The Crucial Role of the Facilitator: Analysing Identity Construction and Dilemmas

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Abstract

Facilitation is a practice with many areas of application: participatory planning, environmental governance and natural resource management are some areas with a high focus on facilitation. Within these different areas, the practice is supposed to empower citizens, revitalise democracy and tackle the sustainability challenge. With an increasing demand in participatory decision-making, planning and other citizens-based approaches, the demand for facilitation is growing, and so is research regarding the topic. Studies conducted on the field of facilitation have contributed to a better understanding of the practice.

However, while research is focusing heavily on involved actors in facilitation, the facilitators' construction of identity remains under-explored. Previous research focusing on the facilitator identified practical dilemmas facilitators face by looking into deliberative theory. Yet, research on facilitation did not reveal how practitioners construct their identity in a process. This is essential since the role of a facilitator depends on differing ideas practitioners draw on when facilitating. Further, the idea of identity matters insofar as it guides the practitioners work during practicing. Therefore, it is problematic that we know little about how facilitators construct their identity.

This thesis addresses this knowledge gap by providing valuable insights into the lifeworld of facilitators in a natural resource management context. Interviews were conducted with practitioners and these are used as a foundation for the thesis. The study uncovers embedded ideas about identity practitioners draw on when facilitating. With the help of frame analysis, I identify underlying ideas and understandings facilitators draw on when constructing their identity.

The analysis brought forward four identity frames practitioners draw on when facilitating, whereas some practitioners draw on more than one frame in a facilitated process. The identified frames are an *equality* frame, *authority* frame, *expert* frame, and *neutrality* frame. Further, the identified frames yield a range of tensions facilitators face when practicing facilitation. First, the results show that there are conflicting identities embedded in facilitation practice. Moreover, tension among the *equality* and *authority* frame arise as practitioners are owners of the process using their authority to level out differences among participants while not dominating the process. In addition, facilitators face a dilemma of being experts in the field of facilitation (*expert* frame) while at the same time not acknowledging the groups' desires (*equality* and *neutrality* frame). The thesis' strength is the foundation of empirical material and has therefore a high practical value for the practice of facilitation.

This study then not only adds a better comprehension of how facilitators construct their identity, but also helps to understand how facilitators approach challenges within the practice of facilitation. Therefore, the thesis yields a contribution to the practical field of facilitation and additionally, adds empirical depth to theoretical work on deliberative democracy. Overall, the conducted frame analysis on interviews with facilitators reveals insights into the practice of facilitation. Thus, this thesis intends to create a basis for reflective practice for practitioners conducting facilitation.

Keywords: Facilitation, Deliberation, Facilitators Identity, Frames, Dilemma, Reflective Practice, Deliberative Democracy, Environmental Communication, Natural Resource Management

Preface

The idea of this thesis is based on two different interests: one is a personal interest in the practice of facilitation in the context of natural resource management, whereas the other one is based on a research interest in theorizing the role of the facilitator. Because of the interest in the former case, I reached out to practitioners and conducted interviews in autumn 2019. These interviews were performed out of mere interest in the topic, and even though I asked questions about their role and responsibility in the process, there was no particular theoretical interest in these interviews initially. Only after finishing the interviews, I started reflecting about the conversations and the content in more depth. Since I am personally interested in the field of facilitation and consider it as a potential future path, I came across some issues mentioned during the interview which I became more curious about but also was challenged with. First, I thought about if the practical part of this pathway would look similar to the experiences of my interviewees, is this then really something I would like to work with? Is this something that goes in line with my own personal worldview and set of values? While I kept thinking about these matters, I noticed that my understanding of the facilitator was challenged in general, not only concerning the role of the facilitator, but also what goes beyond. I stumbled if my value of environmental well-being aligns with the features of facilitation and the role of the facilitator, who is rather concerned about the process instead of the substance. Further, I questioned if my own worldview of including all – enclosed the environment – would be in the way for becoming a fair and neutral facilitator.

After a few weeks of reflection and meetings with my thesis supervisor, we concluded that the interview material I gathered is rich in information regarding facilitation. Therefore, we decided that my personal critical point of view together with the empirical material constitute a good foundation for a master thesis.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Problem Formulation

In a complex and fast-changing world, humanity faces wicked challenges in environmental governance. Faith is put into local governance and participatory decision-making in order to create long-term sustainable solutions. While being confronted with major issues such as climate change, loss of biodiversity and growing inequality, the importance of community action and citizens engagement is growing (Forester, 1999; Innes & Booher, 2010; Reed, 2008; Smith, 2009; Bodin, 2017). The facilitation of such processes is allocated a high importance for the success of inclusive, effective, and sustainable outcomes. Facilitation is a practice which is applied in settings such as participatory planning, workshops, collaborative decision-making, political deliberation (Forester, 1999; Innes & Booher, 1999; Escobar, 2011). It is a practice that is about "inquiring and learning together in the face of difference and conflict, telling compelling stories and arguing together in negotiations, coming to see issues, relationships, and options in new ways, thus arguing and acting together" (Forester, 1999, Preface). It is the facilitator's responsibility to "keep[…] groups on task, monitor[…] a group's social/emotional behavior", and provide "invitations that open a space for dialogue" (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009, p, 457, p. 859). Several scholars have acknowledged the crucial role of effective facilitation for successful participatory approaches (Forester, 1999; Innes & Booher, 1999; Escobar, 2011; Westin, Calderon & Hellquist, 2014; Bodin, 2017).

At the same time as the demand for participatory approaches has been increasing, the number of research projects conducted on the subject has grown (e.g. Forester, 1999; Mansbridge et al., 2006; Moore, 2012; Kraff, 2018; Westin, 2019). As a result, several tension points in the facilitation practice have been identified. For example, Kraff (2018) explores pitfalls in participatory approaches that cause unjust practice, such as unequal access to information and participation as well as the facilitator's biases and blindness towards culture. Further, Mansbridge et al. (2006) reveal a discrepancy between theoretical ideals regarding deliberation and the practice through an inductive study, drawing on facilitator's

experiences. Closely related to that, Chilvers (2008, p. 155) criticises the inadequacy of current participatory approaches and initiates an evaluation in order to provide a basis for practices which open up "to diversity, differences, antagonism, and uncertainties/indeterminacies" and therefore, create a better understanding for actors in facilitation practice. Finally, Westin (2019) highlights the influence of power structures in participatory settings and develops a family resemblance of power structures. In order to grapple with these tension points and create long-lasting, inclusive and just solutions and decisions, all above mentioned scholars emphasise the importance of the concept of reflective practice (e.g. Escobar, 2011; Moore, 2012; Westin, 2019).

Yet, even though the concept of reflective practice is identified as being highly relevant, the crucial role of the facilitator remains surprisingly under-explored (e.g. Forester, 1999; Moore, 2012). As noted by Moore (2012, p. 146), a "growing reflection in the practices of generating deliberation" of facilitating unfolds new areas of interest within the research of facilitation. One of these areas concerns the role of the facilitator. Writings by Moore (2012) address this research gap by providing insights into dilemmas and tensions deliberative facilitators have to deal with in practice. However, research has yet to shed light on facilitator's understandings of their role and identity within a process. Since the facilitator is ascribed a crucial role, there is a need to better understand the practitioners working in those positions. Further, as our embedded ideas and understandings of the world around us guide our activities (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), identifying facilitators´ ideas concerning their identity in a process is essential in order to generate an in-depth understanding of the practice of facilitation and enable reflective practice. Given today's importance of facilitation in tackling environmental challenges, I argue that there is a need for a deeper understanding of the role of facilitators and how practitioners construct their identity in the context of a process.

1.2. Research Aim and Questions

This thesis addresses the above described research gap by specifically focusing on the role of facilitators and their embedded ideas regarding their identity in a process. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to provide insights into the lifeworld of facilitators and accordingly, contribute to the practice of facilitation by identifying practical dilemmas that are not fully explored in practice and research. In order to be able to identify tensions within the practice of facilitation, I have conducted interviews with facilitators and analysed these by applying frame analysis. Applying frame analysis helped to uncover embedded ideas practitioners draw on when facilitating. Using the lens of the "Following from the Front"- dilemma (Moore, 2012) as an entry point for the discussion, I define and describe dilemmas practitioners face in a process of facilitation. By highlighting these tensions, I aim

to raise awareness and foster reflections on tensions and dilemmas for facilitators and therefore, contribute to the practice of facilitation through enabling reflective practice. In order to address the aim, my thesis will be guided by the following research questions:

1. What identity frames do practitioners draw on when facilitating?
2. What kind of tensions arise from facilitators' different ideas regarding their identity?
3. How can the previous identified tensions be theorized in the context of deliberative democracy?

Throughout this thesis, I refer with facilitation to all practices which involve the role of a facilitator. Furthermore, I will use the terms facilitator and practitioner interchangeably for those people who are in the position of conducting or leading facilitated processes.

2. Research Design

In this chapter, I elaborate on the research design of this thesis. Therefore, I discuss the selected research approach, the data collection procedure and introduce the analytical and theoretical framework. I will conclude this chapter with a reflection on methodological choices.

2.1. The Interpretive Approach

The underlying philosophical assumption of this thesis is a social constructivist worldview. This worldview assumes that there exist multiple meanings and perceptions of the world around us, and that there is no overall truth (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2011; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This understanding is in line with the aim of this thesis, which focuses on the individual meaning-making of practitioners in the specific context of facilitated processes. Having a philosophical worldview which emphasises a plurality of existing meanings and understandings of individuals combined with a heavy focus on empirical material, I decided to apply an interpretive research approach. Interpretive research "focuses on specific, situated meanings and meaning-making practices of actors in a given context […]" (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2011, p. 1). This approach is in accordance with the aim of this thesis focusing on facilitator's meaning-making.

Further, according to Schwartz-Shea & Yanow (2011), the interpretive research design is commonly accompanied by an abductive logic of inquiry. Abduction in this thesis is understood as "the researcher […] simultaneously puzzling over empirical materials and theoretical literatures" (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2011, p. 27). In this study, I utilized the abductive approach by moving between the interviews with practitioners and theories of framing and deliberative democracy. This was not a linear, but rather an iterative process. I conducted several iterative circles trying out ways of doing analysis, drawing conclusions and reflecting on the applied steps until a conclusion was reached and a meaningful link between empirical material and theory was established.

In order to gain knowledge about the perceptions and meanings of individuals in this thesis, I decided to conduct a frame analysis (van Hulst & Yanow, 2016). Frame analysis provides an established methodology for analysing embedded ideas individuals draw on when making sense of the world (Schön & Rein, 1994; van Hulst & Yanow, 2016). I will elaborate on the conducted frame analysis in Section 2.3.3.

Finally, an essential consideration within an interpretive research design concerns the reflexivity of the researcher (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2011). Since

in the interpretive research approach "the researcher him- or herself is the primary "instrument" of data generation and sense-making […]" Schwartz-Shea & Yanow (2011, p. 109), it is important to be aware of the influence of the researchers own understanding when analysing and theorizing the empirical material. Therefore, during the study I reflected upon how my own understanding of facilitation as well as my personal worldview influenced the selected focus point on the empirical material, as well as the analysis and interpretations of the findings.

2.2. Data Collection and Generation

I decided to examine the interviews conducted prior to this thesis since they provided me with insights into the practical world of facilitation. In the process of data collection, I interviewed six practitioners working with facilitation in the field of natural resource management. According to Creswell & Creswell (2018), interviews are a suitable method in order to uncover meaning- and sense-making of individuals. Because of my interest in the role of the practitioner from the beginning, my focus in the interview was on the personal experiences of the individual facilitator within the field. Therefore, I prepared a semi-structured interview guide with open-ended questions. For the creation of the interview guideline, I mainly drew on two resources: the first one is the book "Doing interviews" by Brinkmann & Kvale (2018). I found this book particularly helpful for organizing themes in the interview and formulating questions. The second resource was the website "Profiles of Practitioners" (Forester et al., 2005), which helped me to establish relevant themes for the interview. In addition, I adapted questions personally to the interviewee if a website (or other material, e.g. CV) was available. Drawing on these resources, I created an interview guideline with different themes concerning the practitioners and their personal experiences (see appendix).

During the interview, I decided to keep the conversation as flexible and open as possible and give the interviewees space to elaborate on their thoughts. Consequently, questions appeared in different orders in each interview. Further, more questions were added in some interviews because of new emerging areas of interest. Three of the interviews were conducted over Skype, two in person. All interviews were recorded with permission of the interviewees.

From the in total six conducted interviews, I selected five for the thesis. The sixth interview has not been taken into consideration due to a poor recording quality and a differing content from this thesis. All interviewees approved to be part of the thesis project. The interviewees engage in different ways with facilitation and work in different geographical settings. I identified and contacted actors working with facilitation in a setting of natural resource management. I considered these individuals as being helpful to supply answers to my initial questions (see Preface)

and provide me with insights into their lifeworlds. I decided to keep my interviewees anonymous due to confidentiality reasons. The following table presents an overview over the interviewees and their engagement with facilitation.

Table 1: Overview of interviewees

Interviewee Identification	Description
Interviewee 1	- Self-employed full-time facilitator, mediator, consultant, and trainer - focus on natural resources and public policy in the United States - experience in facilitating disputes, public meetings, trainings, and workshops
Interviewee 2	- professional mediator and facilitator - working within natural resource management in a Swedish context - facilitating dialogues and conflict resolution
Interviewee 3	- mediator, facilitator, and attorney - experience in mediating processes concerning complex natural resource management issues in the United States
Interviewee 4	- no full-time facilitator - conducts facilitation as part of occupation and in activist settings
Interviewee 5	- free-lancing process consultant, project manager and organizational developer - experience in facilitating workshops, innovation and change processes in an international context

I transcribed the interviews one by one interview, taking notes of interesting findings while transcribing. The transcribing process was carried out verbatim, leaving out filler words such as "um". During the process I created my personal transcribing rules in order to ensure a consistent form for all transcripts.

2.3. Frame Theory and Analysis

The aim of this thesis is to create insights into facilitators lifeworlds and dilemmas. In order to address this aim and my research questions regarding facilitators construction of identity, a frame analysis was conducted. In this section, I will reason for the choice of this analytical approach and further, provide an overview

of frame theory and analysis, before describing the in this thesis applied approach based on van Hulst & Yanow (2016).

The study object of this thesis is spoken language (in form of a transcript). Language plays an important role as it shapes our perception of the world (Hajer, 2006). I have chosen this study object in order to gain an understanding of embedded ideas regarding facilitator's identities. Therefore, choosing an analytical method focusing on language was essential. In this thesis, frame analysis was chosen over other kinds of discourse analysis due to its heavy focus on language as well as the consideration of power-influenced meaning-making processes in facilitation (van Hulst & Yanow, 2016; Westin, 2019). In addition, as pointed out by van Hulst & Yanow (2016), there is a connection between the analytical approach of frame analysis and reflective practice. As mentioned in the introduction, this thesis intends to contribute to reflective practice.

2.3.1. Frame Theory

Frame theory originates from the writings of Bateson (1973) and Mead (1934). The researchers focused on the creation of meaning through social interaction. In particular, van Hulst and Yanow (2016) illustrate how Bateson's (1955/1972) work on meta-communication among monkeys influenced the tradition of frame theory. Based on these writings, Goffman (1974) introduced the term "frame" as a conceptualization of meaning-making processes through social interaction. The early works on frames and frame theory highlight a social constructivist nature of the discipline. This is evident since frame theory acknowledges that the creation of frames (= framing) on an issue is shaped by actors' experiences and background, and therefore, there exists various meaning-making processes (van Hulst & Yanow, 2016). Consequently, actors can create different frames on the same issue, which results in heterogeneous understandings of a situation (van Hulst & Yanow, 2016). This is at the core of the analytical approach in this thesis: it is of importance to probe for different embedded ideas regarding the identity of the facilitator.

In general, the social constructivist background is underlined in the writings by Entman (1991, p. 7), who describes a frames' function as "providing, repeating, and thereby reinforcing words and visual images that reference some ideas but not others, frames work to make some ideas more salient in the text, other less so – and others entirely invisible". In brief, "framing essentially involves selection and salience" (Entman, 1993, p. 52). By making something "salient", certain ideas are highlighted and described more meaning than others (Entman, 1993). Further, as van Hulst & Yanow (2016) note, "frames […] guide the ways situational participants perceive their social realities and (re)present these to themselves and to others; a frame reflects actors' organizing principles that structure those perceptions […]".

In conclusion, various practitioners construct different frames regarding their identity in a process, based on a particular situation, the practitioner's diverse backgrounds and experiences and the embedded ideas in a particular practice. Since this thesis is characterized by a social constructivist worldview with the aim of bringing different meanings of facilitators regarding their identity in the specific context of natural resource management processes to light, I argue that frame analysis is a suitable analytical framework for this study.

2.3.2. Frame Analysis

Within the discipline of frame analysis, scholars largely separate between two different functions of frames: the first one concerns a diagnosis of the situation which evaluates what is going on in a particular situation. The second function entails an action bias which responds to the diagnosed situation suggesting specific actions (e.g. Entman, 1993; Perri 6, 2005; van Hulst & Yanow, 2016; Westin, 2019). In the work of van Hulst & Yanow (2016, p. 98) the product of framing is "both a model of the world – reflecting prior sense-making – and a model for subsequent action in that world". In this thesis, the diagnosis of the situation encompasses the facilitator's understanding of a situation and the corresponding action bias refers to a certain direction derived from the diagnosis. Identifying salient components of the diagnosis of the situation and action bias allows the reconstruction of frames in my analysis.

In order to be able to reconstruct a frame, frame analysis focuses on what is made salient (e.g. Entman, 1991; 1993). Therefore, attention is paid to the specific language, selected words, and metaphors (Entman, 1993). For this purpose, Entman (1991, p. 7) asserts that "frames can be detected probing for particular words and visual images that consistently appear in a narrative and convey thematically consonant meanings across media and time". Further, it is noted by van Hulst & Yanow (2016, p. 96) that "actors draw on language that reflects their understanding" and filters what is important to be named and hence, what can be left out. Therefore, in the analysis I pay attention to language usage such as metaphors, recurring themes as well as keywords to identify what is made salient in a frame.

In this thesis, I applied a frame analysis approach based on the work of van Hulst & Yanow (2016). The scholars established an analytical framework for analysing framing processes in dynamic policy settings and have illustrated that frame theory is an appropriate analytical tool to study dynamic processes characterized by a diversity of involved actors. I claim that this applies not only to policy-making processes, but is also suitable for studying facilitation practice. In my study, I do not focus on the act of framing, but seek to reconstruct the embedded identity frames within facilitation practice. Further, I follow the suggestion from van Hulst & Yanow (2016, p. 105), who state that the application of frame analysis in

"environmental dispute resolution settings in which scholars want to engage power-sensitive analyses and dynamic processes" is suitable.

According to van Hulst & Yanow (2016, p. 102), framing is concerned with three kinds of topics: "the substantive content […], the identities and relationships of situational actors […], and the policy process itself". Since the aim of this study concerns facilitators' ideas regarding their identity in practice, the focal point of the applied analytical framework in this thesis is on the topic identities and relationships. In van Hulst & Yanow's (2016, p. 103) understanding, "identity […] [is] more than a surface layer that can be put on, taken off, or otherwise altered at will". With that said, I argue that this analytical framework is suitable for my objective as the framing process relates to "actors' senses of their own and other actors' identities and the relationships between or among them […]" (van Hulst & Yanow, 2016, p. 102). Focusing on the topic identity allows me to reconstruct facilitator's identity frames embedded in the practice of facilitation. Different to other traditions of frame analysis (e.g. social movement studies), wherein frames are seen as strategy devices, the frame analysis approach I apply acknowledges that actors might not be fully aware of how their actions are guided by underlying frames (Schön & Rein, 1994; van Hulst & Yanow, 2016; Westin, 2019). Therefore, I claim that this analytical framework fits this thesis since the analysis uncovers identity frames facilitators are usually not aware of when employing.

2.3.3. Applying Frame Analysis

Since this analytical frame approach recognizes that actors might not always be aware of utilized frames guiding their actions, the analysis requires going beyond what is being said (Westin, 2019). Accordingly, during the analysis I paid attention to the interviewee's identity construction in the context of facilitated processes. In the following, I will elaborate on the steps taken in the application of frame analysis in this thesis.

After the data generation and text production in form of a transcript (see Section 2.2), I approached the interview material with the identity topic in mind (van Hulst & Yanow, 2016). This being said, the first step was guided by a qualitative content analysis (cf. Schreier, 2012) and included two rounds of colour-coding. As Entman (1993, p. 57) notes, "content analysis informed by a theory of framing" is beneficial to "measure the salience of elements in the text" rather than analysing positive and negative articulations in a text as equally salient. During the first round of coding, I focused on relevant statements that concerned the identity of the facilitator. Material was considered meaningful regarding the identity topic when: i) the facilitator actively talked about his/her role, responsibility or tasks, ii) the facilitator positioned him-/herself within the process and/or in relation to the group or substance of the process, iii) the interviewee elaborated on values within the

practice, and iv) the practitioner shared stories about previous experiences. Afterwards, all highlighted material was added to one single document, and analysed by being attentive towards keywords, metaphors and language use. During the second round of coding, I paid attention to what kind of situation facilitators are diagnosing and how they construct the related action bias. Doing so, it appeared that key material for both categories is closely related to each other. To make sure that both categories are distinct from each other, I focused on underlying assumptions within the categories. Supplementary, I looked out for what has not been said regarding the facilitators' identity. In a next step, I summarized the preliminary findings and named the frames tentatively. This was followed by a presentation and discussion with my supervisor as well as fellow students. Finally, feedback was taken into account and the frame descriptions and titles have been finalized.

These steps have been repeated over several iterations until the findings were concluded. Therefore, I made use of the abductive logic of inquiry moving between interview material and theoretical frameworks within deliberative theory. With the help of this approach, I was able to reconstruct facilitators' identity frames in the practice of facilitation. The results will be presented in Chapter 3.

2.4. Theoretical Framework

Here, I will elaborate on the application of theory in this thesis. Therefore, both my theorizing approach and the theoretical framework "Following from the Front" by Moore (2012) will be introduced.

2.4.1. On Theorizing

For the theorizing part of this thesis, I followed the approach by Swedberg (2012). According to the author, "to theorize […] means essentially to produce an explanation of something you have observed" (Swedberg, 2012, p. 27). Therefore, "the point is to theorize one's own empirical work, not to use somebody else's ideas" (Swedberg, 2012, p. 2). Fundamentally, theorizing is an ongoing, iterative, and reflexive process which builds on observations and findings in the material rather than forcing the empirical material into an existing theory.

Hence, Swedberg (2012) suggests an approach with two stages to successfully theorize. The first stage characterizes the start of the research process, where theorizing builds on empirical material with the intention of exploration. The researcher observes and chooses something interesting, names and formulates the central concept, builds out the theory and completes the tentative theory, including the explanation (Swedberg, 2012, p. 10). The second stage encompasses drawing up and executing the research design and writing up the results (Swedberg, 2012,

p. 10). In this second stage, the findings from the theorizing act are put into relation with existing concepts. An end point of the theorizing process is characterized by providing an explanation to the detected phenomena. As this approach illustrates, theorizing is an essential practice from the beginning of the research.

For theorizing my findings, the concept "Following from the Front" was used as an inspiration and provided me with a prospect to focus on tensions within the practice of facilitation.

2.4.2. Deliberative Democracy: "Following from the Front"– Dilemma

This thesis draws on theoretical work in deliberative democracy. Within this field, Moore (2012) has done work which aligns with the interest of my thesis. He has theorized dilemmas and tensions which practitioners face within the practice of facilitation. The author theorizes the tensions in facilitation as the "Following from the Front"- Dilemma, which provided the inspiration for the title of this thesis. This theoretical framework fits the aim of this study as it: i) focuses on the person in the position of deliberation, namely the facilitator, and ii), presents practical dilemmas and tensions for facilitators in a process of deliberation.

Within the theoretical framework "Following from the front: theorizing deliberative facilitation", Alfred Moore (2012) explores the role of the facilitator in the setting of deliberative minipublics. The following quote summarizes the main component of the framework: "The central problem involved in "following from the front" is that organized deliberative practice seems to require the presence of actors who intervene to make the discourse happen, yet deliberative theory treats ideal deliberation in terms of the absence of coercion, repression and inequality." (Moore, 2012, p. 149). Hence, the author aims to identify pitfalls within deliberation which facilitators are challenged by. Therefore, Moore (2012) focuses on tensions within several areas of facilitation: "the framing of the publics, the handling of expertise, the conduct of deliberation, and the crucial phase of bringing a deliberation to a conclusion." (Moore, 2012, p. 146). The aim of this work is to make these pitfalls visible in order to contribute to reflective practice. In the scope of this thesis, I will focus mainly on the categories *conducting deliberation* and *handling expertise*. Furthermore, while Moore (2012) is focusing on deliberating processes with minipublics, I apply the concept in a broader context.

With *conducting deliberation* Moore (2012) refers to dilemmas and tensions which arise from the act of facilitating in a process. According to Moore (2012), deliberative facilitators actively shape the setting of the process with the intention to make the process inclusive and create a setting where voices of marginalized groups can be heard. A dilemma, then, arises as it is the facilitator's task to initiate dialogue but at the same time not directing it towards a certain goal or taking control over it. Further, as Moore (2012) points out, there are tensions between the ideals

of deliberation – such as legitimacy, rationality, consensus and equality – and the desires of facilitators to merely support a group reaching goals they set for themselves. The central tension of *conducting deliberation* encompasses facilitator's challenges to, on the one hand, guide the group towards a self-set goal, while, on the other hand, not taking control over the process by directing or dominating the dialogue.

The second area of tensions for facilitators is *handling expertise*. This term includes tensions that arise in two different areas: handling process related expertise and handling substantive expertise. The latter might create tensions because the facilitator often is the person providing information on the substance of the process. Moore (2012) includes in this informing process choosing relevant experts who inform the group and a selection of relevant material for the process. In that sense, the facilitator is the person deciding which perspective will be listened to and which will be left out. Tensions arise since the facilitator steps into a powerful position where s/he selects the relevant experts and readings.

Tensions regarding process related expertise arise from a professionalization of the facilitator. The tension here is that facilitators potentially pressure groups on behalf of the organizers of the public engagement process and therefore, use the process as a confirmation for their governance rather than taking public concerns into account. Therefore, citizens engagement processes "are nascent technologies for producing new kinds of truth to serve the purposes of government" (Moore, 2012, p. 153). In this regard, the facilitator is understood to be an expert in the field of participation and community.

2.5. Methodological Reflections

In this chapter, I will discuss the constraints of this thesis. Therefore, I will reflect upon the quality of empirical material, the frame analysis approach as well as how my own understanding and worldview influenced the study.

A delicate issue of the empirical material is the diversity of interviewees' engagement with facilitation. Even though all practitioners work in a field related to natural resource management, the study could have been improved by a more elaborate interviewee selection. This was not taken into consideration when setting up the interviews, since the initial purpose was not connected to this thesis. However, viewing the interviewee representation from a frame analysis perspective, the diversity of practitioners could be considered as a strength regarding the differing experiences and backgrounds they draw on. As the intention of an interpretive research design is "building contextually grounded knowledge" (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2011, p. 67), the number of conducted interviews allowed me to perform an in-depth analysis by focusing on the specific and contextuality, rather than generalizing.

Another reflection concerns the frame analysis approach. Since the analytical tool in this thesis is a frame rather than framing analysis, the focus is on embedded ideas regarding identity, instead of the creation of these frames. However, the identity of facilitators is intertwined with them personally and therefore, the personal and cultural background plays into the identity construction. Yet, in line with the social constructivist view that frames are created through social interaction, the presented frames can be considered as a representation of frames which are not created by the individual alone, but through interaction and engagement with the practice of facilitation. Therefore, I argue that the findings are a valid representation of identity frames, but do not aspire to have explained the complexities of identity construction in a particular situation.

A third constraint is the influence of my own worldview in the analysis. As Entman (1993, p. 53) noted, "because salience is a product of the interaction of texts and receivers", the researchers plays an important role since what is made salient is selected by the researcher, and consequently, guided by the researcher's own belief system. Therefore, a constant reflection upon why something was depicted salient and what it means is essential. Especially as this thesis identifies tensions and dilemmas regarding facilitator's identities, my own worldview and understanding of what is considered as strained influenced the analysis. For this reason, I continuously critically reviewed my own beliefs, values and norms and discussed with fellow students. In addition, in order to decrease the influence of my own worldview and enhance the validity of my findings, I used an established framework to guide my analysis and made sure to relate my results and interpretations to other scholars' work in the field of deliberative democracy.

3. Results – Identity Frames

The frame analysis revealed four identity frames facilitators draw on when facilitating: the *equality* frame, *authority* frame, *expert* frame and *neutrality* frame. In the following Sections, I will explain how the analysis led to this result by discussing their diagnosis of the situation and corresponding action bias.

3.1. Equality Frame

The first uncovered identity frame is the *equality* frame. The diagnosis of this frame consists of an equality of all human beings, and therefore, the practitioner sees him-/herself as part of the group. Practitioners drawing on this frame diagnose an equal treatment of all participants, regardless of their professional or personal background. Based on this diagnosis, the facilitator aims to create a safe space where every participant can feel comfortable to be who they are, as well as feeling comfortable to contribute to the process. In doing so, a feeling of unity among the involved actors ought to be fostered by the facilitator.

The diagnosis includes the view that all humans are equal. This is for example illustrated when one interviewee talks about how ground rules are generated as well as how they are applied. Interviewee 1 emphasises that s/he "will create the ground rules with the flip chart with the group", and that rules apply to everyone, including the facilitator: "And I'll say this is what I'm asking of myself and of all of you". Here it is made clear that there are no special rules existing for any group member. The same rules apply to everyone since everyone is equal. Throughout the process, the facilitator ought to make sure that participants stick to the agreed ground rules. This implies a potential tension between equality and the special role of the facilitator.

In addition, facilitators drawing on the *equality* frame emphasise equal treatment, no matter what background participants have, and which interests they bring into the process. The practitioners underline the importance of treating everyone the same and not judge participants according to their interests in the facilitated issue. In this regard, the facilitator acknowledges that everyone has the right to bring their interests and that the facilitator should not have any bias against them, no matter what the opinion of the facilitator is towards the issue of facilitation:

> And, of course I don't want them to rip up the land and ruin everything, of course I don't. But in that setting, I have no bias against them, there is a person sitting there representing the company who needs to make a living, needs to do his or her job well, needs to make a deal with

this group in the room as best as they can. And I feel that way about everybody around the table. So, they're hard-working, committed human beings. (Interviewee 1)

Consequently, the facilitator's interest regarding the facilitated issue is not relevant, but the interest in the communication and relationship- and trust-building among the participants, including the position of the facilitator. This also emphasises the importance of a safe space, as the facilitator is stressing the fact that s/he has no bias against anyone "in that setting".

Founded on this diagnosis, the corresponding action bias suggests several activities. First, as previously mentioned, creating a safe space is a key part of the process so that participants can feel comfortable and safe to be who they are. For practitioners drawing on this frame, feeling safe in a process in order to fully be oneself is seen as essential since only then an equality of all involved participants is ensured. According to the interviewees, this space has to be created in the beginning of a process and is characterized by inclusiveness. Therefore, practitioner 1 stresses the importance of unifying and including the group rather than dividing:

> You know, so sort of pre-empting that kind of anger by continuing the tribal spirit of inclusiveness and honouring and respecting everybody in the room rather than dividing and separating out, and these are the people with something worth talking about and these other people don't have something to be talked about tonight. […] instead of dividing, including. (Interviewee 1)

Even though the interviewee highlights that it is the facilitator's task to create a safe space, it is an activity which is performed by the whole group together. To emphasise this, the practitioner gives an example of a facilitated process with indigenous people. In this case, the process was opened up with a prayer from the local indigenous group. Even though not all participants belonged to this group, the facilitator perceives this as an entry into the process that unified the group as the prayer gives the participants a feeling of belonging together as well as a feeling of sharing:

> I did that by asking people in the beginning, telling them how I feel about respect, and the importance of listening to each other. And I'm here to make this a safe space for us to say what we need to say and that kind of things. (Interviewee 1)

> It's unifying and speaking for everybody. (Interviewee 1)

In addition, the feeling of belonging, unity and being who you are does not only apply to the participants of the group, but also to the facilitator. This is made salient by interviewee 1 when emphasising that taking on the role of the facilitator should embrace one's own identity and should not be a mask a person takes on:

> I think that's important for facilitation that you know that this is who you are […]. I would worry about you as a facilitator if it wasn't who you really were, I think it's important to know yourself really well and know if this is the position you want to be in and if you really care about doing this work help people communicate with each other. (Interviewee 1)

To continue, as the frame's diagnosis revealed an equal treatment of every actor in the process, the action bias of the *equality* frame suggests a fair and open discussion in which every participant is open towards other actors' opinions, ideas and thoughts. Therefore, no judgement, both from participants and the facilitator, is appreciated in a conversation since every idea is valid. Practitioners drawing on this frame also highlight that they value a good intention with which people enter the process:

> Because in the beginning, we always ask people to be there in good faith. In good faith means you're open, your're open to whatever you hear. (Interviewee 1)

This stresses the practitioner's understanding of equality among all involved actors, as s/he is asking for the participants' openness towards all shared thoughts and opinions.

As a final remark, facilitators applying the *equality* frame perceive themselves as part of the group and consider equality of all parties as essential. Based on this, the facilitator aims to create a process which allows the participants to fully be themselves and embrace the sameness of all involved actors.

3.2. Authority Frame

The *authority* frame represents another identity frame which was reconstructed from the interviews. The frame diagnoses that there are times when the facilitator has to take an authority position, if the group is moving too far away from the facilitated topic or if the process requires an authoritative stance. According to this diagnosis, the action bias of the *authority* frame suggests a stepping up of the facilitator and leading the group towards a certain direction. In order to do so, the practitioner takes control over the group and therefore, steps up into an authority position.

The diagnosis of the situation consists of situations when discussions of the group are moving away from the facilitated issue, as well as other situations that require the facilitator taking an authority position and representing this position in front of the group. Within this frame, facilitators perceive themselves in a position where they have to be "very firm" (Interviewee 5) and "to deal with some kind of message upfront" (Interviewee 1). This requires a stepping up of the facilitator, for example when it comes to sticking to the ground rules:

You're keeping order. So, a facilitator keep order in a [as] compassionate way as possible, based on an agreement that we all made in the beginning, how we wanted to be treated, and if I can just come back to that, people will remember that and know that they're going to be treated fairly. (Interviewee 1)

Further, one practitioner stresses that as a facilitator you need to be able to stand in front of the group and communicate about your intentions of this process. This includes having authority to decide on the agenda of the process. Interviewee 1 mentions an example which makes this view salient. The context of this case is a facilitated process where an angry public was involved. The participants wanted to talk about things which were beyond the agenda for that particular meeting. The facilitator, then, made use of his/her authority by honouring and acknowledging these emotions and views, but reminding the group of the meeting's agenda and shifting the focus back to the facilitated issue:

I was in a bit of quandary when I saw […] a question written that had nothing to do with the settlement [issue of the meeting]. So it had to do with something else. And so I was just honest with the audience, and I said 'I have here cards that do not relate to what we're here to talk about tonight. And I did make it clear, when I first introduced myself to everybody that we would be talking about this particular settlement. And that was what was on our agenda. However, […] I think it's really important to honour the fact that you have come to this meeting, and that you have something that you care about and want to hear about. […] I want to honour you by reading every card.' (Interviewee 1)

In response to this diagnosis, the action bias indicates a positioning into an authority role. The practitioners mention that it is important to check in with the group throughout the process and stay attentive to how the participants are doing. One interviewee mentions an example of a process where s/he invited participants to talk to the facilitator individually, in order for them to open up to the facilitator. By doing this, the practitioner sees him-/herself in an authority position by asking the participants to share thoughts about the process with him/her personally. In this regard, the facilitator aims to know what is going on behind the scenes, and therefore, holds an authority position. This is seen as important for the facilitator to be able to keep an overarching view on the process:

[…] I invited the group 'if anyone here needs to talk to me privately and confidentially about what's going on, I'm happy to do that. If you need to bounce things off of me or [you are] concerned about something or things aren't going right, please come and tell me.' I would say that frequently. (Interviewee 1)

Further, it is made salient that the facilitator enters the process with a certain authority. This authority is represented by being in the role of helping the participants in the process to talk to each other and make the dialogue productive, and therefore, leading the group. This is evident as practitioner 1 views his/her "role

as helping people in the room, communicate with each other in a respectful, clear, honest, productive way". Further, the practitioners recognize that "I might have to intervene more, I might have to be more active in enforcing some kind of ground rules" (Interviewee 1) during the process. By having the authority to intervene in the discussion, the facilitator is in the position of directing the dialogue.

However, taking control over the group does not only imply guiding the group and discussion, but also actively giving control to the group itself: "And that it's really important to give power to the group itself, that they really came up with the answer. I was not going to be able to force it out of them" (Interviewee 1). In addition, interviewee 4 says that "a good facilitator will help a group take control themselves". This demonstrates the authority and power of the facilitator to hand power over to the group, and hence, take a step back from the authority position. Yet, in order for the facilitator being able to hand power to the group, the practitioner needs to hold an authority position. At the same time, the practitioner's authority allows him/her to take this control away from the group. The practitioners further underline the thin ice facilitators are walking on during a process, when to switch between being in control and giving control to the group. Besides emphasising this difficult task, one interviewee also considers the successful handling of this task as a key part of making a meeting work. One practitioner takes it even further by saying that with the aim of having a constructive meeting, the facilitator should not be in control all the time:

> It isn't always in our control or shouldn't always be in our control as a facilitator. I think a lot of times we're hired to be in control, take care of the situation, keep these people quiet, make this meeting work, but making this meeting work isn't necessarily always being in control. It's a very delicate thing. (Interviewee 1)

Finally, practitioners drawing on the *authority* frame value equal participation opportunities among participants in the process. This is made salient when interviewee 1 talks about balancing power differences among participants:

> Those people are paid to be there, they have all kinds of power. They have the power that comes from having money, from being fluent in English, from having a law degree, from being white. All of that brings automatic power to the table. And I want to be sure that those that aren't sharing in those same powers in those same attributes, that they are equally powerful at the table. (Interviewee 1)

Here, the facilitator makes use of his/her authority in order to level out power asymmetries and provide each actor with an equal amount of power to participate in the dialogue. Additionally, facilitators applying the *authority* frame aim for "giving space to people who otherwise won't be heard" (Interviewee 4), and thereby using their position to give this voice to those who are usually not heard.

In conclusion, while the *equality* frame suggests a placing of the facilitator within the group, the *authority* frame brings forward a different identification in relation to the group, which is an "out-of-the-group" placing. Furthermore, both frames suggest an equal view of all involved actors. However, while the *equality* frame proposes an equal treatment of everybody in the process, regardless of their background, the *authority* frame draws on the idea that differences among participants should be levelled out by the facilitator by providing more support to less powerful actors.

3.3. Expert Frame

Another identity frame uncovered from the interviews is the *expert* frame. This frame diagnoses a situation which is characterized by the need of a leader of a facilitated group. The *expert* frame suggests that this role is taken by the facilitator, and consequently, the facilitator positions him-/herself outside the group. Within this idea, the facilitator is portrayed as an expert regarding process related knowledge. The corresponding action bias of this frame proposes a stepping back of the facilitator to keep an overview of the group and process. Furthermore, the facilitator leads the group through the process by deciding on specific exercises to be performed.

According to this frame's diagnosis, there is a need for leadership in a facilitated process. This position is necessary during facilitation as there is a demand for a person the group can rely on. Further, the frame reveals that this position is taken by the facilitator. The activity of leading the group is expressed by interviewee 2 as guiding the group without intervening too much in the discussion:

> As a facilitator, you're also a leader, you're also […] leading the group without actually participating, but you're sort of the person that they can lean on. (Interviewee 2)

Within this position, the practitioner takes on the task of guiding and leading the group through a process. This does not include the overarching agenda setting, but contains choosing relevant exercises and tools during the process that bring the group closer to a set goal. The frame reconstructs the identity of the facilitator as being an expert regarding the process of facilitation.

The need for a leader in a process who has an overview over what is going on is furthermore necessary as the participants often bring a diversity of opinions to the meeting. This diversity can lead to a polarization of opinions. In such situations, it is essential to provide the group with tools in order for them to have democratic dialogues:

> You have polarization and if you have polarization and you have a lot of people thinking different thoughts, you need to think about the democratic ways of expressing yourself. (Interviewee 2)

Here, it is evident that it is the practitioners' task to support the members of the process by presenting different tools and exercises which help them have a dialogue in a democratic way. Consequently, the facilitator is here considered as an expert regarding the knowledge of certain tools and exercises that enable democratic conversations.

The *expert* frame diagnoses further that the facilitator as the group leader has the task of reading the group and "having to respond not with what you think necessarily, but with what they need, and how do you meet those needs" (Interviewee 3). This illustrates the expertise of the practitioner since s/he is supposed to know what is best for the group in a particular situation. Furthermore, the facilitator draws on the idea that s/he holds expertise regarding facilitation to such a degree that s/he is able to identify mechanisms how the group works well together and accordingly, chooses tools and exercises which support the group in their solution-finding and learning process:

> And facilitation to me is to accelerate learning. It's to really find these mechanisms, be aware of them and to use tools that facilitate learning. […] Then I have to know how can I help them scaffold? […] How can I help them come to this conclusion? (Interviewee 2)

Being able to identify these mechanisms and adapt exercises to that, the *expert* frame suggests that the practitioner is an expert in the field of facilitation. Holding expertise regarding the practice allows the facilitator further to identify "wrong types of decision[s]" and contribute to the process by providing help to consider "the right things at the right time from the right perspective" (Interviewee 5).

Based on the previously described diagnosis, the facilitator's action bias indicates a variety of actions. Being a leader and expert in the field of facilitation is emphasised when interviewee 2 talks about facing challenges in a process. The practitioner considers tackling difficulties as the task of the facilitator. As a consequence, the practitioner approaches problems in the process by taking a step back in order to reflect about the situation:

> But I took a step back, I sat down by myself and I started thinking and reflecting and in this thinking and reflecting came the solution". (Interviewee 2)

This statement also stresses the outside-the-group identification of the facilitator, as solution-seeking concerning process related problems is not defined as a task of the group together with the facilitator, but a responsibility of the facilitator.

Taking a step back from the group and reflecting upon the process is also part of keeping the overarching process in mind. According to the *expert* frame, the

facilitator leads the group by having the bigger picture in mind. Therefore, it is not necessary to contribute to the discussion with content regarding the facilitated issue, but rather to "be able to read between the lines so that you know what questions you need to ask to get deeper into the dialogues" (Interviewee 2). This includes making use of the position as a facilitator to make sure that the group is moving forward with a dialogue and not getting stuck in details of the issue:

> You're supposed to be a catalyst, you're not supposed to take place. But I still want to help them in the conversation, so they don't get stuck because that's really common. (Interviewee 2)

In this regard, the facilitator makes use of his/her expertise regarding the practice to guide the dialogue in a certain direction. Practitioner 2 talks here about being a "catalyst" and hence, using the position of the facilitator to contribute to the discussion in a way that the group can discuss the issue on an advanced level. In addition, "be[ing] kind of a catalyst" contributes not only to a deeper level of discussion, but the facilitator is moreover "pushing them, helping them to sharpen their focus" (Interviewee 5). Drawing on the expertise of the facilitator, s/he can help the group to communicate beyond a shallow level:

> Because mostly I have this really shallow discussion and people are talking past each other. And then you need to be there and be this facilitator of the dialogue and help the people in sort of a mediation. (Interviewee 2)

However, as it is emphasised in the statement above, it is important to take this action as a facilitator without taking over the conversation.

To continue, facilitators utilizing this frame pick suitable exercise and tools in a particular situation. According to practitioner 2, facilitators try out different exercises and tools when facilitating and therefore, "evaluate every exercise when working with it". This evaluation leads the practitioner to develop his/her "own toolbox with exercises that you need" (Interviewee 2). Based on these evaluations, the facilitator has more knowledge about process relevant tools and exercises that help move the discussed issue forward. Having a comprehensive repertoire of tested tools and exercises is essential for the facilitator since s/he is the person who decides what is needed by the group in a process. Thus, the practitioner chooses tailored exercises and tools which help the group moving forward:

> And I mean, every group is different. […] You get the same results when you use the same exercise, but at the same time, sometimes I stand there before lunch and I'm thinking 'But this group, they need maybe a different exercise than I have planned.' (Interviewee 2)

Finally, the reconstruction of the *expert* frame suggests an identification of the facilitator as leader and expert. However, it is important to mention that the expert

knowledge concerns process related expertise and not expertise in the substantial issue.

3.4. Neutrality Frame

The last identity frame which was reconstructed from the interviews with practitioners is the *neutrality* frame. This frame diagnoses a situation in which a neutral third party is needed to facilitate a process with several parties. Moreover, an impartial facilitator is required since the involved actors are locked up in the substance of the process. As a consequence, the practitioner is responsible for the processual set up, but not for providing the group with issue related information. Building on this diagnosis, the frame's action bias suggests the facilitator to enable a process where different participant groups can talk with each other and make progress on the facilitated issue. Therefore, the facilitator aims to create an environment which allows participants to freely talk about their concerns and ideas and therefore, to focus on the substance of the process. As soon as the involved actors start having a conversation and making progress, the facilitator steps back and only intervenes if necessary. Consequently, the frame suggests an identity of the practitioner which is supposed to enable a process through his/her neutral facilitation.

The frame's diagnosis constructs a situation where the facilitator considers him-/herself as best help for the group by being a neutral third party: "I can do my best work as a neutral third party, and therefore, I cannot advocate for something" (Interviewee 3). The group needs such a person since the members of the process are too engaged with the substance of the process and therefore, are advocates for one side in the process. Additionally, compared to other forms of group management, interviewee 4 views the facilitator as "much more impartial". The importance of the neutrality of the facilitator is made salient when interviewee 3 talks about an exceptional situation, where s/he went from representing a party to facilitating:

> So I ended up being the third facilitator, a kind of an unusual one, and that's a really unusual situation, you normally do not go from representing somebody to facilitating. (Interviewee 3)

Being a neutral third party is important since it provides the facilitator with "this rare view into everyone's world" (Interviewee 3).

Further, the frame suggests that the facilitator is responsible for setting up the process. This includes establishing conditions which help the involved actors to figure out their own needs in order to have discussions and negotiations about the core substance of the process. This is made salient in the interviews when the practitioners talk about the facilitator's focus on the process: "But what I'm really

handling as the facilitator […] is the people who's in the room, and the process […]." (Interviewee 3) and "I'm responsible for the process, I'm not responsible for the answer anybody comes up with" (Interviewee 1). Contrary to the *expert* frame, facilitators drawing on this frame do not perceive themselves as experts in the field, but rather as neutral enablers of the process. Creating conditions which allow participants to have a conversation requires efforts from the facilitator to support the group in finding out what they want and what potential solutions there are. This is evident as one interviewee mentions:

> And the job, my job is to set it up so that people can for example, brainstorm their ideas and then go back and evaluate them. (Interviewee 3)

Noticeable here is that it is emphasised that the involved actors focus on the progress and achievements regarding the substance. The facilitator, on the other hand, sets his/her priority on enabling a constructive development of the process. Hence, while the participants are occupied with the substance of the process, the practitioner sets up the structure of the process:

> […] it's not my reframing that matters, it's theirs. And I'm just helping them get there, again, by handling the people and the process so they can deal with the substance and what they want to approach. (Interviewee 3)

Additionally, the position of the unbiased facilitator who is setting up the process and providing opportunities to discuss was described by one practitioner as "a motherly approach, that kind of mother that lets her kid grow" (Interviewee 5).

To continue, the frame's action bias suggests a variety of actions in order to set up the conditions for the process. One interviewee uses the expression "playing chess on five levels" (Interviewee 3) as a metaphor for the practice of facilitating. This metaphor represents the different tasks a facilitator performs to set up a process that allows parties to communicate, negotiate and work together. Practitioner 3 gives an example of two challenges that the facilitator has to address. First, people do not know what they want, and second, the participants are afraid of making an impression of not being capable to deal with the substance of the process. In response to these challenges, the *neutrality* frame suggests support from an outside third party to overcome these challenges by asking questions and therefore, preventing actors from being discredited. One practitioner describes the kind of help s/he is providing with the following words:

> I'm helping you to figure out what the answer is, I'm not going to tell you what the answer is, and I'm not going to tell you what I think. I'm going to ask a lot of questions. I'm going to help you figure out what you might want and what the other set of participants might want. But I'm not gonna tell you that's a good answer or a good outcome or not. (Interviewee 3)

Moreover, as this statement illustrates, the frame suggests a reserved position of the facilitator, as it is the group who is supposed to figure out solutions. The facilitator is supporting this process by "asking stupid questions" that "nobody else there could" (Interviewee 3) in order to clarify matters regarding the substance of the process. The frame further proposes that this is the task of an unbiased facilitator since s/he cares about the process and the involved people, and consequently, wants to help people by creating an environment where they do not get into a situation of losing their face. Being a neutral third party allows the facilitator to perform this task, which positions the practitioner differently compared to the *equality* frame where the group together creates a safe space. In this regard, the frame highlights an identity of the facilitator which protects involved actors in the process. Hence, creating a safe environment ought to allow people to freely express their values and needs, but at the same time not losing their faces. The safe space created in the *equality* frame, however, aims to achieve and overall acceptance of involved actors for who they are and what they bring to the table.

Apart from this, the frame's action bias proposes the generation of circumstances in which people can get to know each other better. This is essential for the process since it helps the involved actors to better understand each other's concerns and therefore, create a foundation for working together:

> So as a facilitator, you're also looking for - once you have people in the room – how do you set up opportunities for conversations where people learn they're not so different. (Interviewee 3)

The frame further suggests a stepping back of the facilitator once the parties start to communicate with each other and make progress on the substance. As interviewee 3 puts it:

> Because the second a group of people starts talking with each other, you kind of fade out. […] Okay, my job is done. Or I can weigh in as I need to. But I'm not the one having to drive it, they are driving it now. It's not about me, it's about them. (Interviwee 3)

This implies that the practitioner is taking an enabling position in the beginning of the process. For this purpose, the facilitator steps in to create an environment in which participants are protected and can communicate and work with each other. Once the process is set and the parties start to make progress, the practitioner reduces his/her involvement and only intervenes if further enabling of the substance's development is needed.

Finally, the *neutrality* frame suggests an identity of the facilitator which is enabling involved actors in a process to move forward on the issue at hand. This identification contains similarities with the *authority* and *expert* frame in a way, that the facilitator holds an identity which is distinct from the group. However, the frame also distinguishes itself from the previous frames, since this idea creates an

identity which enables rather than leads the process of facilitation. Furthermore, facilitators drawing on this frame do not reconstruct an identity of being an expert in the field of facilitation, but rather apply the idea of being the one enabling the process.

4. Discussing Facilitator's Dilemmas

The aim of this thesis is to provide insights into the lifeworld of facilitators and accordingly, contribute to the practice of facilitation by identifying practical dilemmas that are not fully explored in practice and research. Regarding the first research question focusing on facilitator's identity construction in a natural resource management context, the conducted frame analysis on interviews with practitioners revealed in total four different identity frames: the *equality* frame, *authority* frame, *expert* frame and *neutrality* frame. Facilitators draw on these frames in order to construct their identity based on the given situation. The second research question concerning the identification of practical dilemmas facilitators face as well as the third research question, how these can be theorized in the context of deliberative theory will be answered in this chapter.

For this purpose, I will elaborate on tensions among the detected *equality* frame, *authority* frame, *expert* frame and *neutrality* frame. In doing so, each finding will be described in detail and afterwards discussed in the context of previous research. Finally, I will theorize my findings by relating to and extending the theoretical framework "Following from the Front" by Moore (2012).

4.1. The Diversity of Facilitator's Identities

The frame analysis conducted on interviews with practitioners revealed that there is no standardized role for facilitators. Rather, the analysis revealed that there are several identity frames available: the *equality* frame, *authority* frame, *expert* frame and *neutrality* frame. Practitioners, then, draw on these frames in different kind of situations and accordingly, construct their identities. The individual application of frames differentiates each facilitator from another. Consequently, there exists no standardized role of a facilitator. This disaccords with previous research, as handbooks and literature on facilitation often handle the facilitator as a uniform role and thus neglect differences among the persons facilitating (e.g. Innes & Booher, 1999; Chilvers, 2008; Escobar, 2011).

To continue, literature on deliberation and facilitation establishes the picture of an ideal facilitator including his/her tasks and responsibilities in the context of a process. However, as Mansbridge et al. (2006) have shown, a discrepancy occurs between theoretical ideals on deliberation and facilitation and how these processes occur in practice. Further, the authors of this study acknowledge differences in the results that are based on practitioners' ideas, experiences, and knowledge. Consequently, Mansbridge et al. (2006) recognize that there is no universal facilitator. The findings of this thesis support this discussion as they show that in

practice there is no standardized position for facilitators. Additionally, the findings provide a new perspective on the practice of facilitation, as they highlight the so far neglected influence of facilitators' embedded ideas regarding their identity in a process. These ideas are essential since embedded ideas about who practitioners believe they are in a process deeply influence their actions in the practice.

The diversity in available identity frames furthermore reveals a potential for tensions facilitators are faced with since the frames differ from each other in their underlying ideas. As practitioners do not only draw on one embedded idea about their identity in a process, facilitators apply several identity frames depending on what kind of situation they face. Tensions arise when there is a misfit of a particular identity frame and a situation. The following two Sections will provide insights into tensions within the switching of frames as well as dilemmas concerning constructed identities.

4.2. The Facilitator's Authority

The second finding based on the frame analysis revealed a dilemma for facilitators drawing on the *equality* frame. More precise, there is a misfit between the *equality* frame and situations in a process which require the facilitator stepping into an authority position and consequently, marks the need for an *authority* frame. While the *equality* frame positions the facilitator within the group, the *authority* frame identifies the practitioner as an outsider to the group. The different positionings lead to two dilemmas for the facilitator: one, as people bring different attributes and powers to the table and the facilitator perceives everyone as equal, s/he steps into an authority position giving more support to less powerful people. Second, while practitioners employing the *equality* frame construct a situation where the group should be in control of the process, at the same time the facilitator neglects his/her authority position since it is up to him/her to give and in that sense also take control to or from the group.

To elaborate on the first, tensions arise with the fundamental idea that all involved actors are equal. By contrast, practitioners employing the *authority* frame illustrate that there is a diversity among the participants of a process and that diverse actors bring different attributes such as different kinds of power to the table. Therefore, in order for facilitators drawing on the *equality* frame to achieve this underlying idea of equality among all participants, in certain situations the practitioner has to employ the *authority* frame with the intention of levelling differences out. Consequently, there is a tension emerging from the *equality* frame since there are situations which require the facilitator to utilize the *authority* frame in order to achieve the underlying ideas of the *equality* frame. In practice, this means that the facilitator uses his/her authority to give more support to the less powerful participants at the table, since they do not share an equality regarding

power. In doing so, equal opportunities to participate in the process are ensured. The following quote from Interviewee 1 illustrates the tension for the facilitator:

> That takes really going outside of a certain norm of simply facilitating, treating everybody equally. I'm happy to treat everybody equally as long as they come with equal power to the table. If they don't, we got a problem because we're treating everybody equally […]. (Interviewee 1)

This being said, there is a tension for the facilitator as s/he perceives him-/herself as part of the group, but on the other hand, steps out of the group in order to achieve his/her ideals of equality and equal participation by using his/her authority.

This finding relates to previous results in literature on facilitation and deliberation. The need for levelling out differences among participants is evident in Smith (2009, p. 169) as, "effective facilitation is crucial if distinctions between citizens are not to have a material effect on the equality of voice". In addition, Mansbridge et al. (2006, p. 2) identified "inequalities as a multifaceted obstacle to deliberation". This compensation of power asymmetries requires the facilitator to step into an authority position in order to be able to even differences out. Further, the finding supports the by Moore (2012) identified tensions regarding *conducting deliberation*. The process of conducting deliberation requires the practitioner to hold a balance between initiating dialogue without being too dominant during the discussion. However, levelling out differences among participants requires more intervention from the facilitator. For example, one interviewee mentions giving extra support to less powerful actors by "hir[ing] somebody to help you understand that report" (Interviewee 1). Here it is evident, that the tensions regarding deliberation not only concern the dialogue evolving in the process, but also creating equal conditions for participants to participate in the conversation.

The second dilemma emerging from the *equality* frame concerns the practitioner's authority to give and take control to and from the group. As described in the result section, practitioners drawing on the *equality* frame perceive themselves as equal to the group, and therefore, the whole group – including the facilitator – are in control of the process. However, by applying the *authority* frame, this view is challenged in a way, that it makes tangible that the practitioner is the person holding the authority to both give and take control to and from the group, and further decide on when the group and the practitioner share control over the process. Consequently, the facilitator is in a position that s/he can decide when the group is supposed to take lead of the dialogue and therefore, owns the process. This leads to tensions regarding the identity of the facilitator, as on the one hand, s/he is part of the group and shares control equally with the group, and on the other, the practitioner steps out of the group in order to take and give control to or from the group and in that sense, exhibits ownership over the process.

This is also evident in the study of Mansbridge et al. (2006, p. 30), as they identified a connection between the "free flow" of ideas from participants and at the same time having a facilitator who "took no visible part". However, the participants of the analysed processes still held the facilitator accountable for the process. This illustrates the dilemma for the facilitator when viewing him-/herself as part of the group. Furthermore, as described above, the tension within *conducting deliberation* by Moore (2012) concerns the practitioner having ownership over the process to some degree, and in that sense, being in a position to take decisions upon process related matters. While it is acknowledged both in Moore's (2012) work and in the findings of the *equality* frame that making progress and letting the group take the lead over dialogue is essential in facilitation, at the same time the outcomes of this study reveal the need for an authority position from the facilitator in order to achieve progress on the issue. This leads to tensions for the facilitator as s/he faces the challenge of balancing between the stages of giving control to the group and taking control of the process.

4.3. The Facilitator's Expertise

Another dilemma emerges from the *expert* frame. The dilemma arises since the facilitator is seen as an expert and therefore, supposed to have a greater knowledge on facilitation and leading the process based on this knowledge. Tensions arise if the suggested process design by the facilitator does not align with the group's wants. Then, the facilitators' expertise collides with the necessity to take the group's knowledge as well as needs into account. The following quote emphasises the tension arising from facilitators' expert identity when facilitating, when one practitioner experienced that the group did not want to follow the proposal of the facilitator about how to approach a situation:

> And during this pause, I was sitting there, and I was like, 'Ah, this is not going the way I wanted it to. How do I convince them that my way is the right way?' (Interviewee 2)

Further, tying into the previous finding, being an expert on facilitation also proposes the practitioner to be the owner of the process since the practitioner has more expertise on process related issues.

This finding ties into the dilemma description *handling expertise* regarding process related knowledge established by Moore (2012). The author identifies a tension within the facilitator being an expert on deliberation and therefore, a risk to lead the group towards a certain goal. On the one hand, the practitioner constructs an identity of an expert which aligns with the group's needs as they actively seek for expertise on facilitation as they would not manage without a facilitator (Moore, 2012). On the other hand, as the inductive study by Mansbridge et al. (2006)

exemplifies, the group's satisfaction on the process is highly essential. Therefore, while the facilitator is expected to draw on his/her expertise, it is also essential for the process that s/he takes into account what the group wants. Consequently, the dilemma arises due to tensions between the necessity of expert knowledge in facilitation and the need to also take the group's knowledge and wishes into account, which is considered to be an essential part of successful deliberation (Mansbridge et al., 2006).

4.4. "Following from the Front": Theorizing Facilitator's Dilemmas

In this chapter, the findings of this thesis are theorized and discussed in relation to the theoretical framework "Following from the Front" (Moore, 2012). In doing so, the above identified tensions for practitioners support the Moore's (2012) claims, fill in missing information and offer new perspectives on the established categorizations of dilemmas practitioners face. Furthermore, while Moore (2012) bases his work on theoretical considerations within deliberative theory as well as drawing on other studies, this thesis is taking the theoretical framework further by theorizing the empirical findings.

4.4.1. Conducting Deliberation

To begin, the findings of the study support the claims of Moore (2012) within the category *conducting deliberation*. The analysis revealed that the detected identity frames sustain Moore's (2012) proposition of the delicate role of the facilitator. Especially the *neutrality* frame highlights the facilitator's sensitive position, as the practitioner is constantly evaluating the progress of the substance while at the same time being attentive to the group's needs. Additionally, the facilitator aims to take the group's desires into account and meet those needs with as little intervention as possible. This emphasises the challenge of keeping the balance between keeping the group moving forward on the substance of the process and at the same time not governing the discussions. In that sense, the results confirm Moore's (2012, p. 154) claim that there is a "central tension between necessarily directing the process (keeping it moving towards its goal) and the theoretical value of non-directiveness and non-domination by the facilitators".

Moreover, referring to the thesis results on the *conducting deliberation* dilemma, the findings reveal a more complex situation regarding the category. The results suggests an additional dilemma categorization for practitioners. As the discussion uncovered, there is a tension arising for facilitators employing the *equality* frame to level out unequal amounts of power among participants while treating everyone equally. Therefore, the facilitator makes use of his/her authority position in order

to be able to compensate those differences. This goes beyond merely structuring the deliberation since it requires an active involvement of the facilitator in order to compensate power asymmetries that are brought to the table due to differences among the participants. Therefore, I suggest that Moore's (2012) framework can be extended with an additional dilemma which concerns the levelling out of power differences among involved actors for equal participation.

4.4.2. Handling Expertise

Regarding the category *handling expertise*, the results of my study nuance and problematize the original ideas of Moore (2012). First, my findings make it possible to nuance Moore's (2012) concerns about facilitation becoming too professionalized. Moore (2012, p. 153) outlines the tension of the facilitator taking an expert role on facilitation as "some critics worry about the professionalization of facilitation". However, while the author claims that the instrumentalization of facilitation and deliberation can lead to tensions for the facilitator by extracting public opinion and feeding it into the political system, he provides no insights into what these tensions entail for the facilitator. Meanwhile, the results of this study add a valuable insight. Besides directing attention on political processes outside of facilitation practice, it is revealing to draw attention to what happens inside the facilitated process. While the constructed expert identity from the practitioner fits the group's needs for an expert on facilitation, a dilemma arises for the facilitator, when s/he perceives him-/herself as holding expertise in what the particular group needs in a process. In doing so, the facilitator might not take into account the group's knowledge and demands and positions him-/herself above the group. By deciding above the group's head, the group's desires might not be considered by the "professionalized" facilitator. That could lead to a lower group satisfaction with the process. Consequently, the findings of this thesis nuance the claim by Moore (2012) that a professionalization of the facilitator can lead to tensions in the process and further, creates a risk for the facilitator to lead the group towards a certain goal while ignoring a group's knowledge and wants. Hence, this thesis provides a different perspective on and empirical insight into the dilemma of *handling expertise*.

Additionally, my thesis problematizes Moore's (2012) original claims about the dilemma of *handling expertise*. Moore (2012) defines the dilemma related to the substance of the process in terms of selecting experts and relevant material and taking the role of presenting the issue. Contrary to those claims, all interviewees perceive themselves as not being responsible to present the substance of the issue, neither selecting relevant material or experts on the field. Even though practitioners employing the *expert* frame understand themselves as holding expertise on process related issues, all four reconstructed identity frames emphasise that it is not the facilitator's responsibility to cover the substance of the process. Especially

practitioners drawing on the *neutrality* frame highlight their non-involvement with the issue of the process. Consequently, my findings suggest that Moore's (2012) theoretical ideas might not correspond with the ideas of the interviewed facilitators.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, the conducted frame analysis on interviews with practitioners revealed in total four different identity frames: the *equality* frame, *authority* frame, *expert* frame and *neutrality* frame. Facilitators utilize these frames to construct their identity based on a diagnosed situation. Consequently, the role and identity of the facilitator cannot be standardized. Further, the study detected that facilitators face tensions arising from the *equality* frame concerning levelling out differences among participants of a process as well as being in an ownership position regarding the process. Moreover, a dilemma for the facilitator arises from the *expert* frame when s/he constructs an expert position and hence, neglecting the groups knowledge and desires. Finally, the thesis yields theorizations of the identified tensions and therefore, extends the theoretical framework "Following from the Front" by Moore (2012).

In summary, this thesis contributes on three different levels. The results add valuable insights into dilemmas and tensions facilitators face in the practice of facilitation and therefore, add to theoretical work in deliberative democracy. The findings especially enrich the theoretical concept "Following from the Front" by Moore (2012). Second, the conducted frame analysis based on van Hulst & Yanow's (2016) approach proofed to be a valuable analytical approach with the purpose of identifying facilitators embedded ideas regarding their identity in the context of a process. And third, this study contributes to the practice of facilitation by enabling reflective practice through the idenitifaction of usually unrecognized identity frames and tensions. Consequently, this study ties into previous research by underlining the importance of reflective practice (e.g. Escobar 2011; Westin, 2019).

Yet, the research rises questions how the different identity constructions influence the practice of facilitation. In addition, further issues of research concern a more in-depth investigation of the identified tensions for facilitators, and how these can be addressed with reflective practice and other tools. Given today's importance of community action and citizens engagement in order to tackle environmental and humanitarian challenges, I propose join efforts between research and practice to achieve transition towards a sustainable and thriving world.

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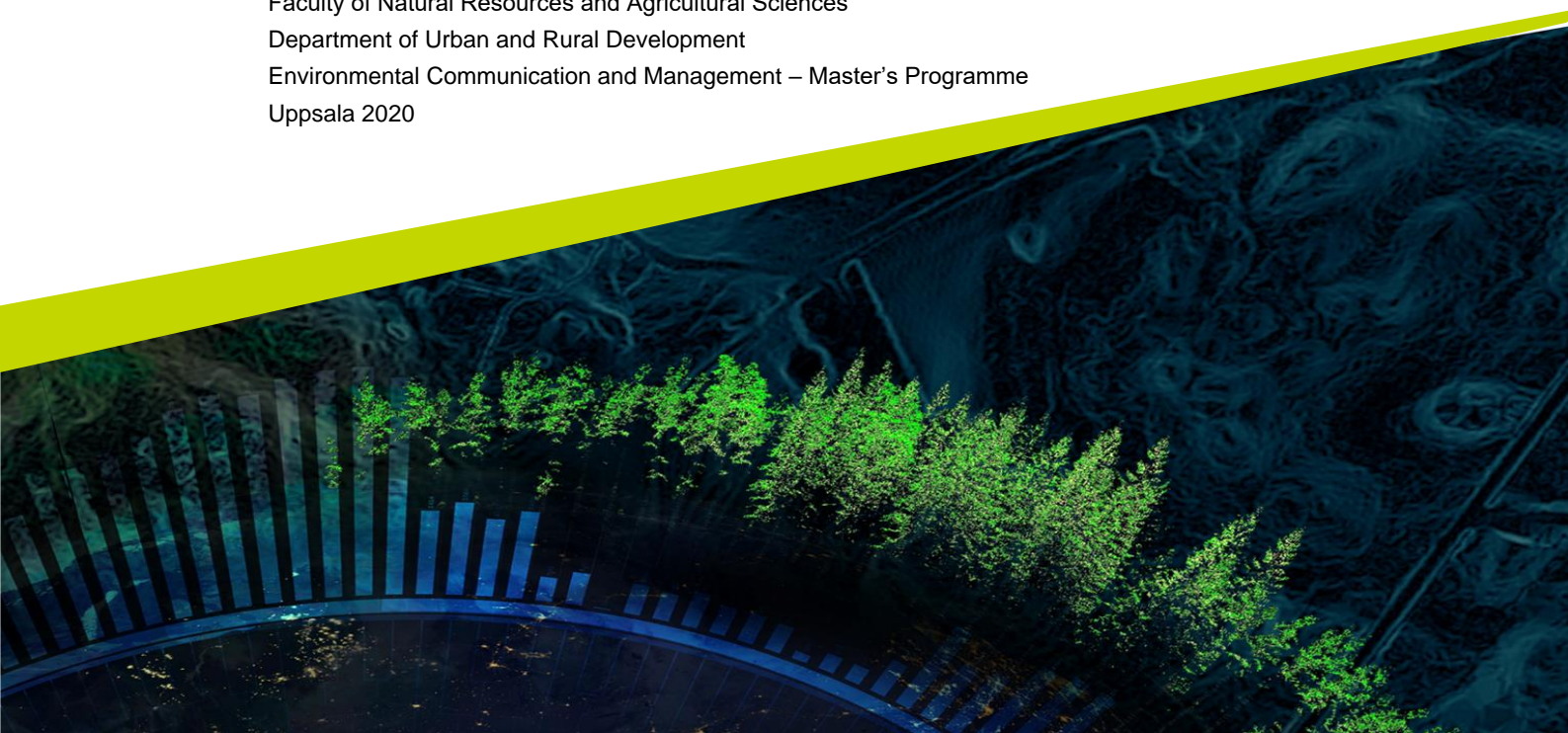
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Appendix 1 – Interview Guide

Part 1: Introduction
- Presenting the project, aim and design
- Information about the interview (documentation, length, ending of interview, presentation of results)
- Ethical concerns: confidentiality, anonymity

Do you have any questions before we start the interview?

Part 2: Personal Introduction
- For how long have you been working in the area of facilitation?
- Can you give me a brief overview of what it is you do in your work?
- What are the goals you most want to accomplish in your work?
- What do you value about facilitation?
- What was your motivation to become engaged in facilitation? / Did you have any life-changing experiences that put you on the path that led you to be doing what you are doing today?

Part 3: Stories and Experiences
- Can you tell me about an example when your work was successful?
    - What happened then? What did you/s/he do then?
- Can you share a story here there were some critical moments?
- How do you see your role in a facilitation process?
    - Can you tell me a moment when you felt that you are in this role?
- Which key skills would you say does a facilitator need?
- Are your goals of facilitation the same in every case or differing with every process?
- Have there ever been any surprises during a facilitation process that stayed in your memory?
- Do you believe that facilitation is something that everyone could learn?
- How do you handle situations when people get angry?
- How do you handle a situation when you feel like the process gets stuck?
- Follow-up questions:
    - Can you give me an example of that?
    - Can you describe that in more detail?

Part 4: Reflections and Lessons
- In all your experiences, what are lessons you learned that you would give me as advice?
- What would you say did you learn from people you worked with in those projects?
- What do you think you taught them?
- Looking back at some of your stories, and if you would go over the process again, would you do anything different?
- What are you looking forward to in the near future regarding your work with facilitation?
- What keeps you motivated to work with facilitation?

Part 5: At the End
- Thank you for your time and openness
- Would you like to add something?

Note: This is an example interview guideline. As mentioned in Section 2.2, each interview guideline has been adapted to each facilitator prior to the interview. Further, not every interview followed the here presented structure of questions, as interviewees brought up different things at different times of the interview. Yet, this design represents the general structure of the interview guideline and provides an overview of the asked questions.