
3 Points	Prominence of Benefits	Benefits of the decision for the respective group of actors are more prominent than costs. The decision enhances the group's coping capabilities.
2 Points	Balance of Benefits and Costs	The costs and benefits of the decision for the respective group are largely balanced. The decision does not increase or reduce the group's coping capabilities.
1 Point	Prominence of Costs	The costs of the decision for the respective group of actors are more prominent than the benefits. The decision reduces the group's coping capabilities.
0 Points	Only Costs	The respective group of actors only suffers from the decision and lacks any benefits. The decision threatens the group's coping capabilities.
Narrative		
Explanation of classification via comments and documents		

Conjoint assessment of the sustainability

Policies and decisions can be declared as more or less sustainable and can likewise be compared. Here our assessment approach offers an alternative to quantitative and large-scale approaches. For the conjoint assessment of sustainability we also employ a 7er scale summarising and arranging the values of the two dimensions. This step also goes along with a considerable loss of information because the scales here, too, represent different combinations of the two dimensions. Narratives, therefore, are equally essential here to ensure transparency and reliability.

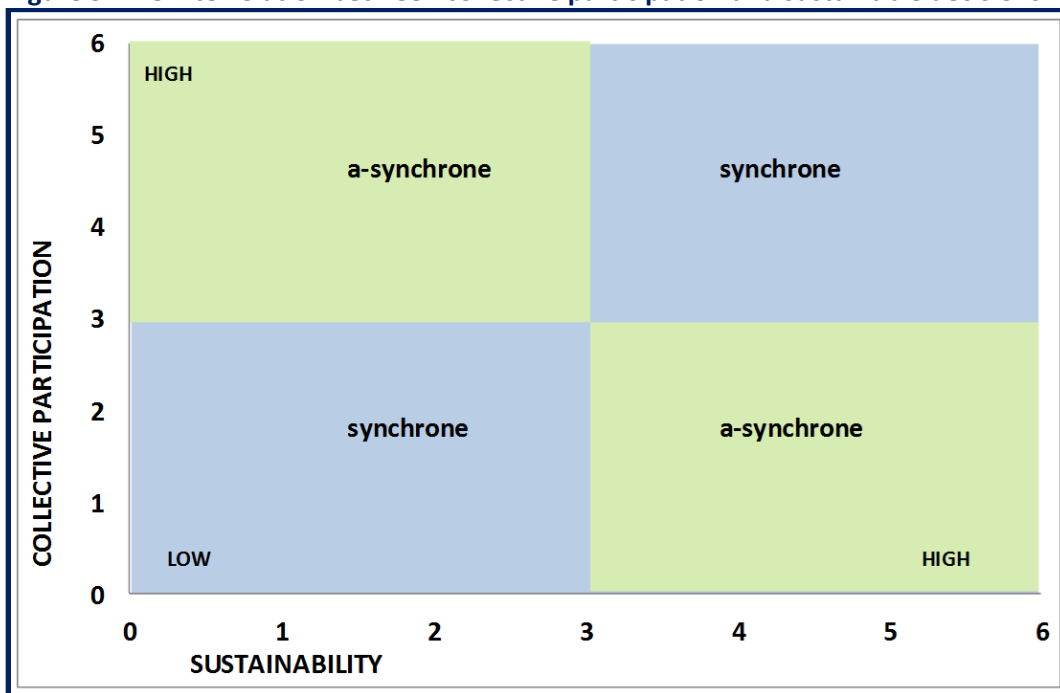
Table 6: Conjoint classification of sustainability

Grading	External impact	Internal coping capacities
6	Prominence of external benefits	Prominence of internal benefits
5	Prominence of external benefits	Balance of internal benefits and costs
	Balance of external benefits and costs	Prominence of internal benefits
4	Prominence of external benefits	Prominence of internal costs
	Balance of external benefits and costs	Balance of internal benefits and costs
	Prominence of external costs	Prominence of internal benefits
3	Prominence of external benefits	Only internal costs
	Balance of external benefits and costs	Prominence of internal costs
	Prominence of external costs	Balance of internal benefits and costs
	Only external costs	Prominence of internal benefits
2	Balance of external benefits and costs	Only internal costs
	Prominence of external costs	Prominence of internal costs
	Only external costs	Balance of internal benefits and costs
1	Prominence of external costs	Only internal costs
	Only external costs	Prominence of internal costs
0	Only external costs	Only internal costs
Narrative		
Explanation of classification via comments and documents		

e. Pooling the assessments - the interrelation between collective participation and sustainable decisions

By matching and comparing the previous results the assessment procedure explores whether the degree of collective participation and the degree of sustainability are rather synchronic or rather opposite. Because this last step is based on several abstracting pre-steps it allows no more than the evaluation of trends. Both graphs are combined and matched; for single cases the graph shows whether both phenomena resemble each other or contradict each other in their tendencies. Cases in the lower left and upper right boxes rather indicate that more collective participation goes along with a higher degree of sustainability in the decisions and that less collective participation goes along with a lower degree of sustainability. Cases in the upper left and lower right boxes rather contradict a harmonious occurrence of the two phenomena. However, the graph does not document any causal relationships or the direction of relations. Any further and more concrete assessment of single cases has to revert to narratives. The narratives will refer to the roles of the intermediate concepts of integrative institutions, subsidiarity and social learning and how these influence the synchronicity or a-synchronicity of tendencies. The more cases that are evaluated along our assessment approach and classified in the graph, the more concrete statements on the synchronicity or a-synchronicity of collective participation and sustainability of decisions can be made. However, more cases do not automatically provide information on causalities. Narratives remain an essential part of the assessment procedure for cross-case comparisons as they are for single case studies.

Figure 5: The interrelation between collective participation and sustainable decisions



Source: Author

4. Exemplification: the agitation for green spaces and slum eviction in Golkunagar, Hyderabad

The qualitative assessment approach is applicable to diverse cases of direct decision- or policy making. We exemplify the assessment approach through an example of local level non-governmental neighbourhood governance in India. We review the agitation for green spaces and slum eviction in Golkunagar, Hyderabad. The presented information is based on field research within the Megacity Hyderabad Project between 2009 and 2012.³

a. The case

Resident welfare associations (RWAs) are gaining enhanced political and scientific prominence in India (Coelho, Venkat 2009, p. 361) as associations of residents in houses' or apartment buildings' RWAs care for the maintenance and security of their housing and neighbourhood and for the proper allocation of public services. Activities vary from bargaining and monitoring public authorities to self-help activities e.g., garbage collection or organising day-care (Coelho, Venkat 2009, p. 361; Harriss 2005, pp. 12, 16, 32; Huchon, Trcot 2008, p. 89; Kamath, Vijayabaskar 2009, p. 369; Kennedy 2009, p. 67; Tawa Lama-Rewal 2007). Several critical arguments are mentioned with regards to RWAs, their internal structures and their increasing significance. The concentration on small groups of people and the frequent substitution of internal elections by 'internally negotiated settlements' (Coelho, Venkat 2009, p. 361) is a commonly criticised feature of many RWAs (Kamath, Vijayabaskar 2009, p. 368). These democratic shortcomings have to be accounted for alongside of the increasing political engagement and influence of RWAs (Harriss 2010; Tawa Lama-Rewal 2007). Also, a high dominance of the middle class in RWAs is critically highlighted (Harriss 2005, p. 32; Tawa Lama-Rewal 2007, p. 5). Even though middle-class interests are far from homogenous (Kamath, Vijayabaskar 2009, p. 368) and RWAs can be found in slums too, especially regarding their political influence RWAs remain a middle-class phenomenon (Coelho, Venkat 2009, p. 358; Harriss 2010, p. 11). These critical issues are also reflected in the presented case study on the Standing Committee of the Tarnaka Resident's Welfare Associations (SCOTRWA) in Hyderabad and the Golkunagar Welfare Association as one of SCOTRWA's member RWAs.

SCOTRWA is a federation of 19 colony welfare associations and 220 apartment-building welfare associations in Tarnaka and its surroundings in the South Indian urban agglomeration of Hyderabad. It was registered in 2002 but most of its member RWAs have been in existence much longer. SCOTRWA is heavily assisted and influenced by the International Foundation for Human

³ Megacity Hyderabad Project (Climate and Energy in a Complex Transition Process towards Sustainable Hyderabad) funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF): <http://www.sustainable-hyderabad.de/>. All data and the protocols of the interviews utilised for the present study can be requested directly from the author.

Development (IFDH), an NGO, and by the IFDH’s president, who is a political activist striving for enhanced civic participation. SCOTRWA as a federation is responsible for matters of comprehensive interests whereas smaller grievances are tackled by the respective member RWAs independently. The member RWAs differ widely with regard to their degrees of participation and scope of activities. The Golkunagar Welfare Association is one RWA belonging to SCOTRWA.

The Golkunagar Welfare Association undertakes a lot to make its neighbourhood green and pleasant. Activities involve planting trees, building parks and equipping them with children’s facilities. There are three parks in Golkunagar. One park was occupied by slum dwellers more than a decade ago. By going to court the Golkunagar Welfare Association arranged for the eviction of the huts in the year 2000 but was not able to organise a complete relocation of the dwellers. All this was done without the slum dweller families’ consent. The slum dweller families have been living in Golkunagar for several decades now. The evicted families immediately occupied another site in Golkunagar, which was either yet not utilised or under roof space. Since then the Golkunagar Welfare Associations has been trying to evict the dwellers again. In the observed meetings and interviews of the Golkunagar Welfare Association, slum dwellers were perceived to be a threat and disturbance to the community. The Golkunagar Welfare Association intends to use the occupied site for community facilities such as a community hall and further green spaces. The concerned slum area consists of about 50 huts surrounded by two streets and several residential buildings. The slum does not have any water connection but does have illegal electricity connections. Approximately 50 families, each with three to four family members, including children, are living there. The Golkunagar Welfare Association in comparison has approximately 280 members with several family members each.⁴

b. Application of the qualitative assessment approach

i. First analytical step: assessment collective participation

First dimension of collective participation: inclusion

Table 7: Classification of inclusion
Case: agitation for green places and slum eviction in Golkunagar

Grading	Translation	Definition
1 Point	Elite Group	Only a small group of the most affected stakeholders is involved in the decision-making process

⁴ Source: Field research in Tarnaka from 2009 to 2012, interviews, observations and document analysis. For reasons of anonymity particular data has to be requested from the corresponding author.

Narrative

Role of individual resources and inclusion:

Membership in the Golkunagar Welfare Association is limited to owners or tenants of houses or apartments in Golkunagar who have to pay an annual membership fee. The membership fee and particularly the requirement of ownership or rent limit the access to the welfare association and thereby its decision-making processes. These requirements exclude the group of slum dwellers who lack the legal status of ownership or rent or the money necessary to acquire this status.

Within the association the executive committee constitutes the decision-making body. For the members of the association time seems to be a resource restricting their attendance at executive committee meetings and therewith prevents them from direct participation in the decision-making process. Caste and sex are two further individual characteristics which are controversially reported to limit the access to the active decision-making processes in the meetings. Observations reveal that female members rarely participate actively in the decision-making. Participation rates for the annual meetings of the general body or for elections to the executive committee which are scheduled every two years are not documented. However, among the executive committee members, participation rates are high and the discussions during these meetings are livid and balanced. Decisions are made by consensus during the meetings. The implementation of decisions largely rests on the general secretary.

Role of social capital and inclusion:

The bonding character of the Golkunagar Welfare Association's social capital is distinctive and consolidates its exclusiveness. Among the executive committee members relations seem to be strong and multilayered. With one another the executive committee members show high levels of trust and high norms of reciprocity. Vis-à-vis the excluded slum dwellers trust and norms of reciprocity are missing and apart from the employment relations (household help) there seem to be no relations. In this direction bridging social capital is missing.

Assessment inclusion:

The restrictions on membership and the bonding mode of social capital make the decision-making process within the Golkunagar Welfare Association a quite exclusive process in which only a small elite group of befriended, elder male legal residents participates directly. Due to the dominance of the executive committee and its closure with regard to the lack of frequent elections as well as the

reported general lack of member participation and the limited access to the association which excludes all slum dwellers in the beginning, we classify 'inclusion' within Golkunagar as the 'Elite Group' and rate the decision-making process with only one point along our four-point ordinal scale.

Table 8: Classification of influence
Case: agitation for green places and slum eviction in Golkunagar

Grading		Translation	Definition
Members of Golkunagar Welfare Association	2 Points	Co-determination	All of the most affected stakeholders have co-determining impact on the project/output and their views are incorporated
Slum Dwellers	0 Points	No influence	The views of all of the most affected stakeholders are neglected

Narrative

The role of social capital and influence:

The influence of the Golkunagar Welfare Association as a whole on policies regarding the use of its neighbourhood territory can be assessed as high. The Golkunagar Welfare Associations benefits from its bridging social capital linking it to SCOTRWA and to political and administrative authorities. The activities for a new slum eviction are continuing and supported by SCOTRWA. Additionally, the police, the corporater, the commissioner and the mayor have been approached on the issue. The current corporator for the Tarnaka division is living in Golkunagar. She held the position of the first directly elected mayor of Hyderabad from 2009 to 2011 and is herself well-connected in the realm of Hyderabad politics. She can be directly approached by the association.

Assessment influence:

However, because the Golkunagar case is only rated with one point along the dimension of inclusion, this high degree of influence of the association itself does not reflect the influence of all the most affected stakeholders. Only those groups of stakeholders who are members of the association execute any kind of influence at all. The majority of the regular members of the association is reported to argue for the eviction of the slum and for the building of more green spaces and community facilities instead. The views of this subgroup of affected stakeholders are at least taken into account in the decision-

making process. Therefore, for the subgroup of members of the Golkunagar Welfare Association we classify the 'influence' dimension as 'co-determination' and rate the decision-making process with two points along our four-point ordinal scale of influence. However, the slum dwellers' views are not taken into consideration at all. Their views and interests are not even noticed and totally neglected in the decision-making process. For this particular subgroup of stakeholders we classify the 'influence' dimension as 'no influence' and rate the decision-making process with zero points along our four-point ordinal scale of influence. The problem of unequal distribution of powers which is a central issue in theories of participation {Fung 2003 #978}{Walk 2008 #1032} becomes apparent here. The dimension of inclusion takes into account the limitations on access and illustrates the elitist character of the decision-making process. How to classify the dimension of influence in summary? Because a conjoint classification and rating covering both subgroups is not convertible without losing information and manipulating the results, we keep both classifications in parallel.

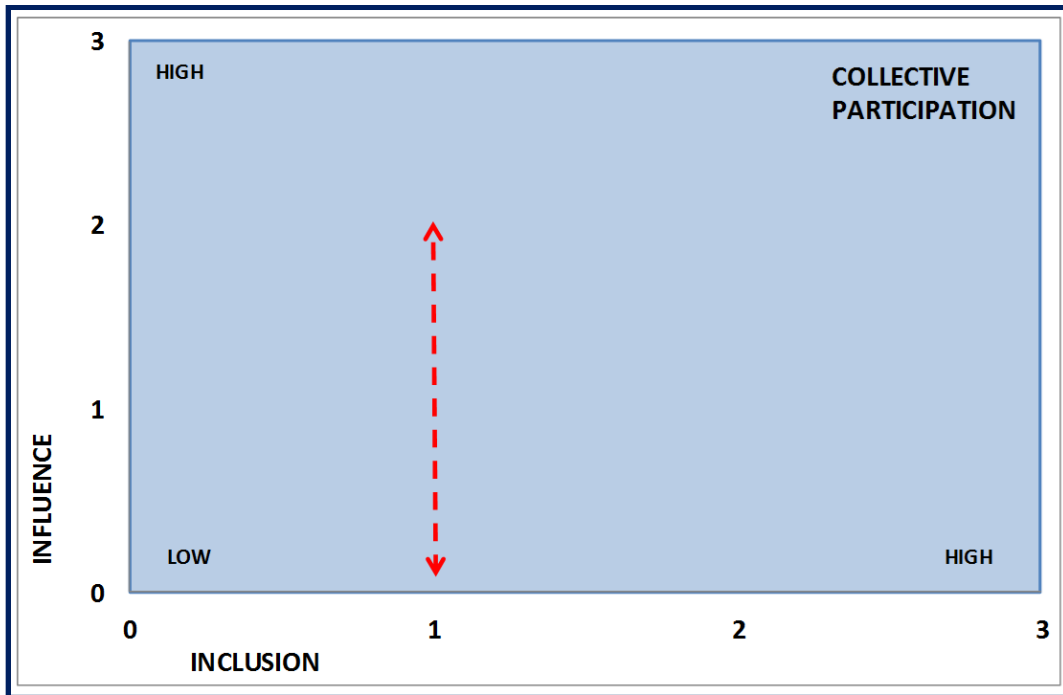
Conjoint assessment of collective participation

The graphical illustration needs to allow for the different classification and rating of the two subgroups of stakeholders along the second dimension. In consequence, the graph does not illustrate a punctual grading but reflects an interval.

Table 9: Conjoint classification of collective participation
Case: agitation for green places and slum eviction in Golkunagar

Grading	INCLUSION of stakeholders	INFLUENCE of stakeholders
3	Elite Group	Co-determination (of members)
1	Elite Group	No influence (for slum dwellers)
Narrative		
<p>The conjoint assessment of collective participation emphasises the shortcomings of our assessment procedure. Because the scaling differs at looking at the association's members or at the excluded slum dwellers, a conjoint assessment is hindered. This diversity within the conjoint assessment needs to be reflected in the evaluation of the interrelation between collective participation and sustainability in the end.</p>		

Figure 6: The degree of collective participation in the case of Golkunagar



Source: Author

ii. Second analytical step: assessment sustainable decision-making

First dimension of sustainability: external impact

Table 10: Classification of external impact

Case: agitation for green places and slum eviction in Golkunagar

Grading	Translation	Definition
2 Points	Balance of Benefits and Costs	The costs and benefits of the decision for others and the environment are largely balanced
Narrative		
<p>Building parks and establishing green spaces in Tarnaka at a first glance involves only benefits for the natural environment and for the health of the overall city population. However, the slum eviction which goes ahead with the establishment of green spaces has social costs and makes the slum dwellers suffer considerably. The slum dwellers have been living since decades in Tarnaka and for years on the occupied sites. They have jobs in Tarnaka, often working in the households of the members of the Golkunagar Welfare Association. Their children go to nearby schools. Thus, the agitation for green spaces and for the eviction of slum settlements in Golkunagar displays conflicting interests of the different urban strata.</p>		

Worldwide studies report how the ever-growing problem of urban slums and illegal settlements (Davis 2006) goes along with an increasing polarisation between the different urban strata. Dirk Bronger points to a strong polarisation between the affluent middle class and slum dwellers who do not fit into the former's image of a modern India (Bronger 2004, p. 166) and in his article on slum development in Hyderabad and Kolkata, Archana Gosh highlights that slum dwellers have themselves little influence on the urban policies that affect their lives (Gosh 2009, p. 239). In a study in 1961 on residential satisfaction in U.S. slums Marc Fried and Peggy Gleicher refer to the fact that forced relocation policies neglect social networks within slum settlements (Fried, Gleicher 1961, p. 315). Michael Cernea, in his World Bank Discussion paper, discusses different aspects of harm to slum dwellers caused by their displacement ranging from the loss of their homes and the loss of informal networks to the loss of jobs and other income-generating assets (Cernea 1993).

Against this background of ecological benefits and health-related benefits for the overall city population in contrast to the harm involved for the directly affected slum dwellers, we evaluate the external impact of the agitation for green spaces and slum eviction in Golkunagar to be balanced in costs and benefits and rate it with two points on our four-point ordinal scale in the first dimension of 'sustainable development'. In this classification the limitations and scopes of our assessment procedure become obvious. The assessment procedure does not provide any mechanism as how to weigh and accumulate the costs and benefits of decisions along ecological, economic and social spheres and does not address the question of the distribution of costs and benefits adequately.

Table 11: Classification of internal coping capacities
Case: agitation for green places and slum eviction in Golkunagar

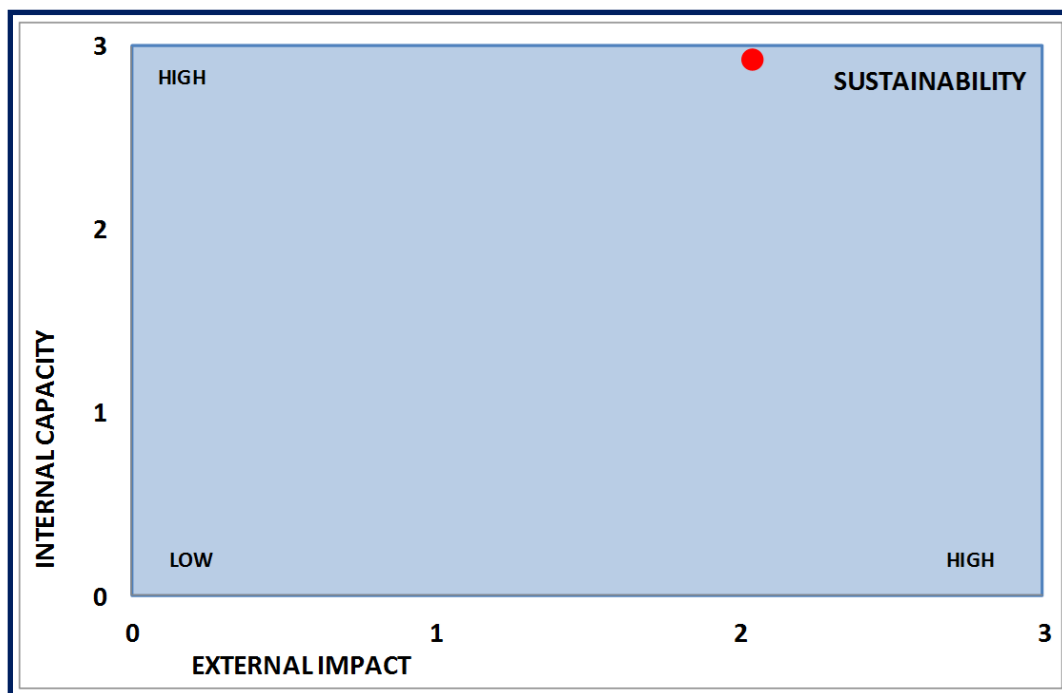
Grading	Translation	Definition
3 Points	Prominence of Benefits	Benefits of the decision for the respective group of actors are more prominent than costs. The decision enhances the group's coping capabilities
Narrative		
<p>With regard to the coping mechanism of Golkunagar's middle-class population and the members of the Golkunagar Welfare Association we evaluate the benefits of the agitation for green spaces and slum eviction in Golkunagar, Hyderabad to be by far more prominent than the costs. These benefits not only cover enhanced space for leisure activities but also primarily long-term health benefits. In</p>		

our assessment we revert to a large-scale study in Tokyo on the interrelation between the longevity of senior citizens and the existence of greenery-filled public areas nearby a residence of senior citizens, which reveals how these walkable green spaces positively influence the longevity of urban senior citizens (Takano et al. 2002). Another large-scale study in the Netherlands shows the positive interrelation between the percentages of green space in people’s living environment and their perceived general health (Maas et al. 2006).

Table 12: Conjoint classification of sustainability
Case: agitation for green places and slum eviction in Golkunagar

Grading	External impact	Internal coping capacities
5	Balance of external benefits and costs	Prominence of internal benefits
Narrative		
Regarding both dimensions and all stakeholders the agitation for green spaces in Golkunagar can be assessed as rather sustainable and rated with five points. However, this rating alone does not reflect the concentration of costs faced by one single subgroup of stakeholders, the slum dwellers.		

Figure 7: The degree of sustainability in the case of Golkunagar



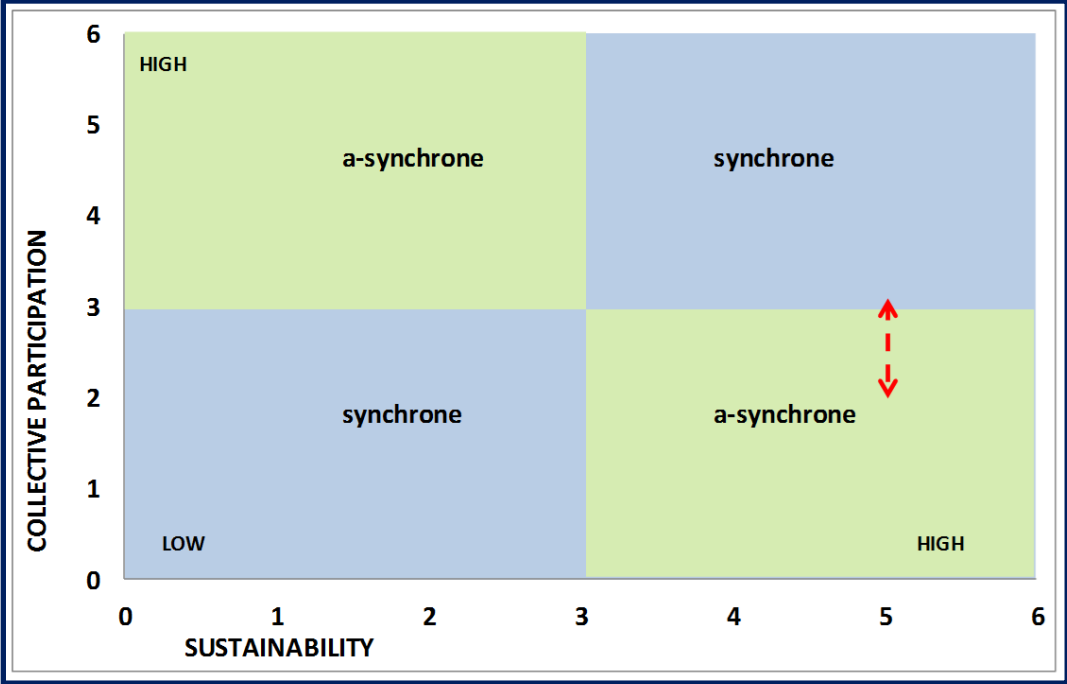
Source: Author

iii. Third analytical step: Pooling the assessments. The interrelation between collective participation and sustainable decisions

The last step of our assessment procedure, the matching and comparison of the previous results, reveals that our case shows a rather a-synchronic trend of the phenomena of collective participation and sustainable decisions. One distinct group of affected stakeholders is excluded from directly participating and influencing the decision. Besides, this group bears the observable costs of the decisions which are not trivial but pertain to their livelihoods, their homes and their jobs.

This exclusive character of the decision-making process with its lack of downward-bridging social capital to the lower strata of the society limits positive effects of collective participation on sustainability. This becomes apparent when looking at the intermediate concepts of integrative institutions, subsidiarity and social learning which are assumed to interlink collective participation and sustainability. The exclusion of slum dwellers from the decision-making process as from the solicitude of the association's members reflects an institutional setting which internalises the benefits and externalises most of the costs of the decisions. Even though the decision-making process takes place at the affected neighbourhood, the exclusion of the group of slum dwellers from the decision-making process limits the positive effects of subsidiarity, such as the adjustment to the specific ecological, social and cultural environment, the regard for stakeholders' needs and capacities and the identification with the decisions of the association's members. The slum dwellers are affected stakeholders whose interests, needs and capacities are completely ignored. Besides, the members of the association are retrained from social learning due to their lack of bridging social capital with the slum dwellers. Social learning, in which the members of the association could learn to regard the slum dwellers, would demand personal networks resulting in trust or norms of reciprocity in this direction. But with reference to the slum dwellers the association's social capital shows its dark side.

Figure 8: The interrelation between collective participation and sustainability in the case of Golkunagar



Source: Author

5. Conclusion

Our attempt is the formulation of a systematically and theoretically based approach to empirically account for the interrelation between collective stakeholder participation and sustainable decision-making. We do not aim to prove causalities but tendencies. The approach combines an abstracting point-based scaling system with explanatory narratives which we apply step-wise. In a first step we assess collective participation via the dimensions’ inclusion and influence, and we assess sustainability via the dimensions’ external impact of decisions and internal capacity. In a second step, the dimensions are pooled and each concept is accessed with a cumulative evaluation. The third step pools the evaluation of collective participation and sustainability and reveals whether both concepts cultivate with even or opposite tendencies.

Empirically, the employed case of the agitation for green places and slum eviction in Golkunagar, Hyderabad records the disadvantage of slum dwellers in the decision-making process as well as in its outcome. This result reflects similar studies on the polarisation of urban strata and the neglect of the slum dwellers’ interests and of any entitlement for co-termination (Bronger 2004, p. 166; Gosh 2009, p. 239).

On theoretical grounds regarding the interrelation between the degrees of collective participation and sustainability no distinct statement can be made on the basis of this case. But looking at the

ratings and the narratives simultaneously, two aspects seem to be of prominent importance for the interrelation between collective participation and sustainability: the inclusiveness of ALL affected stakeholders and the amount of bridging social capital. These two aspects should be analysed further.

Methodologically, the empirical application of our approach reveals the need for its refinement: The disregard of the methodological scaling for any diversity among stakeholders especially in the dimension of influence is a shortcoming of the approach in its current status. This disregard makes it difficult to classify cases in this dimension if certain groups of stakeholders have very different impacts and powers as in the Golkunagar case. A further methodological and theoretical shortcoming lies in the cost-benefit assessment of sustainability. So far, the approach retrains theoretically and methodologically from certain core questions: Do ecological, social and economic costs and benefits have the same values? Can one type of benefit or cost outperform another? And what about the distribution of costs? The importance of these questions is highlighted by the convergence of almost all social costs on one group of stakeholders in our case. We have to rethink our theoretical concept which generates our methodological approach. We need to define whether equity among stakeholders in the distribution of costs and benefits matters for sustainability and whether one sort of cost or benefit can outperform the other.

List of figures

Figure 1: Conceptualisation of sustainability	p. 5
Figure 2: Draft design - a theoretical framework for exploring the capability of participative and collective governance in sustainable outcomes	p. 7
Figure 3: Two dimensions of collective participation	p. 10
Figure 4: Two dimensions of sustainability	p. 10
Figure 5: The interrelation between collective participation and sustainable decisions	p. 17
Figure 6: The degree of collective participation in the case of Golkunagar	p. 23
Figure 7: The degree of sustainability in the case of Golkunagar	p. 25
Figure 8: The interrelation between collective participation and sustainability in the case of Golkunagar	p. 27

List of tables

Table 1: Classification of inclusion - dimension of collective participation	p. 11
Table 2: Classification of influence - dimension of collective participation	p. 12
Table 3: Conjoint classification of collective participation	p. 13
Table 4: Classification of external impact - dimension of sustainability	p. 14
Table 5: Classification of internal coping capacities - dimension of sustainability	p. 15
Table 6: Conjoint classification of sustainability	p. 16
Table 7: Classification of inclusion Case: agitation for green places and slum eviction in Golkunagar	p. 19
Table 8: Classification of influence Case: agitation for green places and slum eviction in Golkunagar	p. 21
Table 9: Conjoint classification of collective participation Case: agitation for green places and slum eviction in Golkunagar	p. 22
Table 10: Classification of external impact Case: agitation for green places and slum eviction in Golkunagar	p. 23
Table 11: Classification of internal coping capacities Case: agitation for green places and slum eviction in Golkunagar	p. 24
Table 12: Conjoint classification of sustainability Case: Agitation for green places and slum eviction in Golkunagar	p. 25

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