



# PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT OF THE HAMLET KIRCHBÜHL, SWITZERLAND

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## ABSTRACT

The traditional settlement structure of many Swiss regions was typically characterised by dispersed small settlements, providing an important basis for agriculture. As industrialisation and structural change have accelerated, these hamlets are increasingly losing their original purpose. However, many of them are of high value in terms of their building culture and heritage. Trying to preserve them adequately presents both architectural and socio-economic challenges. In order to address these difficulties, we developed a new strategy for the hamlet of Kirchbühl, in the town of Sempach. By bringing together experts' viewpoints and the viewpoints of the key stakeholders in a participatory process, we aimed to identify potential conflicts between the different views and address them early on in the development of new guidelines. For each work-package, the goals were defined with the aim of formulating a set of principles and recommendations for planners, builders and the public authorities. The results of the participatory elements have shown that it was possible to integrate the local viewpoints continuously into the ongoing process and the guidelines. A clear line of conflict emerged between the practical vision of the owners and inhabitants and a more preservationist vision of some authorities. Thus, a more direct dialogue between the local stakeholders and the experts should be aimed for in future projects. The ex-post process reflection has also shown that the process needs to be tightened financially and temporally, to be able to carry it out in other municipalities.

Keywords: participatory development, hamlet, stakeholders, property owners, inhabitants, heritage

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## INTRODUCTION

The traditional settlement structure of many Swiss regions, particularly in the Swiss Plateau and some alpine regions, was typically characterised by small, dispersed settlements with close connections to the surrounding countryside (Schwick et al., 2010, pp. 59-62). This provided an important basis for agricultural activities, which were of pronounced importance over the last centuries. As such, many hamlets composed of a few farmhouses and large barns developed over time. However, over the last few decades, industrialisation and structural change have accelerated. Solely between 1905 and 2005, over 188,800 farms were given up, meaning a decline of nearly 75% over 100 years (FSO, 2018). Similarly, while in 1905, 40% of the working population was employed in agriculture, in the year 2005, it was less than 5% (FSO, 2007, p. 5).

A tendency, which has continued over the last decade. Consequently, many hamlets are increasingly losing their original purpose and have seen their use altered or have been abandoned.

However, many of these hamlets are of extremely high value in terms of their building culture and heritage. Trying to preserve them adequately presents a challenge, not only on an architectural level, but also on a socio-economic level. As agricultural uses are no longer economically viable, barns are derived of their original purpose and are often left empty. Finding conversion possibilities and new uses that are in line with planning and preservation laws and offer a useful, as well as profitable alternative, presents a strong challenge. Similarly, the original farmhouses, which can be found in the hamlets, are considered beautiful by residents and visitors alike, but mostly they do not conform to modern living requirements. For historical reasons, such as the technical building possibilities at the time, the windows are often very small, allowing very little natural daylight to reach the rooms and the room-sizes are considerably smaller than in modern-day buildings. All of this makes it hard to sell or rent out these houses. Furthermore, pursuing renovations or a new-building involves numerous restrictions and long negotiation processes with heritage agencies, ensuring for example that the choice of the new building materials is appropriate (Hasche, 2006), all of which raises the costs incurred, meaning that many owners are reluctant to take action. Lastly, on a national level, urban planning challenges arise, as dispersed settlement structures do not conform to the modern day efforts of trying to promote urban intensification.

All of this makes it increasingly difficult to open up possibilities that allow the inhabitants and property owners to keep the original hamlet structures alive, while at the same time preserving their heritage. In order to solve this apparent dilemma, we developed a new strategy for the hamlet of Kirchbühl, in the town of Sempach, in Central Switzerland (see Figures 1-2).



Figure 1: Location of Sempach  
 in Switzerland

Source: Own map based on vector data, 2017



Figure 2: The hamlet of Kirchbühl  
 and its surroundings

Source: Own map based on data from  
 the official cadastral survey, 2017

It is one of the most prestigious hamlets in Central Switzerland, in terms of its cultural heritage value. The heart of the hamlet is formed by the Church of St. Martin, which dates back to late Roman times in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century. Furthermore, many old farmhouses and three barns remain intact and the setting of the hamlet in the surrounding countryside is considered unique. Figures 3 to 5 show the hamlet of Kirchbühl in its surrounding landscape, one of the traditional farmhouses present in Kirchbühl, as well as the church of St. Martin.



Figure 3: The hamlet of Kirchbühl and surrounding landscape

Source: Timo Walker, HSLU, 2017



Figure 4: Traditional farmhouse in Kirchbühl

Source: Timo Walker, HSLU, 2017



Figure 5: The church of St. Martin in Kirchbühl

Source: Timo Walker, HSLU, 2017

This paper presents the results of an applied research project, which we carried out together with the municipality of Sempach, as well as the cantonal heritage agency and urban planning department. A participatory process with the property owners and the inhabitants of Kirchbühl, as well as with other stakeholders such as the aforementioned public authorities and local planning experts was conducted, in order to elaborate guidelines for the future development of Kirchbühl. By bringing together experts' viewpoints and the viewpoints of the local property owners and inhabitants, we aimed to identify potential conflicts between the different views and address them early on in the development of new guidelines. The research aim behind the project was to develop a method, which could also be applied to other hamlets across Switzerland and ultimately extended to a larger spatial scale, such as a whole municipality.

The paper is divided into five sections. The first section above includes the general outline of the problematic facing many hamlet settlements in Switzerland and a short project description. The second section presents the theoretical framework, which underlies our methodology. In the third section, we outline the methodology which was applied for this research project. This includes the work-packages and associated goals of each step, the main stakeholder groups

involved as well as a description of the participatory elements of the process. In the section results and discussion, we show the whole process in a summarised form and then outline the results of the participatory elements in detail, giving the local stakeholders' responses and comments, as well as discussing how these were integrated into the project results. In this section, we also present the results of an ex-post process evaluation carried out with the various stakeholders that were involved in the process, as well as within the project team itself. We conclude by reflecting the need for participatory aspects, the transferability of the process and by giving a general outlook on the next steps.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Building on the discourses of Lefebvre's "The Production of Space" (1991), scholars such as Ronneberger (2008) and Rolshoven (2012) have suggested that space ought to be considered as a triad, where the built environment is one dimension, but where *representational space* and *experienced space* are equal dimensions. *Representational space* refers to the historical attributions and *experienced space* refers to an individual's perceptions of and everyday actions in space. All three dimensions exist together and make up space as we experience it. Thus, our modern understanding of space calls for a more participatory approach to spatial development, in order to account for all three dimensions of the triad. This is also the approach that has been taken in this project and which underlies our methodology outlined in the following section.

As García (2018) puts it, "[t]o allow for change, and perhaps even to accommodate it, contemporary planners seek to engage and understand community members and make policies with local interests in mind" (p. 522). This paradigm change raises very practical questions for planners, policy makers, and local authorities as to how local interests can and should be determined, who ought to be engaged, and how to go about it. And, perhaps even more crucially, how the engagement is reflected in the final, binding plans, documents or policies. Stephenson (2010) argues very strongly that there should be "an integrative approach" in planning, "to fill the theoretical void in the treatment of people-place relations", and to "account [...] for both the rational and non-rational qualities of place/landscape across both insider and outsider value sets" (p. 19).

Pollice (2003) argues that "territorial identity can contribute to the development and the implementation of local-scale innovation processes [... which are] successful when [... they are] the result of choices shared by the local community and the authorities that govern the territory" (p. 109). The project in Kirchbühl tried to take advantage of precisely this dynamic, by bringing local stakeholders and expert stakeholders together in the same process, in order to take account of local interests and attempt to weave them into formalised planning instruments. Ultimately, in our view, it is about finding ideas that resonate with a large part of the community.

Especially in areas of high heritage value, this approach can seem disconcerting, as the implementation of heritage protection policy is nowadays dominated largely by expert discussions. This is somewhat bewildering, when we consider that the origins of modern day heritage protection often arose in a bottom-up fashion, from communities who opposed to rapid and large scale urban renewal in the decades following the Second World War (e.g. García, 2018, p. 520). Hence, heritage protection had a very prominent social aspect since its beginnings. Yet, nowadays these considerations seem to remain in the background, while architectural, design-related and economic aspects are often at the centre of heritage considerations. Meske

(2018) even points out that the heritage label is often (mis)used to marginalize and displace historic communities. All the while, scholars have long pointed to the fact that “heritage is [...] subjective in its nature, representing the values of a certain group of people at a certain period of time” and that it “can easily be manipulated to favour particular interests” (Haselsberger, 2011, p. 158). The questions of “who defines what should be protected, and who decides which artefacts are to be remembered or forgotten over the years?” (Haselsberger, 2011, p. 159) are therefore critical.

Mualam & Alterman (2018) propose an interesting conceptual framework, which suggests that “there are two points of view addressing the question of heritage policy and its social impact” and that “both their implications can be recognized in decision-making processes” (p. 484). They show how heritage policy is described as “socially supportive” by some scholars and as “socially regressive” by others (p. 485). By analysing numerous cases of heritage appeals in the Greater London Area they find that “the prominence of social considerations in heritage debates suggests that heritage policies can (and do) shape the social fabric” and that “planners should be more cognizant of the potentially regressive aspects of heritage policy as it relates to society. Reliance on largely architectural discourse is no longer tenable and is likely to be challenged politically or legally” (p. 495). They state that both the socially supportive and socially regressive arguments should be taken into consideration.

Looking therefore at the wealth of theoretical groundwork and empirical findings, which suggest that our built environment is not limited simply to its physical manifestations and that built heritage is in fact a highly dynamic good, which is closely interwoven with social dimensions, we chose to develop a methodology that would allow us to both expand the understanding of the place as such, and reflect the social impacts of future development options for the locality. In order to highlight this side of the project, the paper focuses particularly on the participatory aspects, discussing the role that these have played in the spatial development process for the hamlet of Kirchbühl.

## METHODOLOGY

Figure 6 shows the methodological design for the project. As Pollice (2003) points out about territorial innovation processes, “the implementation of the change itself requires the participation of culturally different individuals driven by contrasting interests” (p. 109). Hence, the methodology was created with the aim of bringing together potentially diverging viewpoints and highlighting possible lines of conflict between local stakeholders and experts appraisals of the local building heritage. The participation of local property owners and inhabitants was deemed essential, as “the joining value of the sense of belonging (social expression of territorial identity) can be crucial [for territorial innovation], and it can contribute to investing individuals with responsibility and stimulate their proactive behavior” (Pollice, 2003, p. 110). Therefore, the methodology involves two parallel strands, which come together at multiple points, in order to address potential differences between local stakeholders and external experts.

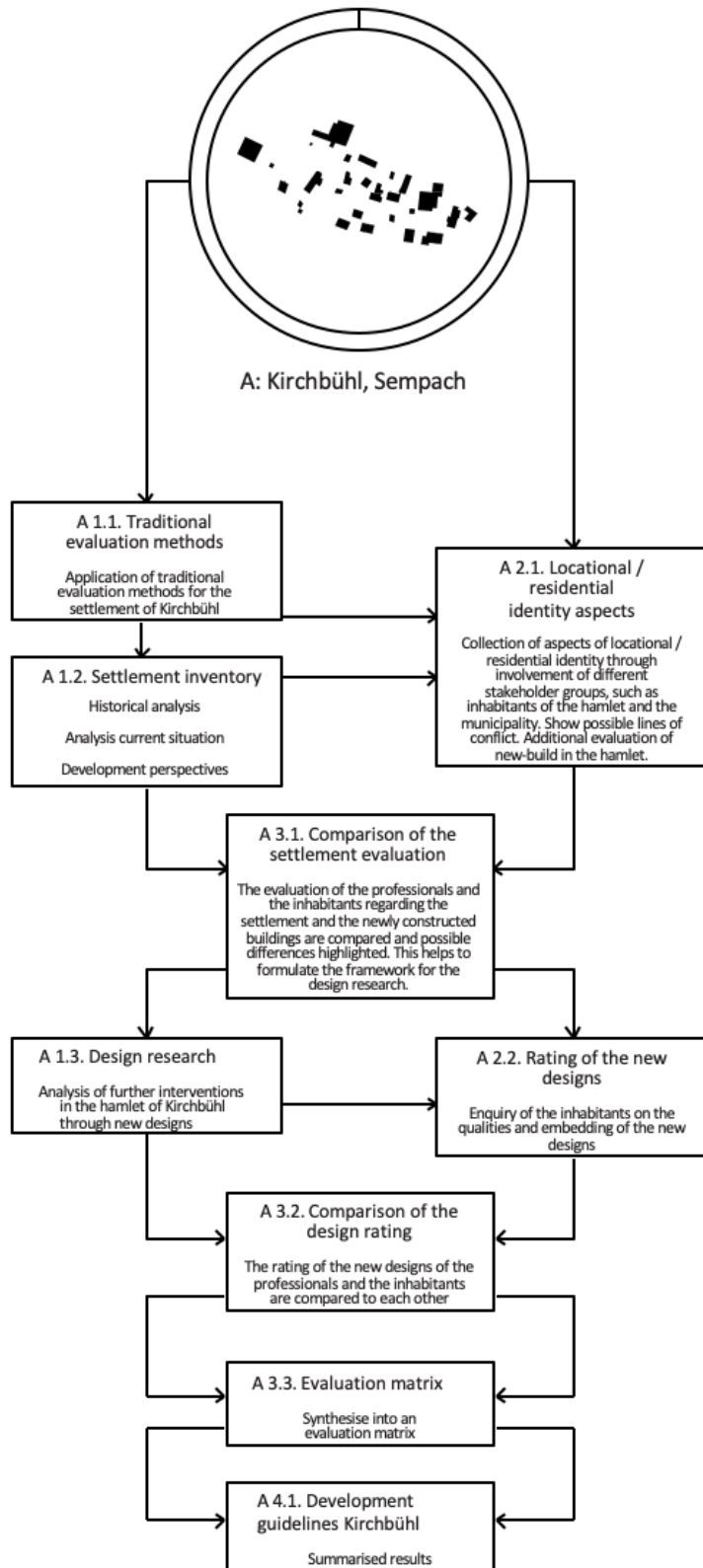


Figure 6: Methodology for the Kirchbühl project  
 Source: HSLU

### Work-packages constituting the methodology

Table 1 shows the various work-packages (A 1.1. to A 4.1.) that make up the methodology of the project. For each work-package, specific goals were defined, with the aim of ultimately being able to formulate a set of principles and recommendations for both planners and builders and the public authorities, as well as extracting lessons, which could be of use for similar processes in other localities. The sequence of the work-packages is defined by chronological factors and the logic of “embedded design research”, according to which “design[s] [...] are presented as arguments for interpretation by their intended audience, forming a critical triad of discourse” (Faste & Faste, 2012, p. 6).

Table 1: Project work-packages and associated goals

Work-package	Goals
<b>A 1.1. Traditional evaluation methods</b>	- Conduct an evaluation of Kirchbühl settlement through traditional evaluation methods (historical analyses of the development in the hamlet, structure of the landscape, the settlement, the site utilisation, etc.)
<b>A 1.2. Settlement inventory</b>	- Analysis grid for Kirchbühl, composed of elements from different settlement inventories - Creation of a customised settlement inventory for Kirchbühl
<b>A 2.1. Locational / residential identity aspects</b>	- Awareness and recognition of relevant evaluation criteria for local stakeholders
<b>A 3.1. Comparison of the settlement evaluation</b>	- Awareness of the commonalities and differences between the traditional evaluation methods and the stakeholders' evaluation of the settlement
<b>A 1.3. Design research</b>	- Study of various structural development options in Kirchbühl
<b>A 2.2. Rating of the new designs</b>	- Evaluation of the design research projects (student projects) by the local stakeholders in Kirchbühl
<b>A 3.2. Comparison of the design rating</b>	- Awareness of the commonalities and differences in the evaluation of the designs
<b>A 3.3. Evaluation matrix</b>	- Creation of an evaluation matrix for future development projects in Kirchbühl - Definition of recommended actions concerning the process around future building projects
<b>A 4.1. Development guidelines Kirchbühl</b>	- Create a set of principles for planners and builders to implement future projects in Kirchbühl - Create a set of principles for the Canton and the municipality to manage and evaluate future projects in Kirchbühl - Communicate the results for the benefit of other municipalities with similar challenges

### Involved stakeholder groups

In order to be able to integrate the viewpoints of different lay and expert stakeholders into the process, different stakeholder groups were involved over the runtime of the project, from December 2016 to January 2018.

### Steering group

The project steering group was composed of a town councillor of the city of Sempach, a member of the cantonal heritage agency (Denkmalpflege und Archäologie), and a member of the cantonal urban planning department (Raum und Wirtschaft), as well as the project team from the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts (HSLU).

### Property owners and inhabitants of Kirchbühl

The property owners as well as the inhabitants of Kirchbühl were involved in a number of ways, which we shall focus on later in the paper. The hamlet of Kirchbühl has around 60 inhabitants in total, including the children. Around 15 of these are also owners of a property and / or land. Hence, the absolute number of people to be included in the participatory process was relatively modest.

### Further stakeholder groups

Next to the main stakeholder groups listed above, some stakeholders were involved selectively through talks or meetings. This included a local planning office which regularly consults the town of Sempach, the old-town commission (Altstadtkommission) of the city of Sempach – an expert body, which acts as an advisory committee for the town council for all questions relating to architecture and construction, the town council (Stadtrat), and the architecture students of the University of Applied Sciences and Arts. They were tasked with developing designs for the hamlet of Kirchbühl and in particular for a currently unused barn, which is in the possession of the town.

### Workshops and interviews with the property owners and inhabitants of Kirchbühl

As can be seen from Figure 6 and Table 1, the participatory aspects of the project concern particularly work packages A 2.1. “Locational / residential identity aspects” and A 2.2. “Rating of the new designs”. Even though they comprise the smaller part of the whole project, they involved a number of steps, which shall be outlined in the following section. Specifically two workshops, as well as telephone interviews, which were carried out between March and September 2017. The results were continuously integrated into the remaining work-packages (A 3.1. – 4.1.).

### Workshop 1

The first workshop was carried out in March 2017 and was attended by 30 people. The main goal of the first workshop was to determine the principal elements that the property owners and the inhabitants of Kirchbühl deem relevant for the character and the identity of the hamlet. After an introduction into the project and the goals, the following questions were discussed with the participants in detail, in three smaller groups:<sup>1</sup>

- What represents Kirchbühl for you?
- What do you think about when talking about Kirchbühl (including social, natural / environmental and built aspects)?
- What does “keeping Kirchbühl alive” mean for you?

<sup>1</sup> The participants were attributed to the groups at random.



The participants were initially asked to write down important elements on large post-it notes by themselves. Later, the notes were collected and discussed in the groups.

In the second part of the workshop, the participants were asked to individually rate the importance of the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5, "1" being the highest priority and "5" the lowest:

- The use of built elements in the surroundings and interventions to the terrain level are to be kept minimal;
- New builds, conversions, and extensions should adopt existing styles, inclinations, and materials for the roofs;
- Paved areas are to be reduced to a minimum, matched to the terrain, and not sealed;
- The buildings should have clearly structured timber facades, made from local timber in brown or grey tones;
- Parking spaces should be integrated into the buildings;
- The arrangement of the windows should follow the (local) context through a steady and uniform collocation;
- New builds, conversions, and extensions follow the local context in terms of scale and form;
- For old buildings, balconies are avoided, for new builds they are integrated into the building;
- The block foundation is solid and built with mineral materials (natural stone, concrete, plaster).

In order to clarify some of the specific architectural vocabulary the statements were accompanied by illustrations, showing which ways of building would conform or not conform to the respective statements. Figure 7 shows an extract of the rating sheet that was distributed to the participants. At the top, the statement was spelled out, on the right side a blank was placed for attributing the personal priority rating and below illustrations showed good and bad practice according to the statement.

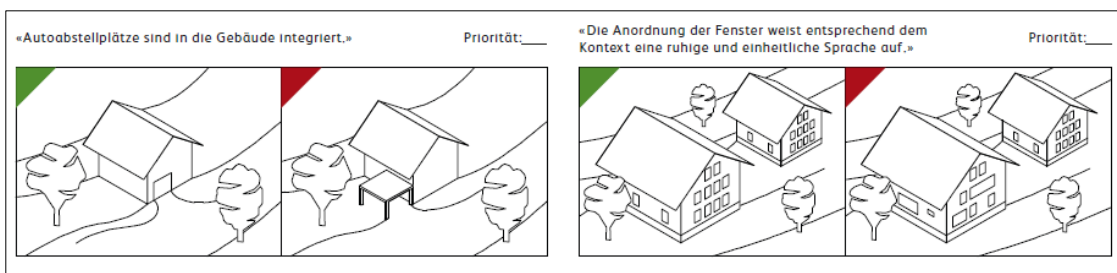


Figure 7: Extract from the rating sheet distributed to participants of the first workshop

Source: HSLU

#### Telephone interviews with the property owners in Kirchbühl

Between March and April 2017, we conducted nine semi-structured telephone interviews with the property owners in Kirchbühl, who were willing to participate. The aim of the interviews was to gain further insight on the development plans of the property owners, in order to be able to integrate this into the development perspectives for the hamlet. The interviews lasted between 20 to 30 Minutes each.

After a short introduction of the interviewer and the project, the following questions were asked:

- How long have you been a property owner in Kirchbühl? How long have you lived in Kirchbühl?
- In your view, what are the strengths of the locality? (e.g. good location, views, green spaces, ....)
- In your view, what are the weaknesses of the locality? (e.g. noise from the motorway, no public transport connection, empty barns, ...)
- Do you have development plans for your property in the coming years? If yes, what are they aiming at? (e.g. Conversion? Extension? Residential use? Commercial use? What time frame are you aiming for, for the completion?)
- What is your personal focus for your property?
  - o *Maintenance and repair (without an improvement / gain in quality)*
  - o *Renewal, repair or extension (with improvement / gain in quality)*
  - o *Keeping the property as a capital investment*
  - o *No plans (maybe selling or moving out)*
- If you currently have no development plans, what about the long-term (the next 10-15 years)?
- Do you have any further concerns, which you think must be considered for the further development of Kirchbühl, so that the current qualities can be maintained?

The results of the first workshop and the telephone interviews were incorporated into the elaboration of the development guidelines for Kirchbühl (A 4.1. "Development guidelines Kirchbühl"), and were used as indicative information for the task assignment for students' projects (A 1.3. "Design research").

## Workshop 2

The second workshop took place in September 2017 and was attended by 18 people. The main goals were to determine in which direction the development principles for the hamlet should go, ranging from more general considerations about the scale and types of uses to more concrete regulation questions regarding traffic and parking in the hamlet. In the first part of the workshop, a target image was presented, with four different sections, concerning the positioning of the hamlet as a living environment, the architectural development, and the use of formerly agricultural buildings, such as the barns. Furthermore, it contained elements outlining a target for the population development and the townscape of the hamlet. The participants were asked to read the sections for themselves and write down on posters the comments they had. Subsequently, an open discussion was initiated to deepen the comments brought up by the participants.

In the second part of the workshop, the following questions were discussed with the participants, and rated individually by them on large posters:

- Which population scenario do you prefer for Kirchbühl?
  - o *Status Quo (60 inhabitants)*
  - o *Moderate growth (80 inhabitants)*
  - o *Doubling (120 inhabitants)*
  - o *Reduction*

- Which type of use do you see the most for the barns in the hamlet?
  - o *Agricultural*
  - o *Commercial*
  - o *Residential*
  - o *Agricultural and commercial*
  - o *Agricultural and residential*
  - o *Residential and commercial*
  - o *Agricultural and commercial and residential*
- Could you imagine the following use for the barns in Kirchbühl?
  - o *Parking*
  - o *Infrastructure in combination with another use*
- Should the current ban on driving through Kirchbühl be enforced more severely?
- Would you approve of the introduction of a 20 km/h zone?
- Should future parking spaces in the hamlet be organised centrally or in a decentralised manner?
- Should there be a future restriction on the number of parking spaces per dwelling unit?
- How important is it to you to have centrally organised guest parking at the entrance to the hamlet?
- How important is it to you to have a mobility concept for Kirchbühl?
- How do you rate the following ideas?
  - o *Regeneration of the fountain square*
  - o *Community space that can be rented out, for example for wedding receptions.*

At this stage of the project, architecture students of the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts had designed a number of projects showing how the hamlet as a whole could develop and how one of the old barns, belonging to the town of Sempach, could be converted for a new use or be replaced by new buildings (see Figures 8-15).



Figure 8. Development proposal for an old barn

Source: Mario Huser, HSLU



Figure 9. Development proposal for an old barn

Source: Mario Huser, HSLU



Figure 10. Development proposal for an old barn  
Source: Selin Zihlmann, HSLU



Figure 11. Development proposal for an old barn  
Source: Selin Zihlmann, HSLU



Figure 12. Development proposal for an old barn  
Source: Carine Amacker, HSLU



Figure 13. Development proposal for an old barn  
Source: Carine Amacker, HSLU



Figure 14. Development proposal for an old barn  
Source: Qendrim Gashi, HSLU



Figure 15. Development proposal for an old barn  
Source: Qendrim Gashi, HSLU

The aim behind the student projects was to show possibilities, rather than developing a concrete project. Hence, the designs were not, as had originally been planned, rated as part of the formal workshop, but the inhabitants and property owners of Kirchbühl had the possibility to look at the designs comprised of plans, visualisations, and 3D-models and leave their comments in writing for each of them.

The results of the workshop were incorporated into the development guidelines for Kirchbühl (A 4.1. "Development guidelines Kirchbühl").

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 16 shows the project process in a summarised form. On the horizontal axis, we show the timeline of the project with the corresponding date of each step at the top. The vertical axis shows the involved stakeholders (inhabitants, property owners, steering group, planning office, old-town commission, etc.) and the activity of the project actors (project team, students). As the figure demonstrates, the process involved a continuous exchange and development of results between different actors and stakeholders.

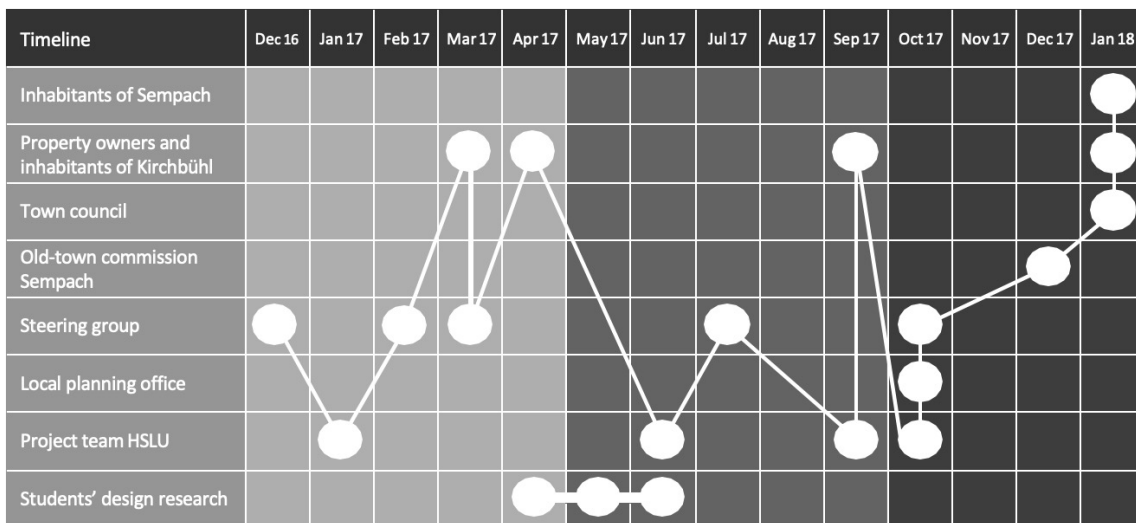


Figure 16: Summarising graph of the project process and steps  
Source: HSLU

### Results of the participatory elements

The following section will present a summarised form of the results obtained from the participatory elements described above, and reflect upon the reception of the process among the stakeholders, as well as the integration of the results in the overall project results.

#### Key elements for the inhabitants and property owners

The first workshop as well as the interviews showed that the inhabitants and property owners in Kirchbühl value a wide range of local qualities. In terms of social aspects, the sense of neighbourhood, community, and familiarity was mentioned often and in various forms. It is also valued that there is a mix of inhabitants in terms of age range. Furthermore, some public services, which are managed by the local cooperative (e.g. water provision), as well as some local traditions and festivities specific to the hamlet are deemed important. The general popularity of the hamlet, due to its location and particularly also due to the Church of St. Martin, which is used for numerous weddings, is viewed with some ambiguity. While the interest is appreciated, the associated increase in traffic and lack of designated parking for visitors is perceived as problematic.

In terms of natural and environmental aspects, the close connections to nature and the views on the lake of Sempach and the nearby mountains are particularly valued. The close connection to the original agricultural activities taking place in and around the hamlet are also valued by many, though awareness of the difficulty of keeping these activities going, due to the ongoing structural change is high. In that light, it was often mentioned that it would be desirable to keep the original agricultural uses alive wherever possible, but that there is a need to remain realistic at the same time. The negatives mentioned were mostly connected to traffic. This concerns the traffic going through the hamlet on the one hand, and the noise emissions from the nearby motorway, which runs directly below the hamlet further down the hillside, on the other. Additionally, the fact that the hamlet is not served by public transport is perceived as an impediment.

Finally, in terms of aspects that concern the built environment, the historic setting is welcomed and appreciated. The Church of St. Martin as well as the old farmhouses and barns are perceived as intact and beautiful, with unique elements that make up a fitting ensemble. However, it also became clear that the inhabitants and property owners are confronted with challenges when it comes to living in these houses, or wanting to renovate them. Among the difficulties mentioned were the building features (e.g. small windows, low ceilings) and the challenges involved in renovating them, particularly dealing with constraints and obligations from the cantonal heritage agency and the longer timelines for approval, as well as the associated costs for renovations or new builds.

The evaluation of the results obtained from the rating sheet (see Fig. 7) showed that the aspects that were perceived as most important by the inhabitants and property owners were: “New builds, conversions and extensions follow the local context in terms of scale and form” and “New builds, conversions and extensions should adopt existing styles, inclinations and materials for the roofs”. This was followed by: “The block foundation is solid and built with mineral materials (natural stone, concrete, plaster)”, “The buildings should have clearly structured timber facades made from local timber in brown or grey tones” and “The use of built elements in the surroundings and interventions to the terrain level are to be kept minimal”. All other aspects, such as integrating parking spaces into the buildings, or choosing a uniform arrangement of windows were not deemed particularly important by the inhabitants and property owners of Kirchbühl.

The interviews with the property owners showed in particular the difficulties associated with finding new and locally compatible uses for the disused barns, and building processes in the hamlet in general. It was mentioned, that building within the hamlet is generally expensive and requires patience due to longer application and negotiation processes with the authorities (in particular the heritage / conservation entities). Constraints to the changes that can be made to the interior of the buildings were less well understood and appreciated, than regulations regarding changes to the exterior of the buildings. In this respect, it was also mentioned that preservation considerations should be made with view of the fact that Kirchbühl should remain a lively place and not turn into a museum-like settlement. However, overall, there was a general understanding and recognition among the property owners that the historic building fabric requires more careful consideration than in less historically important buildings and surroundings. The idea of a development towards a more densified way of building or an increase in the number or volume of buildings present in the hamlet was therefore rejected by the interviewees.

Concerning the question of development possibilities for the barns, there was also a wider spectrum of viewpoints among the different property owners. Some stressed that new residential uses, conforming to modern living requirements, should be possible in these buildings. While others stressed, that residential uses are a possibility, but should not be exclusively applied as the sole option. Concerning the barns, it was pointed out that they pose particular challenges in being repurposed, as they usually have a very large footprint and very large roofs, which are difficult to subdivide. Additionally, the fact that the barns are disused means that they generally face structural problems more rapidly, for example as the timber frames become affected by woodworms.

In the second workshop, the inhabitants and property owners commented on a draft target image. The changes arising from the comments (**in bold**) were the following:

- The hamlet positions itself as a place of residence, which is attractive **for different generations**, instead of mainly for families.<sup>2</sup>
- New builds, which replace old buildings, have to be of high quality, **and should respect the character as well as integrate the typical local elements in a contemporary form.**
- The types of uses that are envisioned should be primarily related to agricultural or residential uses.<sup>3</sup> In the first draft, possible examples of such uses were given; these were removed, as some of them were contested. Furthermore, it was added that **the uses should be compatible for the hamlet, in particular regarding the emissions and traffic they generate.**
- Instead of speaking more generally of a moderate increase in population, it was defined in concrete numerical terms; i.e.: “A population increase **from 60 to around 80 inhabitants** is possible.”
- For the continued advancement of local relations in the hamlet, **jointly used areas (e.g. multi-purpose room)** are supported, instead of speaking of infrastructures.
- The section previously named townscape was changed to **town- and landscape**, to reflect the importance of the natural landscape for the character of the hamlet.

Additionally, the participants were asked to give their rating on a set of different questions, as outlined above (see pp. 39-40). In total, there were 18 participants, though not all chose to mark their vote on each question, hence the total number of respondents per question is sometimes below 18.

Figures 17 to 21 show the outcomes of this rating process.

<sup>2</sup> The explicit distinction between “families” and “different generations” was crucial to the inhabitants of Kirchbühl. They emphasised that different generations is a more inclusive term, as it encompasses, for example, young, single inhabitants or elderly inhabitants.

<sup>3</sup> The relation to agricultural uses was understood quite broadly to include commercial activities such as farm shops or overnight stays in an agricultural context (e.g. Bed & Breakfast or sleeping on straw).

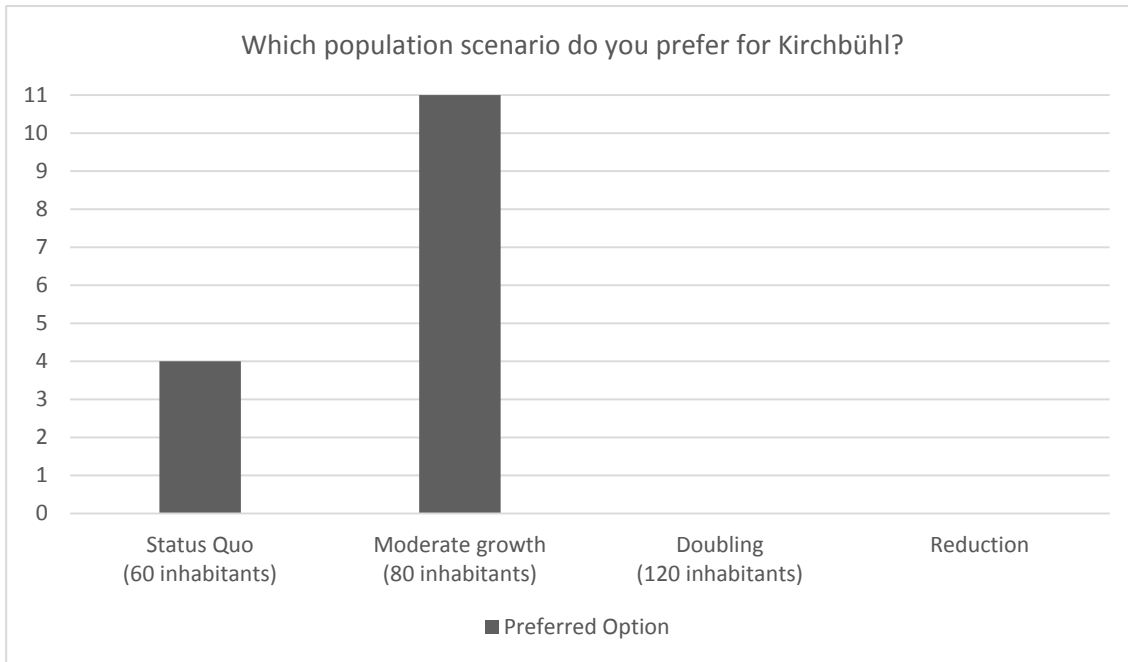


Figure 17: Results of the question on the preferred population scenario for Kirchbühl

The preferred population scenario with moderate growth from 60 to around 80 inhabitants (11 out of 15 votes) was integrated into the target image.

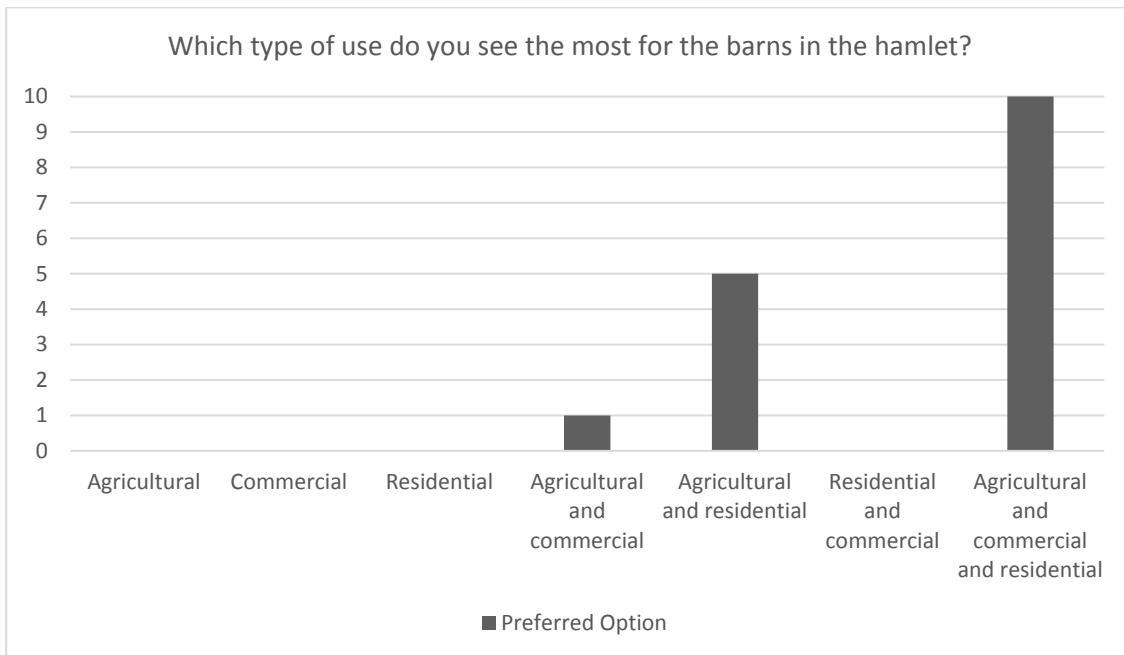


Figure 18: Results of the question on the preferred type of use for barns in Kirchbühl

For the type of use envisaged for the barns in the hamlet, there was a clear preference (10 out of 16 votes) for a mix of agricultural, commercial and residential uses.



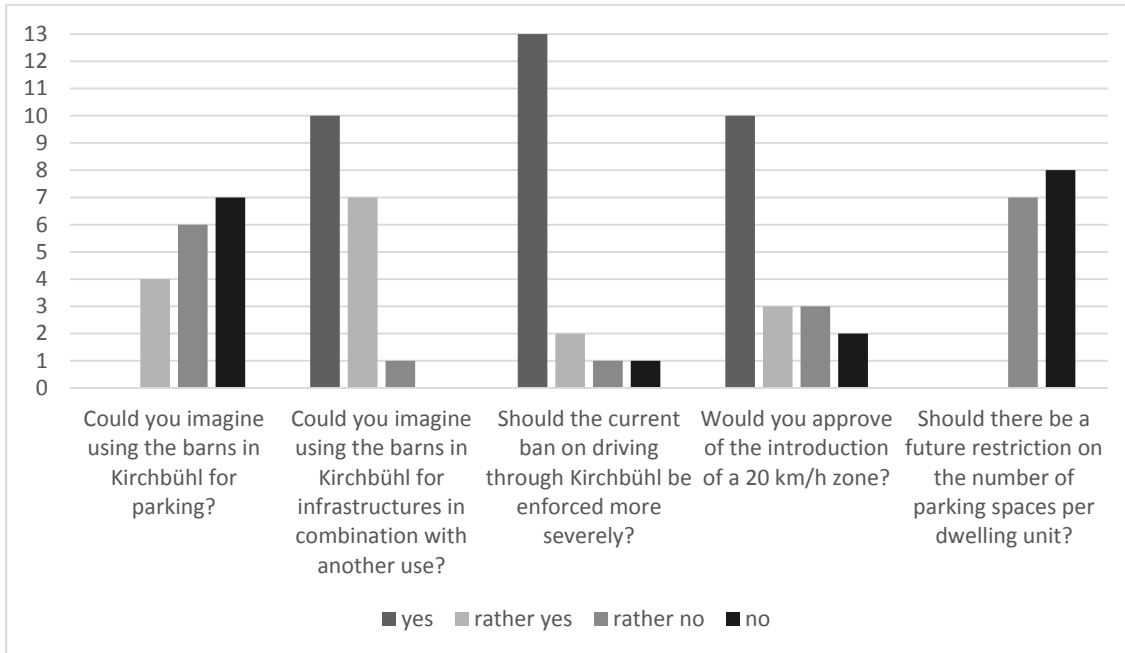


Figure 19: Results of development proposals for the hamlet

For a number of questions, the participants had to mark how much they agreed or disagreed with certain development proposals. Asked if they could imagine using the barns for parking, the majority voted “rather no” or “no” (13 out of 17). Using the barns for communal infrastructure in combination with other uses was favoured, with 17 out of 18 voting “yes” or “rather yes”. A more forceful enforcement of the current driving ban through the hamlet was approved (15 out of 17 “yes” or “rather yes”). The introduction of a 20 km/h zone was also rated mostly positively (13 out of 18 “yes” or “rather yes”). A future restriction on the number of parking spaces per dwelling unit was very clearly rejected (15 out of 15 “no” or “rather no”).

Finally, the participants were asked to rate how important certain issues were to them personally, with a scale comprising the options “important”, “quite important”, “rather unimportant” and “unimportant” (see Fig. 21). The availability of centrally organised guest parking was regarded as “important” for 16 out of 17 respondents. The creation of a mobility concept for Kirchbühl was contested, with 8 out of 17 perceiving it as “important” or “quite important”, and 9 out of 17 regarding it as “rather unimportant”. Similarly, the idea of a communal space which could also be rented out to external people (for e.g. for wedding receptions) was “important” or “quite important” to 11 out of 17 people, while 6 out of 17 regarded it as “rather unimportant”. Finally, 15 out of 18 people rated a regeneration of the fountain square as “important” or “quite important”.

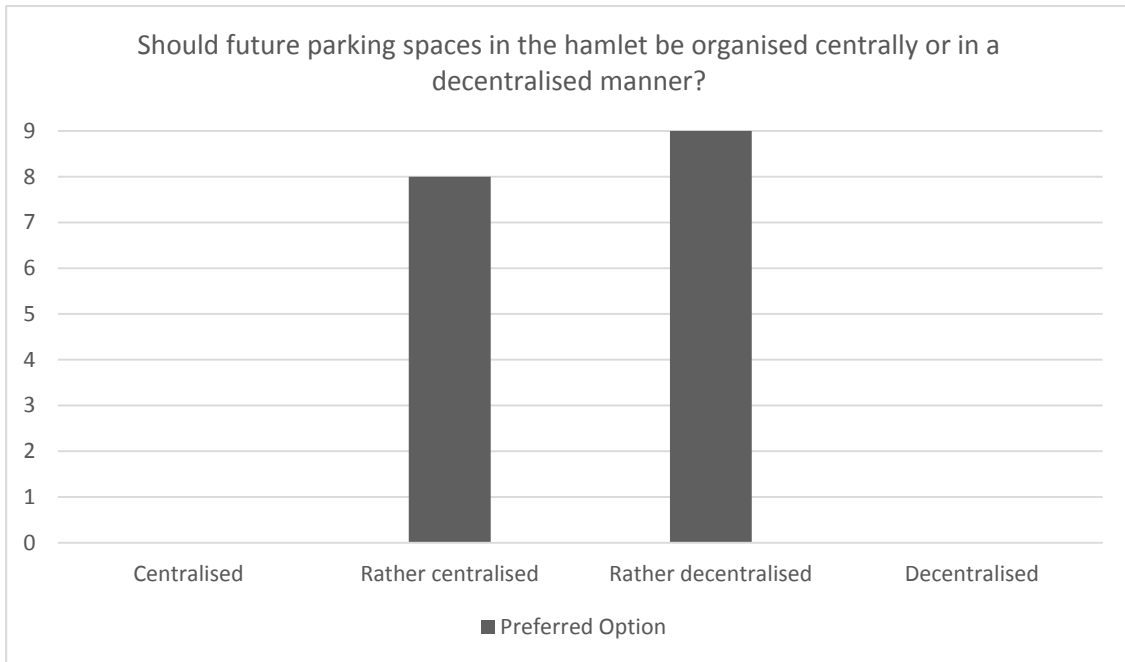


Figure 20: Results of the question on centralised versus decentralised parking solutions

The question of whether future parking spaces in the hamlet should be organised centrally, or in a decentralised manner was rather contested, with 8 out of 17 favouring a “rather centralised” solution, and 9 out 17 favouring a “rather decentralised” solution.

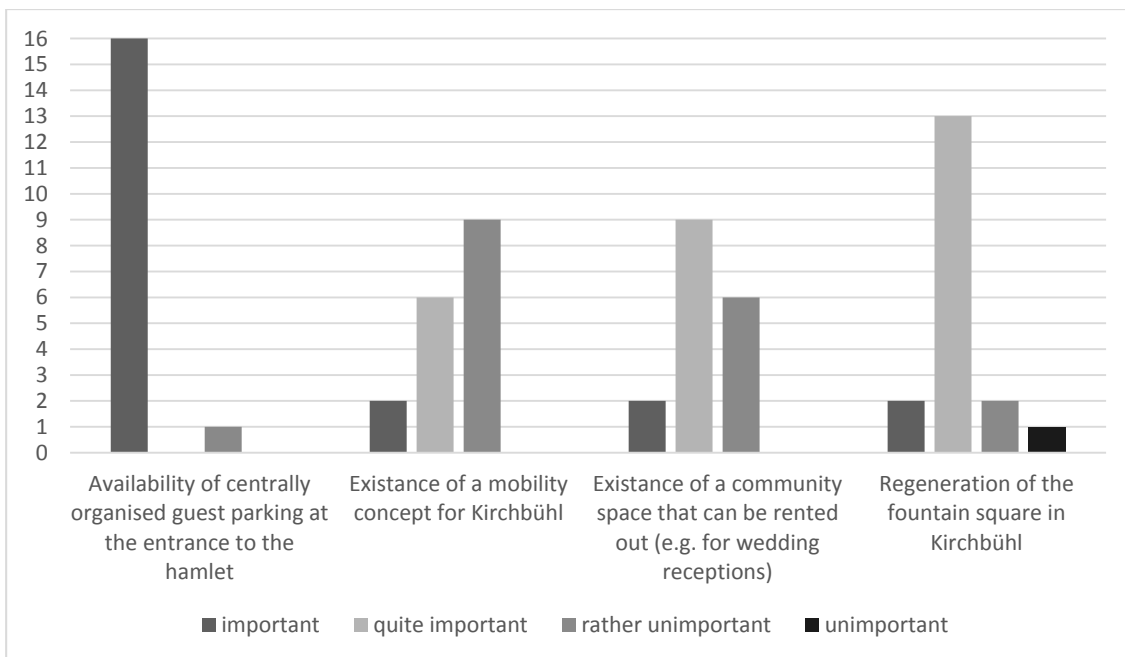


Figure 21: Results on the importance of different development options

### Commonalities and lines of conflict

We aimed to gather commonalities and potential lines of conflict between the viewpoints of the local stakeholders, such as the inhabitants, and those of the experts from the fields of planning and heritage preservation. Thus, we devised our methodology (see Fig. 6) with two parallel project strands, which come together at multiple points. Overall, highlighting commonalities and lines of conflict between the different stakeholder groups was not possible to the extent to which we originally envisaged it. This was mainly because the experts involved in the process showed little interest in attending the workshops with the inhabitants and property owners. Thus, the discussion could not be facilitated immediately, but rather had to be channelled through the project team. Nevertheless, commonalities as well as lines of conflict were noticeable and taken into account while developing the details in each step of the process and the development of the final guidelines.

Particularly the first workshop demonstrated that the inhabitants have a great appreciation for the particularity of the buildings they inhabit and own. In the rating of the important aspects to consider for renovations or new builds (see Fig. 7), we see that they consider general scale and form of the buildings, the styles, colours, and materials used, and minimising the intervention on the terrain to be essential in order to preserve the character of the hamlet. A line of conflict with the experts' views, such as those of the cantonal heritage agency (Denkmalpflege und Archäologie), however, concerned more practical aspects, such as allowing covered external parking or balconies that stick out of the main building frame. Similarly, it became clear from the interviews with the property owners that specifications and restrictions for the interior of the buildings are less apprehended, especially in light of the fact that the hamlet should be preserved as a living space. The strong preservationist stance taken by the cantonal entity thus presented a line of conflict throughout the project.

### Integration of the participatory elements in the project results

As a final project step, we elaborated so-called development guidelines ("Leitlinien für die Entwicklung") for the hamlet of Kirchbühl. They reproduce the results of the participatory process in a consolidated form and serve as a basis for the municipality, builders, and the heritage agency in determining future development within the hamlet. In order to bring the contents of these guidelines into an official planning document and make them binding, the municipality of Sempach decided to include its contents in a structure plan for the hamlet ("Richtplan Weiler Kirchbühl").<sup>4</sup>

The development guidelines are divided into two main sections, the first dealing with the development of the hamlet as a whole, and the second focusing on the development practices for individual buildings within the hamlet.

In the first section, the target image outlines the main directions of impact. The comments of the inhabitants and property owners on the target image, collected during the second workshop, were directly integrated as described above. Next to the target image, the first section contains indications on the development of the local building fabric in certain perimeters, indications of possible usage types for the barns, and recommendations for mobility

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<sup>4</sup> Spatial planning instruments at the municipal level include the zoning plan and the associated zoning regulations, which are binding for landowners. Moreover, there is the possibility of creating municipal structure plans, which are binding for the authorities.

management. The possible usage types for the barns, as well as the recommendations on mobility are also a direct result of the discussions and feedback during the participatory process.

The second section contains a process sequence for building projects, planning principles and planning recommendations. The process sequence for building projects was elaborated with the municipality by determining their existing procedures and putting them on paper in order to make them transparent to the building owners. While the planning principles were discussed with and rated by the inhabitants and property owners (Fig. 7), the priorities stated were ultimately not taken into account in the final document. Instead, all of the planning principles have been kept. Finally, the planning recommendations give some added detail on the specifications made in the planning principles.

#### Ex-post process reflection

After completion of the participatory process, and the elaboration of the guidelines, we carried out an ex-post analysis of the project, reflecting on the original goals internally within the project team, as well as externally with the involved stakeholders.

#### Project team HSLU

In order to reflect on the process that was carried out, and the potential for improvement, the project team of the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts (HSLU) held an internal workshop. A selection of the key points that were raised are described here briefly, focusing on the aspects that concern the participatory elements of the process.

The number of stakeholders involved was deemed as generally adequate; however, in hindsight, it would have been helpful to start with a comprehensive stakeholder map at the beginning of the process. This would have allowed to show dependencies between the stakeholders and delineate which stakeholders are or are not going to be actively involved in the process.

Both the project team and the steering group also deemed it desirable to have workshops together with the planning and building experts. This would likely allow to better see the lines of conflict between their views and the views of the inhabitants, and potentially find solutions to these through discussion. Generally, it was found that conflicting points need to be highlighted more and raised more offensively in future processes, in order to avoid that they continue to exist subliminally and are not tackled. The fact that the process and its outcomes were strictly open-ended could also have been highlighted better.

Including the students' projects in order to produce designs enabled the realisation of very detailed designs, which could be discussed tangibly with the various stakeholder groups. The disadvantage was that the interplay with the inhabitants and property owners, while developing the designs, was very limited. In a follow-up project, we aim to produce certain design elements, such as volumetric studies directly through the project team, so that they can be developed in cooperation with the inhabitants.

It was further noted, that the process could have been designed in a way that is more specific to the various target groups. Not all groups have to be questioned on all topics; rather, they should be questioned on the aspects that concern and affect them directly. For instance, the property owners can be questioned on individual buildings, whereas the inhabitants (who are not all property owners – renters, children/teenagers, elderly people, etc.) can be addressed on a higher level, regarding the settlement as a whole.

Finally, the hamlet of Kirchbühl proved to be very manageable concerning both the size of the settlement and the number of relevant stakeholders that needed to be addressed. If future projects focus on larger spatial areas, the participation methods will have to be adjusted. In light of this, a targeted, group-related process gains additional importance.

Property owners and inhabitants of Kirchbühl

At the end of the final workshop, the participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire to give feedback on how they perceived the process. While 32 people took part in the first workshop and 21 in the second, only 10 feedback forms were received at the final workshop. Hence, not all the local stakeholders' feedback could be collected as desired.

The feedback form consisted of two parts: In the first part, seven items had to be rated on a rating scale of 1 to 5, 5 corresponding to "applicable/correct", and 1 corresponding to "not applicable/ not correct". In the second part, there was the possibility to comment freely in the form of written text.

Figure 22 shows the distribution of the results of the questionnaire.

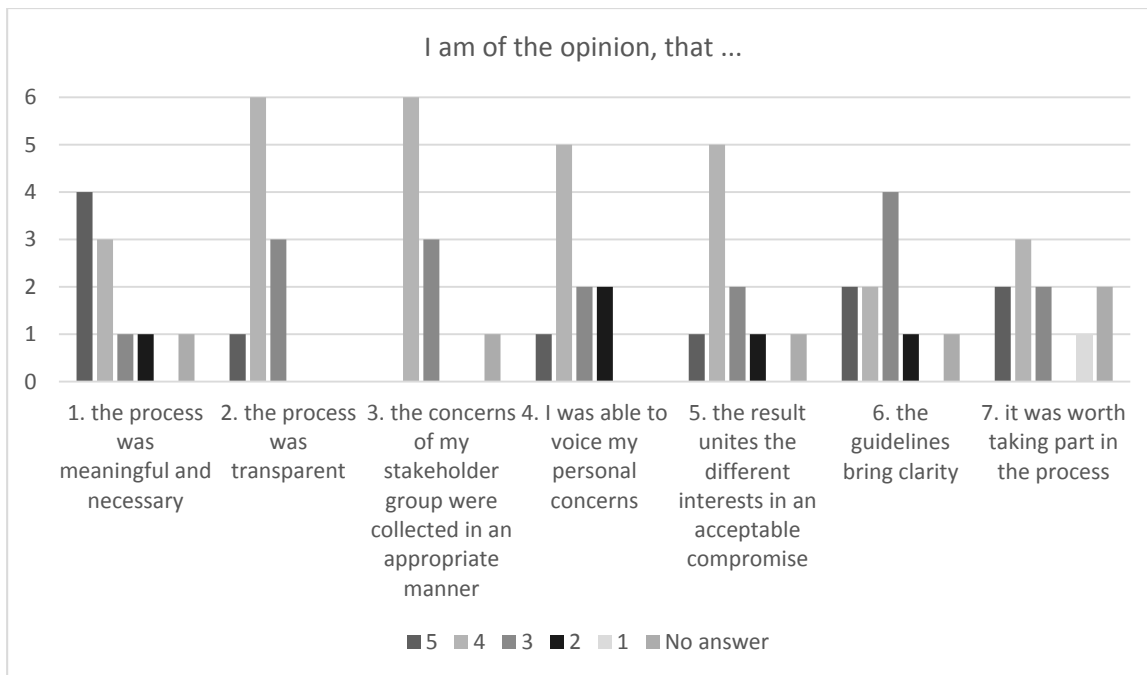


Figure 22: Results of the questionnaire distributed to participants of the final workshop

In a summarised form, the results of the questionnaire made visible that points 1-3, as well as point 5 show mostly positive feedback. Hence, no direct need for action was derived from these points. Point 4 showed some slightly more negative feedback. Inside of the project team, we thus discussed options, which would allow inhabitants to voice their concerns in a less public setting. While the property owners had the possibility to do so through the interviews that were carried out with them, the inhabitants were constrained to the public workshops. Options that were discussed include a digital, anonymous questionnaire. The feedback concerning point 6 was generally more split across the rating scale. The conclusions drawn are that the results will

have to be presented in a way that focuses more on the various target groups. For example, aspects that concern property owners who want to renovate or do a rebuild could have been highlighted more clearly.

#### Project steering group

The members of the steering group were asked about their evaluation of the process in separate interviews. For the interviews, a questionnaire was prepared, with the following questions:

1. How did you experience the process? (short general assessment)
2. To what extent are you satisfied with the result? To what extent are you not satisfied?
3. In your view, what are the strengths of the process?
4. In your view, what are the weaknesses of the process?
5. What would you change?
6. In which cases is it worth carrying out such a process?
7. To what extent can you make use of the results in your daily practice?
8. In your opinion, which findings can be transferred on to other hamlets?

Additionally, they were also asked to complete the same feedback form as the inhabitants of Kirchbühl. The results are not shown graphically due to the lower number of respondents. Instead, the results are given in a summarised form below.

The main feedback from the steering group was that the process enabled the creation of sustainable and actionable guidelines, based on a comprehensive analysis. On the negative side, it was mentioned that the questions concerning the handling of the disused barns and the handling of hamlets in the Canton in general could not be answered as extensively as they would have liked. The extensive analyses, the inclusion of the stakeholders, as well as the design research through the architecture students were all named as strengths of the process. The weaknesses mentioned were that there had been different expectations from different stakeholders, which could not all be fulfilled, and that the communication with the local inhabitants and property owners did not manage to achieve full acceptance and understanding for the rules which limit the building possibilities within the hamlet. Furthermore, it was mentioned that the perimeter of the analyses could have been extended further.

Possible changes that were suggested concerned the continued improvement of communication and including direct contact of expert members of the steering group with the local inhabitants and stakeholders. Overall, it was also mentioned that the process could be tightened with a view of reducing time and effort. In light of this, it was mentioned that it is particularly worth carrying out such a process in settings of high heritage value and with good locational qualities, or where general development questions surrounding the locality need to be clarified, with the aim of achieving a higher settlement quality.

The use of the results for daily practice was evidently differing among the members of the steering group. For the municipality of Sempach, the results will be used regularly, whenever a property owner in the hamlet of Kirchbühl wishes to (re-)develop his property. For the two cantonal entities, they serve more as a showcase example for other municipalities that are confronted with similar questions. The main findings, which are transferrable in the view of the steering group, are the criteria concerning the built elements, which are similar across most of the hamlets in the Canton.

## CONCLUSIONS

*“[T]oday the processes of community engagement have come to be seen, not just as ancillary functions or even best practices, but as the very foundation of [...] planning ethics. The virtual necessity of engagement today, however, has not yet produced standards for engagement practices or techniques that could be seen as universalizing or ubiquitous [...]; much of the field is constrained to the art and craft of engagement, and not a rigid methodology or science”* García (2018, p. 534).

Though there seems to be growing consensus on the importance of public engagement in spatial development (see above), in practice, we still find very few planning documents that thoroughly consider the role that territorial identity and “people-place connections” (Stephenson, 2010) play. Also the question of how territorial identity can be strengthened to support spatial development processes remains very limited (Stephenson, 2010). With the project in the hamlet of Kirchbühl, we aimed to address this gap.

While the aim of achieving a universal methodology or practice is somehow contrary to the iterative nature of participatory processes, where the results of each round of engagement inform the actions and the design of the next step, there is nevertheless a need to make such processes comprehensible and manageable for public entities if we want them to be applied more widely. In view of this, the aim of our applied research project was to develop a method that would make the process we carried out in Kirchbühl applicable to other municipalities, by making the elements within the larger frame customizable to the specific setting of each locality.

In this article, we have seen that the main challenge arising for the Swiss traditional settlement form of the hamlet is structural change. The decrease in agricultural activity renders barns obsolete, and questions the right to existence of settlements outside the building zones in times when urban intensification is being promoted. The heritage value of many of the old farmhouses and barns goes unquestioned, yet difficulties in upkeep and long, expensive processes for maintenance and renovations pose a threat to their continued existence.

We have seen that by expanding our traditional understanding of space as a merely physical space to a multidimensional space, which includes historical attributions and individual perceptions, the need for a local perspective on space and identity is apparent. In keeping with the ideas and arguments that many scholars have put forward, we have attempted to integrate professional as well as local value sets in our methodology. The methodology combines two strands, which come together at multiple points in the process to identify potential commonalities and lines of conflict, which can also occur among experts of different disciplines or among the inhabitants. The experience of Kirchbühl has allowed us to define three rough phases which can function as a framework for applying the process of Kirchbühl to other localities. The three phases have been defined as:

- Phase 1 - Understanding comprehensively
- Phase 2 - Developing collectively
- Phase 3 - Implementing qualitatively

In Phase 1, we conduct the analysis of the locality through traditional evaluation methods, a detailed settlement inventory, and by determining the locals’ viewpoint, and comparing the two sets of analyses (Fig. 6: Work-packages A 1.1, A 1.2, A 2.1 & A 3.1). In Phase 2, design research and a target image allow for the discussion of different spatial scenarios, and the comparison of

possible and locally desired development options makes up the basis for the following steps (Fig. 6: Work-packages A 1.3, A 2.2 & A 3.2). Finally, in Phase 3, development guidelines are drafted and discussed with different stakeholders (Fig. 6: Work-packages A 3.3 & A 4.1). They provide a set of principles for planners, builders, and the local authorities.

The results of the participatory elements have shown that it was possible to integrate the local viewpoints continuously into the ongoing process, and consider the preferences that resonated with a large part of the community in the elaboration of the guidelines. Some lines of conflict with the experts' views, such as those of the cantonal heritage agency could not be discussed in the depth that we had hoped for. Hence, the development guidelines reflect the feedback obtained from the local stakeholders to a large part, with exception of the planning principles.

From the ex-post process reflection, we have seen that the process still needs to be tightened, so that it becomes feasible to carry out a similar process with less financial resources, and in a shorter time frame. In terms of the participatory aspects, a more direct dialogue between the local stakeholders and the experts should be aimed for in future projects, as well as adjusting the participation methods more to certain target groups, especially in view of potential projects that cover larger spatial areas and thus a greater number of stakeholders.

#### Outlook

We are now carrying out a similar process to the one in Kirchbühl for a dispersed settlement in the municipality of Giswil, Canton Obwalden. The cultural and building heritage as well as the characteristic landscape are also of high importance in this dispersed settlement. Simultaneously, we are trying to apply this framework to the scale of whole municipalities in other places around Switzerland, aiming to coordinate it with local spatial planning processes.

The methodology used may be applied to other localities aiming to bring forward spatial development processes with a participatory approach. Certainly, the greatest challenge in the attempt to create a more widely applicable methodology for spatial development processes is that each locality still needs to be considered in its uniqueness, and the engagement of local stakeholder groups needs to be adjusted accordingly. Hence, the execution of the process in its "art and craft" is much more vital than the framework applied. Nevertheless, more experiences through further applied research can be gained on customisable elements for development processes in areas with high heritage value, urban intensification processes, or municipal development in general.

#### Acknowledgements

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