Stakeholder participation to improve societal acceptance for mega projects

A case study of the forum for the coal-power plant “Datteln 4” project

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Anna Zakharova & Tassilo Jäger
Summary

The aim of this thesis is to evaluate how stakeholder participation should be implemented to improve societal acceptance for mega projects. Thereby societal acceptance is seen as a major contributor to project success in this context and involving society in decision-making and two-way dialogue is recognized as the most effective to achieve this. Based on this research area, a theoretical framework was proposed for the mega project context including prerequisite, process and outcome criteria for stakeholder participation.

In this sense, a critical realist ontology stance was assumed to develop the knowledge base and the research was carried out with a qualitative, deductive approach. The case of the coal-power plant “Datteln 4” project and its stakeholder participation forum were used as a unit of analysis for evaluating the proposed framework. From the case, data was collected from interviews with participants as well as forum documents and then analyzed using the template analysis. Based on this evidence, the proposed theoretical framework was adapted to a new case-based framework.

The research had three objectives at the outset which were fulfilled in the discussion of the data findings. For the first of these, it was shown that the general link of stakeholder participation and societal acceptance is applicable to the mega project context. A second major finding was that the theoretical framework proposed in literature is relevant, however only to a certain extent. Contextual challenges pertaining to mega projects such as the nature of conflict, long duration and stakeholder positions, however, require more attention to these criteria. Lastly, the necessary further developments for the new case-based framework were discussed including that for mega projects underlying issues of transparency, expectations, power and atmosphere must constantly be considered in stakeholder participation.

In conclusion, a stakeholder participation framework is presented that matches the context of mega projects and their need for societal acceptance. Therefore this thesis developed the theoretical knowledge on this underexplored area of project management, and for practitioners it offers criteria to consider during stakeholder participation in mega projects.

**Key words:** mega projects; stakeholder participation; societal acceptance; project success; involvement; forum; power plant projects; facilitation
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1 Introduction
This chapter aims to provide a brief introduction to the thesis. It does so by presenting a background on mega projects, societal acceptance and stakeholder participation, and also touching upon the case that served as the initial inspiration for the research focus of this thesis. This discussion is then formalized into the theoretical and practical relevance, by describing how the findings can potentially contribute to the mega project practice and also to the existent research gaps. The research objectives and the research question then follow. Finally, the thesis delimitations and outline are presented.

1.1 Background
Mega projects have been undertaken by mankind for many millennia leading to wonders that have fascinated the world as displays of human achievement. Such projects significantly differ from “normal” projects by their huge project size, enormous investment, long duration, technological complexity, significant number of stakeholders involved and a strong socio-economic impact (Chang, 2013, p.628; Giezen, 2012, p.782; Jergeas, 2008, p.96). Some well-known mega projects include, but are not limited to, the Pyramids of Giza, the Panama Channel or the Transcontinental Railroad in North America. Clearly, the outcomes of these special projects have changed the world we live in. Today there is an unwavering popularity among national governments and private companies to invest in mega projects (Giezen, 2012, p.783; van Marrewijk, 2007, p.290), like the construction of the new Istanbul international airport and the Three Gorges Dam, to name but a few. In particular, mega projects are becoming popular as a mean of regional development (van Marrewijk, 2007, p.290) because of “a very strong social attribute” (Jia et al., 2011, p. 821). Therefore, mega projects are expected to deliver social and economic value (Flyvbjerg et al., 2002, p.4) beside the prestige they bring for project sponsors.

Although mega projects should lead to an improvement of social life, they often create new unrest as the public is often disappointed because of the negative social and environmental effects that mega projects have also become notorious for (Jia et al. 2011, p.817-818). Thereby, societal acceptance that was expected to be high because of the social and economic benefits that mega projects have to offer often appears to be very low (Flyvbjerg et al., 2002, p.4). Mega projects often face opposition from citizens, NGOs, policy actors or other interest groups (Siupuliga & Cuppen, 2013, p. 224) because of disagreements regarding project objectives, planning and design. Consequently, most mega projects report significant delays, cost overruns, or even fail to deliver the expected value (Giezen, 2012, p.781; Koppenjan et al., 2011, p.740; van Merrewijk et al., 2008, p.591). Hence, the lack of public and political support is one of the most common reasons why projects fail (Raven, 2009, p. 564).

Thereby, success in mega projects becomes largely dependent on the societal acceptance (Olander & Landin, 2008, p. 557), as they have to not only reach time, scope and budget objectives but also meet the needs of society (Jia et al., 2011, p. 821). Consequently, scholars realize the importance of improving societal acceptance for mega projects (Chang et al., 2013a, p.1139). However, there is still a lack of integrative knowledge on practices shaping societal acceptance as it is a complex notion that is hard to define and measure (Raven, 2009, p. 564; Benn et al., 2009, p. 1567). Nonetheless, it can be recognized that societal acceptance is dependent on the management of external stakeholders, more
specifically on how the diversity of interests among society is treated (Olander & Landin, 2008, p. 561).

Therefore, it becomes necessary to involve external stakeholders in mega project planning and implementation because not paying attention to concerns of these parties leads to a lack of societal acceptance and so endangers the mega project success. Moreover, taking into account the complexity of a mega project environment and a high social value, more intensive form of involvement is needed comparing to less complex projects (Johannenssen & Olsen, 2011, p. 31). Simply informing external stakeholders through a variety of communication channels will not be enough to gain societal acceptance for a mega project. The mechanisms that bring different perspectives into the arena for discussion to find credible solutions and overcome disputes concerning the project should be created (Stringer et al, 2006, p.15; Morsing & Schults, 2006, p. 324). Thereby, stakeholder participation is proposed as a mechanism that allows selected individuals, groups and organizations play an active part and have an input into decisions that affect them (Reed, 2008, p. 2419; Rowe & Frewer, 2000, p.6; Lawrence, 2006, p. 282; Petts, 2008, p. 821). Although participatory practices in form of workshops, public meetings, stakeholder forums or consensus conferences take place in some mega projects, they still fail to improve societal acceptance (Flyvbjerg et al., 2002, p.139).

One case that should bring insight into improving societal acceptance for mega projects through stakeholder participation is the coal-power plant “Datteln 4” project. This project, started by the German energy provider, E.ON GmbH, in the beginning of 2004, was to build a single-block plant next to the city of Datteln in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany (E.ON GmbH, 2013, p.1). This power plant with a gross output of 1100MW and an investment of over €1 billion, should replace the three old blocks “Datteln 1-3”, as the world’s most modern hard coal-fired power plant (E.ON GmbH, 2013, p.1). Although this energy source is planned to provide district heat to 100,000 households, deliver energy for the rail system, and create over 500 jobs, protest arose from local residents of Datteln and Waltrop as well as environmental groups (WDR, 2010). In reaction to this, E.ON founded a forum for stakeholder participation in 2007 where both aversive and supportive stakeholders should discuss the project and suggest improvements to the project (IFOK GmbH, 2013). Although this forum was installed, some residents took legal action against the “Datteln 4” project. Political indecision, a legally-orchestrated construction stop in 2010, and countless certification hurdles have led to significant delays, while the future of this mega project is still uncertain (Neuhaus, 2013).

As to be seen from the mentioned case example, insufficient practices exist on stakeholder participation in mega projects. At the same time, high quality stakeholder participation should be a standard for mega projects in order to reduce the likelihood of protests (Miller & Lessard, 2001a, p.25). This case, alongside other mega projects facing similar problem, provides the inspiration for the research of stakeholder participation as a mean to improve societal acceptance for mega projects.

1.2 Practical and theoretical relevance

This section seeks to provide an overview of the practical and theoretical relevance of the thesis. The relevance of this thesis is determined by the trends within mega projects practice and the research gaps in the academic literature on mega projects and stakeholder participation. These areas will now be described.
As was previously described, never before so many of mega projects have been undertaken as recently (Jia et. al. 2011, p.817). However, with the increasing number of mega projects, the social and political protests they face have also increased in intensity (Floricel & Miller, 2001, p.445; Flyvbjerg et al., 2002, p.7). Inability to create the mechanisms to manage expectations of multiple stakeholders, in particular poorly implemented stakeholder participation, is seen as one of the reasons why mega projects fail to improve societal acceptance and deliver expected value (Raven, 2009, p. 564). Given this problem, this thesis seeks to explore how stakeholder participation can be implemented in effective way in a complex mega project environment. From the practical point of view, bringing insight into this area can potentially contribute to successful delivery of mega projects. Practitioners dealing with similar context might use the findings to improve societal acceptance through effective stakeholder participation, however, being aware of the limitations that will be discussed in following chapters (see section 6.5.).

From a theoretical perspective, researchers are focusing their attention to mega projects given their complex nature. However, mega projects are still considered to be a “poorly understood area of management” (Miller & Lessard, 2001a, p.19). According to Jia et al. (2011), “the fundamental problem is that there lacks of a new perspective, new tools, or new theory to better understand the mega project” (Jia et al., 2011, p.818). Recently, improving societal acceptance was realized by scholars as important for the mega projects success (Olander & Landin, 2008, p. 557). However, the theoretical knowledge in this area is still not comprehensive (Raven, 2009, p. 564). This lack of knowledge determines the need for further research on management of external stakeholders in mega projects, more specifically stakeholder involvement, as it becomes necessary to involve external stakeholders in mega project planning and implementation (Miller & Lessard, 2001a, p.25).

From the literature review it seems that there is a research gap in terms of studies that explore stakeholder participation, as a highest level of stakeholder involvement (Rowe & Frewer, 2000, p.3), in the mega project context. At the same time, it is not exhaustively investigated how stakeholder participation improves societal acceptance. Furthermore, several criteria to be followed for effective stakeholder participation are suggested in literature; but it is not examined whether these criteria are relevant for mega projects context. Our research endeavor has the mission to contribute to filling these gaps. This will result in the research objectives and research question, to be discussed in the following.

1.3 Research objectives and question

Having identified practical and theoretical relevance, the next step is to define the research objectives and the research question. As was touched upon above, the main purpose of this thesis is to contribute to the theory and practice of mega projects by investigating how stakeholder participation should be implemented effectively to improve societal acceptance for mega projects. This purpose can be achieved by fulfilling the following three objectives:

- To investigate if stakeholder participation improves societal acceptance for mega projects
- To examine whether the criteria proposed in existing literature for effective stakeholder participation are relevant for mega projects
- To develop the proposed theoretical framework (by adding, removing or adapting criteria) in order to match the mega project context
If our research is able to fulfill these objectives we will be able to develop the theoretical and practical knowledge base by answering the following research question:

*How should stakeholder participation be implemented to improve societal acceptance for mega projects?*

### 1.4 Delimitations

Defining the scope of this thesis will make our research focus clearer. Nonetheless, it will become apparent that these boarders are fluid, meaning that definitions and paradigmatic stances are flexible. The scope of the thesis in terms of the theory, context, and method will be outlined in the following.

From a theoretical perspective, this thesis is related to business administration, more specifically, to the project management discipline. Therefore, it is mostly founded on social, in particular managerial, studies and not on political, legal or psychological theories that might have another perspective on the research topic.

This thesis is focused on mega projects following the recent trend in project management research. More specifically, the focus is limited to stakeholder management which is important to improve societal acceptance and ensure mega project success (Olander & Landin, 2008, p. 561). Furthermore, internal stakeholders are out-of-scope for this study; rather we focus on external stakeholders, which include the society, as they are seen as a source of a high external turbulence that influence the mega projects (Millier & Lessard, 2001, p.22). The society and its acceptance for a mega project can be managed in several ways, like information, consultation and participation; however we focus on the latter, since it is believed to have a strong influence on societal acceptance (Miller & Lessard, 2001 a, p.25). Therefore, our research focus is targeted at where three topics of importance in project management meet: mega projects, stakeholder participation and societal acceptance.

However, the scope of our research is limited by the context that we investigate in, i.e. the case of “Datteln 4”. Without going into the potential shortcomings of this case study focus, we do want to point out the subjects of our investigation. We have identified the “Kraftwerksforum Datteln” as a central tool for external stakeholder participation, hence not investigating in-depth any other tools used by E.ON, but only touching upon their relation to the forum. As this tool is directed at involvement of the local stakeholders, meaning community in the vicinity of the project site and any special interest groups with regional influence, our assumption about societal acceptance revolves around these actors, and not politicians, the greater state or national population.

Methodologically, we are also limited in this research by the resources and time available, as well as by other contextual challenges. For example, we do not attempt to gather data directly on societal acceptance as it is very difficult to measure and, probably, requires psychological experiments. Furthermore, we cannot investigate on the mega project over a longer period of time, collecting data or even influencing the design of stakeholder participation. This is not only restricted by time, but also by the stakeholders who were not willing to allow us to attend a forum meeting.

### 1.5 Thesis outline

The thesis was organized in such a manner that each chapter should guide towards answering the research question. This will be done through discerning theories, contrasting
methodological consideration, presenting and analyzing the case data, discussing the findings and implications of the research, and finally leading to the conclusions and critical evaluation of this research endeavor.

First, a literature review of mega projects, societal acceptance and stakeholder participation theories will be undertaken, pinnacing in a theoretical framework which is the basis for our research. Defining the main characteristics of mega projects will lead to the insight that ensuring societal acceptance is a central success determinant for these kinds of projects, however investigating this will also show that societal acceptance cannot be directly measured. Hence, the focus will shift to stakeholder participation. Certain criteria of effective stakeholder participation will be identified that can be investigated in the context of mega projects. With this proposition, the literature review transitions to the chapter on methodology.

The methodology chapter brings forth all methodological considerations, as well as how they will influence the thesis. Therefore, we begin with our philosophical stance as researchers, i.e. the ontology and epistemology, as well as our topic specific preconceptions and ambitions. Continuing on from this point, the research strategy is discussed. Next, the methods of data collection for the given sources of evidence are treated. The last sections focus mainly on discussing the method for data analysis, especially for the interviews and critiquing our methodology, for example the sources that were used.

The data presentation and analysis then show the processed data from the case study, evolving to a new case-based framework. In order to do so, the “Datteln 4” project and the stakeholder forum are described with their respective defining features and timelines. Thereby, also the contextual background is set for the following analysis, where the existing, added and amended criteria of the theoretical framework are examined in-depth by referencing to the responses from the interviewees and the theories from scholars. This analysis leads us to a new case-based framework, the implications of which can be discerned in the discussion.

This discussion is aimed to fulfill the objectives that we have set to answer the research question, and shows what implications our findings have for project management theory and practice. Here we will show that stakeholder participation is even more important for mega projects and the criteria that were believed to be relevant for “normal” projects can largely be accepted. However, the discussion focuses mainly around changes that should be made to the theoretical framework to match the mega project context.

Having completed this fulfillment of our research objectives, finally we conclude with an answer to the research question. However, here we also recognize the limitations of our thesis findings related to such topics as generalizability, which translate into the suggestions for future research.
2 Theoretical frame of reference

The role of this chapter is to establish the theoretical frame of reference for this thesis. Firstly, the notion of mega projects and its key contextual characteristics will be examined. Following this, as an underlying topic, societal acceptance will be defined and its relevance to the mega project context will be revealed. This section will then lead to the introduction and analysis of stakeholder participation in terms of types, methods and effectiveness criteria. Drawing together these points from the literature, a theoretical framework will be presented showing how participation should be organized in an effective way to shape societal acceptance in the mega project context.

2.1 Theory of mega projects

As this thesis is aimed at investigating of how stakeholder participation can improve societal acceptance for mega projects, this project context with its various features must be understood. Therefore, we will start by defining the mega project and how it is different to other projects. Next, the value of undertaking such endeavors will be discussed, leading to the problems in planning mega projects. Following this discussion, a review of the sources of problems will show that they largely pertain to exogenous or external risks and issues. Since stakeholder management will be identified as critical for mega project success, we will look into stakeholders and success in mega projects. Given this theory of mega projects, a foundation will be laid for understanding societal acceptance and how stakeholder participation is necessary in mega projects.

2.1.1 Terminology

Assuming that a project is defined as “a temporary endeavor undertaken to create a unique product, service, or result” (PMBOK, 2008, p.5), there should be certain characteristics that differentiate a mega project from a “normal” project. These characteristics will be shown using the various characterizations used by scholars, presented in Table 1, as there is no universally accepted definition of the term “mega project” (Jia et al. 2011, p.818; Zhai et al., 2009, p.99), let alone a common way of writing. Hence, this section will conclude with a mega project terminology that will be used further for the thesis.

The phenomenon of the “mega project” has acquired various ways of writing and associations in scientific literature, which need to be clarified. The smaller problem of these two is the different phrasing forms that are used by researchers like the terms “mega project”, “megaproject” and “mega-project”. But as the phrasing “mega project” was prevalently used in the literature selected for this thesis, it will be accepted here. More importantly, several authors inserted or substituted in certain industries that execute mega projects, such as mega infrastructure projects (van Merrewijek et al., 2008, p.591), service-led project (Alderman et al., 2005 cited in Sanderson, 2012, p.432), large-scale construction projects (van Marrewijk, 2007, p.290), large engineering project (Koppenjan et al., 2011; Milller & Lessard, 2001). This tendency shows that there is not only a lack of consistency on the terminology used but also that there is a discrepancy between what authors call mega projects and what association (infrastructure, engineering, etc.) they have in mind. However, no such association will be made in this thesis, even though the case studied here is a mega energy project, the term “mega project” should not be dissected even more for matters of clarity. Given this decided terminology for this thesis of the “mega project”, now a definition can be presented.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Scope</th>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
<th>Cost/Financing</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Dominant characteristic</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Public involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chang et al., 2013b</td>
<td>High end technology</td>
<td>Multibillion dollar</td>
<td>Long duration</td>
<td>Complex</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>Initiator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esty, 2004</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$500 million</td>
<td>1-5 years structuring</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eweje et al., 2012</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Strategic asset</td>
<td></td>
<td>Oil and gas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giezen, 2012</td>
<td>Large amount of staffing</td>
<td>Large amount of financing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Very politically charged</td>
<td>Special position in policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jergeas, 2008</td>
<td>Huge</td>
<td>Large amount of interfaces</td>
<td>Over $1 billion</td>
<td>Complex, risky</td>
<td>Some strategic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jia et al., 2011</td>
<td>Advanced technology</td>
<td>Different than normal</td>
<td>Longer time</td>
<td>Different than normal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koppenjan et al., 2011</td>
<td>Very unique</td>
<td>No previous experience</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hard to deliver</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruuska et al., 2011</td>
<td>Significant undertaking</td>
<td>Many organizations; different objectives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wide socio-political environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanderson, 2012</td>
<td>Very large-scale</td>
<td>Private contractor or consortium</td>
<td></td>
<td>Physical infrastructure; capital asset</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Client</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>van Merrewijk, 2007</td>
<td>Different than normal</td>
<td>Many partners</td>
<td>Different than normal</td>
<td>Distinguished complexity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Enormous social impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhai et al., 2009</td>
<td>Tech. development</td>
<td>Large amount of participants</td>
<td>More than $140 million</td>
<td>Long duration</td>
<td>Extreme complexity; substantial risks</td>
<td></td>
<td>Extensive community, economy, region/land</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Terminology used by researchers on mega projects
The best way to define mega projects is to understand how they are different from “normal” projects, although few authors really make a clear cut between “normal” and “mega”. Rather, there are different defining characteristics researchers mention explicitly in their publications (like larger, longer, more complex) including contradictions between definitions and Table 1 is a proof of this variance. Nonetheless, this section will attempt to find a common understanding on mega projects in terms of scope, stakeholders, cost, duration, complexity, outcome and impact. Firstly, there is a common view in terms of scope that mega projects are unique, large-scale and involve advanced technology. Secondly, there are many stakeholders, grouping and interacting in networks, as well as a significant financial investment (140 million to several billion dollars) in mega projects. Most scholars agree that such endeavors require a longer time to be completed. “Distinguished complexity”, “substantial risk” and “hard to deliver” are just a few of the dominant characteristics used, stemming from the larger scope (Chang, 2013, p.628). There is less coverage in the factors of outcome and impact. For Jergeas (2008), some mega projects have a strategic outcome, whereas Eweje et al. (2012) sees that all deliver strategic assets, and Sanderson (2012) distinguishes between either physical infrastructure or capital assets. It is clear that the outcome is greater than normal (Jia et al., 2011, p.818), although no clear distinction can be made between “normal” and “mega”. There is also consensus that a mega project will have a tremendous impact on society, although only some authors mention it directly in a description. What can be gained from this discussion is the definition that a mega projects significantly differs from “normal” project in that it has a larger scope; involves many stakeholders (including the public in some way); costs usually more than half a billion dollar and has a duration measured in years; it is more complex and risk-laden; leading to significant outcome and usually with a socio-political impact. These defining factors are what we understand under the term “mega project” and should be considered when reading the thesis, as several of these factors will be analyzed in-depth in the following sections.

2.1.2 Planning mega projects

In order to receive the benefits of undertaking mega projects, project managers have to deal with certain complications in the planning mainly stemming to long duration, complexity and risk, which renders many traditional planning approaches useless (Floricel & Miller, 2001, p.445). The different schemes of ownership, the critical phases, and the balance between control and flexibility are the main problems discussed by the literature. These problems will now be discussed more in-depth.

There are various forms of ownership that can be used for mega projects, depending on the parties involved, which means that there can be different levels of decision-making power project managers have over project plans. For example, if a mega project is initiated by governments (usually the case in infrastructure) it will most likely be delivered by a private enterprise (Clegg et al., 2002, p.321). This, however, can mean that it will “remain under political scrutiny well after the official final decision is made” (Giezen, 2012, p.782). What also happens, is that the project party delivering the product or service not only plans and constructs, but often also operates what it delivered, handing it over to a later point of time (van Merrewijk et al., 2008, p.591). These different arrangements mean that the planning cannot be influenced in the same way over the entire mega project life-cycle.

In addition to this restriction in planning, there are critical phases in mega projects that influence the success largely, although there is no consensus on exactly which phase. For Miller and Hobbs (2005, p.43), the most critical phase is, however, the project front-end.
Not only does it often constitute up to 33% of the total budget, but it is also the phase with the most impact on the project performance, according to the results of their study on 60 mega projects. For van Merrewijk et al. (2008, p.591), an important process is that of setting up the integrated project organization, which brings together actors’ competencies throughout all phases also in the operation of the facility. Contradicting to both these views, Eweje et al. (2012, p.639) see the execution phase as the pivotal time. They believe that the impact of the project manager’s decisions will determine the final strategic value. What this discussion shows, is that every phase of such long projects has its own challenges and effect on project performance.

What also becomes clear given the complex and risky nature of such projects, is that there is a need to control and be flexible at the same time (Koppenjan et al., 2011, p.740). This creates a paradox for managing mega projects (Koppenjan et al., 2011, p.740) as thought-out plans in the front-end may make the project organization blind to risks for following phases due to the length of the project (Miller & Hobbs, 2005, p.43). For example, project managers have to disrupt those conditions that could affect project performance constantly due to the turbulent environment they are dealing with (Floricel & Miller, 2001, p.446). Institutional arrangements help many mega projects to survive catastrophic situations by providing such flexibility (by enabling to reschedule, restructure, or even go into bankruptcy) (Milller & Lessard, 2001, p.25). Such anchoring into “sets of laws, regulations, and agreed to practices” is one essential condition for project success and mega projects may even change laws themselves for protection (Miller & Hobbs, 2005, p.43; Milller & Lessard, 2001, p.23). Therefore mega projects face not only different phases where government involvement is deterministic, but also have more carefully balance between flexibility and control.

This section has shown that it is incredibly difficult for project managers to plan the mega project as they are restricted in the project ownership, there are several critical phases, and they have to balance between flexibility and control. Relating these challenges to the theoretical framework, it becomes evident that enabling stakeholder participation will be difficult as planning mega projects is clearly a delicate matter.

2.1.3 Risks and issues in mega projects

So far it has become evident that the project management of mega projects is incredibly challenging (Zhai et al., 2009, p.100), stemming from the unusual risks and issues of great variety that traditional methods cannot process (Miller & Hobbs, 2005, p.43). This uncertainty and complexity relates to the defining characteristics of mega projects: long duration, huge investment and many uncontrollable emergent factors (Chang et al., 2013b, p.323; Milller & Lessard, 2001, p.22). There are several ways proposed to categorize the risks and issues. Some examples are by sponsorship/development, market, social acceptability, regulatory and political, financial, execution, and operation (Floricel & Miller, 2001, p.448); or government relations; host community relations; contract management and procurement; and the influence of multi-location execution. (Eweje et al., 2012, p.639). However in this section we will simply distinguish between two sources: “exogenous events, occurring outside of the control of management, and endogenous events, arising within project organizations” (Milller & Lessard, 2001, p.22).

Internal risks center mainly around the high-end technology deployed in mega projects and managerial issues for coordinating the many participating parties. Although such risks are not the focus of this study, they are noteworthy as they show what endogenous events
trouble project managers along with those coming from external stakeholders, as technological innovation does create high risk (van Merrewijk et al., 2008, p.591). The challenge is more with the managerial issues (Eweje et al., 2012, p.643), in the way that sponsors often cannot manage unforeseen turbulence within the project organization (Müller & Lessard, 2001, p.22); the inherent complexity and the difficulty in establishing a common understanding (for example of the entire project life-cycle) with internationally dispersed stakeholders (Chang et al., 2013b, p.323). Without discussing the characteristic of differing or even competing agreements, interests, values and cultures of the internal stakeholders, altogether this creates an ambiguous culture, according to van Merrewijk et al. (2008, p.592-593). They see that the issue of misalignment of processes in communication and decisions of organizations causes the underestimation of costs, duration and other risks. Therefore, internal risks, especially those relating to internal management issues, should not be overlooked when designing external stakeholder participation.

Nonetheless, external risks have a much greater impact (to the extent of endangering the entire project) and occur more unexpectedly than internal ones (Miller & Lessard, 2001b, p.437) as this section will show. Comparing to traditional projects, “mega projects involve more extensive facets of society, and more uncertain factors affect the projects, even a small mistake can determine the project's failure or success” (Jia et al., 2011, p.826). Social and environmental issues, thereby, are the most common factors, often leading to political tension and intervention (Floricel & Miller, 2001, p.445). For example, mega projects face challenges of public legitimacy, where projects approved by government are questioned, have to be adjusted and create political discussion (Miller & Lessard, 2001, p.21). Environmental protection is frequently critiqued by the public as it can have an existential impact on wild-life, communities, leading to socio-political pressure on the project (Flyvbjerg et al., 2002, p.4). Reports on the financial, social and environmental impact of mega projects are routinely denounced and with more force (Flyvbjerg et al., 2002, p.5). Through this political stability in terms of support for mega projects, laws, best practices, and other parts of the institutional framework becomes less reliable for project managers (Floricel & Miller, 2001, p.445). As these risks emerge over time, combine and amplify each other, turbulence from outside the project can abruptly go into stalemate (Miller & Lessard, 2001b, p.439), showing the power of these risks and the stakeholders that cause them.

The risks in mega projects, especially those exogenous ones are particularly interesting for this thesis as the stakeholder participation (through a forum) could help to recognize and manage these risks, which will improve the quality of decisions made and, ultimately, mega projects will perform better (Eweje et al., 2012, p.649).

2.1.4 Stakeholders in mega projects
One defining feature of mega projects mentioned in many definitions is the large amount of stakeholders. Although there are several problems concerning internal stakeholders (as seen in the sections on planning and risks), which have been widely researched, attention must be paid particularly to external stakeholders, especially the role of the public. Together these form a dynamic social network around the project (Miller & Hobbs, 2005, p.43; van Marrewijk, 2007, p.291).

Firstly, it should be noted that mega projects seldom involve only one sponsor and one managing body at the core, but rather coalitions and alliances of various delivering groups
Aside from all internal stakeholders aiming towards delivering the project, each actor or group has its own objectives (Ruuska et al., 2011, p.648), and solving conflicting resource scheduling is often the main task for management within the project (Sun & Zhang, 2011, p.828). Keeping partners and their responsibilities legally separate can be a complex task adding to uncertainty (van Marrewijk, 2007, p.290). Although senior project managers may have strategic influence in such projects (Eweje et al., 2012, p.640), the complexity of internal stakeholders and individual objectives should also not be underestimated.

Adding to the uncertainty of how internal stakeholders will act, mega projects involve the greater society with people increasing awareness about such impacting undertakings (Jia et al., 2011, p.818). These stakeholder categories are the source of exogenous turbulence, as Millier and Lessard (2001, p.22) call such unforeseen events affecting the project from the outside. The impact that mega projects have on the external environment creates demands of the stakeholders such as land acquisition, remaking zoning plans, convince local politicians (Giezen, 2012, p.783). For example, bankers are already anticipating asking for environmental analyses due the certainty of pressure coming from NGOs such as Greenpeace, International Rivers, and the World Wildlife Fund (Millier & Lessard, 2001, p.21). However, such “[key institutional actors, such as NGOs, various levels of government, industrial interests, scientific and technical expertise and the media] do not always adequately represent publics” (Flyvbjerg et al., 2002, p.7). With his book on “Megaprojects and Risk”, Flyvbjerg (2003, p.5) stresses the role of the public in mega projects. He points out that citizens cannot influence decision making as it can in other areas of public life. They are denied information or receive it too late, are not involved and, hence, are driven to more radical opposition (Flyvbjerg et al., 2002, p.88). Van Merrewijk et al. (2008, p.593) go as far as to claim that “megaprojects … are motivated by vested interests which operate against the public interest”. If such views are surfacing, than it is obvious that researchers see power play within projects (through conflicting objectives) and towards the external stakeholders as defining for mega projects (Flyvbjerg et al., 2002, p.7). However, sponsors and governing bodies are realizing the importance of stakeholder participation in order to reduce uncertainty and managing value creation (Chang et al., 2013a, p.1139). Therefore, it is clear that managing external stakeholders is more important for the success of a mega project than internal stakeholders, although there influence should be underestimated.

Given this insight and the discussion on mega projects, it should be clear that allowing external stakeholders, like society, participate in planning is difficult but necessary. Difficult in the sense that the planning is restricted by ownership and there are several critical phases. However necessary, because most risks and issues in mega projects are from external sources, and more importantly are created by external stakeholders, not including these parties would endanger the mega project success. Therefore, mega projects, which this section has shown as more challenging than “normal” projects, must involve stakeholders in some form in order to create societal acceptance and be successful.

### 2.1.5 Success in mega projects

From this intermediate conclusion on the theory of mega projects, it becomes evident that examining success in mega projects is necessary as it connects to the importance of creating societal acceptance. Thereby, the discussion below will show that mega project success focuses more on external factors like prestige, social impact and ultimately societal acceptance, than the internal factors like time, cost and quality.
Success for “normal” projects is usually achieved when a project is completed on time, in budget and within scope; however this is secondary for mega projects. Because if this was the case then mega projects would not be so popular (van Marrewijk, 2007, p.290), as it is near obvious from the multitude of studies, that mega projects frequently do not meet time or budget targets and do not deliver the outcomes expected at the beginning (Chang et al., 2013a, p.1139; Giezen, 2012, p.781; Koppenjan et al., 2011, p.740; van Merrewijk et al., 2008, p.591; Zhai et al., 2009, p.100). Rather project sponsors have realized that there are more factors that signalize project success, and these are more related to external measures, although time, cost and quality still serve as a baseline measure for senior executives (Chang et al., 2013a, p.1142).

Two definitely enticing but subjective external factors for those delivering and receiving the project are prestige and social impact. “Drawn to new technology, aesthetics and other novelties, politicians and engineers favor projects and solutions [as they are] generally great symbols of modern engineering and for politicians an important political legacy” (Giezen, 2012, p.783). Furthermore, mega projects can be used by governments to solve social conflict effectively where regional development is one common objective (Jia et al. 2011, p.817-818). However, this is often used to gain support for the social acceptance for the project, which can later hardly be measured, and if it is often negative (Flyvbjerg et al., 2002, p.4) or is different from what was promised (Zhai et al., 2009, p.100). This leads to conflicts regarding project objectives, planning and design that in turn result in negative consequences for project implementation such as significant delays and cost overruns (Olander & Landin, 2005, p.321). Hence, ensuring societal acceptance is a “tricky and puzzling issue” as the lack of public and political support is one of the most common reasons why projects fail (Raven, 2009, p. 564). Therefore, success in mega projects is largely dependent on the societal acceptance than on internal factors such as time, cost and quality.

2.2 Creating societal acceptance

Following the discussion on the theory of mega projects, the focus will now be on understanding what societal acceptance is and how to create it, as it is essential for a mega project success (Olander & Landin, 2008, p. 557). Thereby, one should remember that the “strong social attribute” of mega projects makes success strongly connected with meeting the needs of society (Jia et al., 2011, p. 821). As societal acceptance is a complex issue, that is hard to measure, let alone define, this section will briefly discuss its various forms and how it depends on the stakeholder management process.

In the context of mega projects, societal acceptance can best be defined if it is divided into two distinguished parts of society, namely political and community (Wüstenhagen et al., 2007, p. 2684), how a lack of acceptance from each part comes about. The socio-political acceptance is associated with a general acceptance of a project by the public and policymakers (Wüstenhagen et al., 2007, p. 2684). Accordingly, a lack of societal acceptance on this level can be referred to insufficient support from politicians (Siupuliga & Cuppen, 2013, p. 225). Community acceptance, on the other hand, refers to acceptance of a project at the local level by the affected population (Wüstenhagen et al., 2007, p. 2685). A lack of societal acceptance on this level is connected to the negative attitude of the local community towards a project because of the social and environmental concerns (Benn et al., 2009, p. 1567). These definition and distinction are important to understand as they will help to see what level of societal acceptance stakeholder participation can relate to.
In order to implement participation, societal acceptance must be seen in the greater picture of stakeholder management of mega projects. Thereby, the following will show that recognizing society and the various actors within is not enough, but that societal acceptance is created by how concerns are treated, and the relationship that is built up. Clearly, different parts of society have different levels of power and interests that define their attitude and direction of influence towards the mega project (Olander & Landin, 2008, p. 554). Hence, the level of societal acceptance depends on the stakeholder management process, more specifically on the ability of the project manager to identify stakeholders’ expectations and concerns (Raven, 2009, p. 565). For example, societal acceptance is high, when stakeholder management is focused on building trust and commitment among stakeholders, establishing clear communication of the project impact and negotiating controversy issues, expectations of the parties become aligned (Olander & Landin, 2008, p. 554). Oppositely, when stakeholders’ concerns are not taken into account in stakeholder management, societal acceptance is low because expectations of stakeholders are not satisfied, or benefits of the project are not recognized by the local stakeholders (Siupuliga & Cuppen, 2013, p. 225; Raven, 2009, p. 566). Therefore, relationship management is needed to recognize the different stakeholder perspectives (Rowlinson & Cheung, 2008, p. 617), by building and maintaining open and positive relations with stakeholders (Karlsen et al., 2008, p. 36). However, there is also still a lack of integrative knowledge on practices that shape stakeholder relationships and thus shaping societal acceptance of mega projects (Raven, 2009, p. 564; Benn et al., 2009, p. 1567). Nonetheless, it can be recognized that societal acceptance is dependent on the stakeholder management, which should be shaped in terms of the part of society of concern, socio-political or community.

This section has shown how the success of mega projects can be ensured through societal acceptance by defining and showing how it is created. Although it became clear that building a relationship is important to understand concerns and interests of the various stakeholders in society, it also became apparent that insufficient practices exist on this particular form of stakeholder management. However, as the next section will show, stakeholder participation is one process that has the ability to influence societal acceptance.

2.3 Theory of stakeholder participation

Consequently from this discussion, the challenge posed to project management is to create the mechanisms that bring different view-points into the arena for discussion to find credible solutions and overcome disputes concerning the project (Stringer et al, 2006, p.15; Morsing & Schults, 2006, p. 324). Therefore, this section will show what stakeholder participation is, its importance for stakeholder acceptance, and what criteria should be fulfilled to make it effective. Before this, however, it is important to place stakeholder participation in relation to other degrees of involvement and the methods commonly used for each degree. Thereby, it will become apparent that only stakeholder participation, as the most effective degree of involvement is suitable to improve societal acceptance for mega projects.

2.3.1 Degrees of involvement

There is a range of degrees of involvement depending on degree of influence external stakeholders should have. Therefore, this section will show the various depictions scholars have made over the years, resulting in one representation that will be used for the remaining thesis. This will make it possible to distinguish different methods commonly used in mega projects and their purpose in managing stakeholders in mega projects.
The earliest of these depictions was the ladder of eight separate rungs of participation— from “non-participation” to “tokenism”, and further to “citizen control” proposed by Arnstein (1969). Here a hierarchical viewpoint is taken, where the intensity of participation and the capability of participants to make an input into final decision increases from the bottom rungs to the higher ones (Reed, 2008, p. 2420). However, the model is a simplification, as in practice other gradations of participation besides the given eight are possible and there are no clear distinctions among them (Reed, 2008, p. 2420). Numerous alternatives to the Arnstein’s typology are proposed by scholars using the same hierarchical principle of distinguishing but suggesting another terms for the same phenomenon (Pretty et. al., 1995, p. 1252; Farrington, 1998, p. 5; Stringer et al, 2006, p.18). For example, Lawrence (2006) uses four types, namely “consultative”, “functional”, “collaborative” and “transformative”, emphasizing the change in power balance from central actors (experts and decision-makers under the status quo) to local actors (those who have less knowledge and power). Similarly, Edelenbos and Klijn (2006) define types of stakeholder participation from “informing” to “co-deciding”, distinguishing to what extent participants can influence the outcomes of participation and shape the original plans. All of the above stress the hierarchy in the ladder meaning that higher levels of involvement like participation are more effective and, thus, should be preferred over lower ones (Arnstein, 1969, p. 3). However, as the theory of mega projects showed, in practice implementing the top rungs of participation is not an easy task because of constraints from the central actors’ side such as resistance to power distribution and non-negotiable positions, as well as from the local actors’ side such as difficulty to organize a dialogue because of distrust (Arnstein, 1969, p. 3). Therefore, methods used to communicate relevant project information to stakeholders or collect their opinions should also be utilized to support stakeholder involvement. For example, press releases might be published in media to communicate the results of major stakeholder meetings. Therefore, Davidson (1998, p. 14) proposes an endless continuum as an alternative to the hierarchical view. The argument is that different degrees of involvement are effective depending on the context and objectives of participation (Reed, 2008, p. 2424; Richards et. al. 2007, p. 9; Rowe & Frewer, 2000, p. 6). Hence, the degrees of involvement should not be viewed hierarchically but equally effective according to the purpose they serve.

Having decided on the perspective taken for the degrees of involvement, the distinction between the various forms has to be made. Thereby the continuum should be divided into only three levels, namely information, consultation and participation (Rowe & Frewer, 2000, p.3). In the first one, the society is directly addressed by the project sponsor with enhanced information about the project, in consultation members are “actively solicited” and participation means that they are given decision-making authority to some extent (Rowe & Frewer, 2000, p.3). This means that every degree of involvement has its certain purpose, which we have now defined.

Therefore, participation should not be seen as the only way to involve stakeholders, but rather as the most effective, but also most challenging form of involvement for improving societal acceptance.

2.3.2 Involvement methods

For each of the degrees of involvement there are methods that are used by project managers to inform, consult or participate (Chinyio & Akintoye, 2008, p. 597; Reed, 2008, p. 2424; Lawrence, 2006, p. 284; Richards et. al, 2007, p. 10). Scholars who propose degrees of involvement also suggest what methods are applicable for each level (Arnstein,
1969, p. 4-13; Pretty, 1995, p. 1254), which this section will present. Similar to the degree of involvement, the methods vary from those that inform stakeholders (e.g., press releases, leaflets, media campaigns) to those that collect different opinions and consider them in decision-making (e.g., public opinion surveys, focus groups), and further to those that construct a two-way dialogue and facilitate stakeholder decision-making on major concerns (e.g., consensus conferences, citizens’ juries) (Rowe & Frewer, 2000, p.3). However, one should be aware that procedures that have different names are also successfully utilized for engaging the public (Rowe & Frewer, 2000, p. 7). For example, public meetings might be organized as forums, assembles or conferences. Figure 1 brings together the findings of Davidson (1998) and Rowe & Frewer (2000) on types and methods of participation, suggesting relevant methods to inform, consult, and participate.

![Figure 1: Stakeholder involvement methods. Based on Davidson (1998); Rowe & Frewer (2000)](image)

Thereby, there are several factors that determine method should be chosen according to the degree of involvement. Firstly, the number of stakeholders that need to be involved, their power and dynamism also influence the choice of the most appropriate method (Chinyio & Akintoye, 2008, p. 597). Next, resource limitations such as a lack of knowledge among participants and time actors are willing to dedicate for participation can constrain the choice of methods (Reed, 2008, p. 2425). Third, methods should be adapted to the relevant stage of involvement process (Reed, 2008, p. 2425). This shows the importance of deciding what degree of involvement is best suited, as the most appropriate method can be chosen only after the stakeholders and their perspectives are identified, objectives of participation are set, and a degree of involvement is identified accordingly to these objectives. It might be that combining different methods or switching from one method to another during the process of stakeholder involvement is also effective (Reed, 2008, p.
Therefore, the choice of the right method(s) is difficult and relates not only to the purpose that the method should achieve.

The decision on the method does not finally decide how much it will involve stakeholders and ultimately improve societal acceptance. Rather it should be noted that despite the discussions on effectiveness of different methods, it has been increasingly claimed by authors that the quality of the outcome is more sensitive to how the chosen methods are implemented (Reed, 2008, p. 2423; Beierle, 2002, p. 740). This means same method might prove to be effective or ineffective depending on how it is formulated and conducted. Therefore, the methods used for involvement have to be evaluated in terms of certain criteria, which will be covered for stakeholder participation in the later part of this section.

2.3.3 Understanding stakeholder participation

The focus is now placed on stakeholder participation, because, as it has been mentioned above, this seems to be the most effective form of involvement in order to improve societal acceptance. However, this section will more deeply analyze its importance, leading to a refined definition of participation. Also the benefits of having a participatory method in mega projects will be shown. Ultimately, this will lead to a discussion on what constitutes effective stakeholder participation.

As has been pointed out, there are certain reasons why stakeholders must be participated in order to ensure that their concerns and issues are considered. Therefore, in mega projects, where interest groups might have the power to create a strong opposition to the project implementation, ensuring a two-way dialogue with stakeholders to reach a consensus on decisions that have a high social and environmental value is becoming a priority task (Chinyio & Akintoye, 2008, p. 591; Dawkins, 2004, p. 110; Olander & Landin, 2005, p.321). Although communication remains necessary, it is not enough to align the expectations of stakeholders and gain societal acceptance for a project (Morsing & Schults, 2006, p. 325). Thereby, participation is usually defined as a process that allows selected individuals, groups and organizations to play an active part in the project and have an input into decisions that affect them (Reed, 2008, p. 2419; Rowe & Frewer, 2000, p.6; Lawrence, 2006, p. 282; Petts, 2008, p. 821). “Input” and “active” are the key words meaning that the feeling of empowerment is fundamental for participation. Hence, a participatory approach is about developing and maintaining relationships with key stakeholders by providing them with an opportunity to be involved into the project, articulate their expectations and influence the decisions (Rowlinson & Cheung, 2008, p. 611; Chinyio & Akintoye, 2008, p. 591). In many cases mega projects that have been managed without participating society have often faced a strong opposition of interest groups, which had a severe negative impact on the project implementation (Flyvbjerg et al., 2002, p.139). Hence, it is argued that in a mega project, stakeholder participation plays a crucial role in improving societal acceptance.

Implementing stakeholder participation in this way, leads to several benefits beyond simply societal acceptance, which will be shown here. For example, there is a strong connection between participating stakeholders on a community level in decision-making and the support for politics and the wider public (Ciupuliga & Cuppen, 2013, p. 224; Raven, 2009, p. 556; Edelenbos & Klijn, 2005, p. 420). Moreover, providing consultation to the local community on social and environmental concerns or inviting stakeholders into project planning meetings reduces the likelihood of protests and severe constraints for project implementation (Miller & Lessard, 2001a, p.25). Furthermore, it is argued that the quality of decisions is likely to be higher when inputs from different interest groups are
considered and expectations are translated into a shared vision (Bulkeley & Mol, 2003, p. 151; Raven, 2009, p. 566; Reed, 2008, p. 2421). Participatory practices also set collaborative working and decision-making arrangements and can be considered as risk-sharing mechanisms (Rowlinson & Cheung, 2008, p. 612). Therefore, stakeholder participation is important for improving societal acceptance, and it also has benefits on beyond this, making its effective implementation even more important.

2.3.4 Effective stakeholder participation
The main insight from the discussion is that the challenge is how participatory practices should be implemented to shape societal acceptance (Reed, 2008, p. 2421). Thereby, we understand effectiveness of stakeholder participation as the extent to which it improves societal acceptance. As the following section will show, there is sufficient evidence of ineffective methods. However, researchers have also revealed certain criteria, grouped into prerequisite, process and outcome, which will be presented separately.

Mainly the ineffectiveness of stakeholder participation relates to problems with implementing the outcomes of these activities into the project planning (Bulkeley & Mol, 2003, p. 151). This stems from central actors using their veto-power to limit the capability of other stakeholders to actually influence the project, thereby, blocking the implementation of the decisions which are not aligned with their interests (Edelenbos & Klijn, 2005, p. 419; Lawrence, 2006, p. 283). Consequently, as parties do not have the capacity to influence, their concerns are not regarded and so stakeholder disappointment often supersedes empowerment (Petts, 2008, p. 830; Lawrence, 2006, p. 291; Ciupuliga & Cuppen, 2013, p. 225). This shows that there are certain factors that hinder participation to be effective; however the focus will be on what project managers can do to implement effective stakeholder participation.

Before the individual criteria can be presented, it is important to group them, as a number of criteria that are believed to be important are identified the literature. While some authors suggest what elements constitute ‘good’ outcomes of participation, others try to understand what process leads to such outcomes (Reed, 2008; Rowe & Frewer, 2000). Instead of choosing either one, both outcome and process evaluation criteria are considered (Blackstock et al., 2012, p. 113), as there is a strong positive relationship between the effectiveness of the participatory process and the quality of final outcome (Reed, 2008, p. 2421). In addition to these two groups, a few authors also stress several prerequisite criteria for effective stakeholder participation (Raven, 2009; Rowe & Frewer, 2000; Morsing & Schults, 2006; Edelenbos & Klijn, 2005). Therefore, the criteria have been divided into three groups, namely prerequisite, process and outcome criteria (Table 2), and these groups will be discussed in the following sections.

Prerequisite criteria for effective participation
Several authors present prerequisite criteria, meaning criteria that should be considered before actually meeting with stakeholders for an active discussion, including stakeholder representation, the willingness of stakeholders to cooperate, early involvement and a clearly defined agenda (Raven, 2009; Bull et al., 2010; Rowe & Frewer, 2000; Reed, 2008; Edelenbos & Klijn, 2005, Morsing & Schults, 2006) which will now be discussed.
Stakeholder representation is crucial for stakeholder dialogue, however, as the following will show, there is a dilemma between coverage and ability to influence. One of the reasons why projects often fail is that project managers take into account interest of only few stakeholders and underestimate the influence of other stakeholders on the project (Raven, 2009, p. 570). When assumptions about widespread support are made and not all interests are represented, there is a risk that decisions will be blocked later by excluded stakeholders if they can influence the project (Raven, 2009, p.570). In mega projects in particular, involvement of multiple stakeholders is crucial to ensure societal acceptance as there are many actors with conflicting interests and the consequences of such conflicts may be more influential and lasting than in less complex project environment (Jia et al. 2011, p. 820). Even if one interest is not represented it may influence the quality of the participatory process and its outcome (Bruijn & Leitjen, 2007, p.64). Therefore, to produce quality decisions project managers must consider a variety of perspectives and involve all the affected parties (Bull et al., 2010, p. 999; Cuppen, 2012, p.31; Petts, 2001, p. 2009; Rowe

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<td><strong>Prerequisite criteria for effective participation</strong></td>
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<td>Stakeholder representation</td>
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<td>Willingness to cooperate</td>
<td>Benn et al., 2009; Morsing &amp; Schults, 2006</td>
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<td>Early involvement</td>
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<td>Defined agenda</td>
<td>Edelenbos &amp; Klijn, 2005; Reed, 2008; Rowe &amp; Frewer, 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Criteria for the participatory process</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>Blackstock et al., 2012; Rowe &amp; Frewer, 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process design</td>
<td>Bruijn &amp; Leitjen, 2007; Edelenbos &amp; Klijn, 2005; Rowe &amp; Frewer, 2000;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent facilitation</td>
<td>Raven, 2009; Reed, 2008; Richards et al., 2004; Rowe &amp; Frewer, 2000;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attention to power asymmetry</td>
<td>Blackstock et al., 2012; Flyvbjerg et al., 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliberation</td>
<td>Benn et al., 2009; Parkins &amp; Mitchell, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to information</td>
<td>Petts, 2001; Rowe &amp; Frewer, 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Criteria for outcomes of the participation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actors satisfaction</td>
<td>Edelenbos &amp; Klijn, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence of input in final decision</td>
<td>Chinyio &amp; Akintoye, 2008; Edelenbos &amp; Klijn, 2005; Petts, 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation of decisions</td>
<td>Edelenbos &amp; Klijn, 2005; Rowe &amp; Frewer, 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social learning</td>
<td>Bull et al., 2010; Cuppen, 2012; Reed, 2008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Stakeholder participation criteria from literature
& Frewer, 2000, p.13). However, it is not always possible to identify and involve all the stakeholders and it is also important to maintain small group dynamics (Reed, 2008, p. 2424). Therefore, some scholars argue that it is more important to create a capacity for a few stakeholders to make their input into decisions than to give a broad population the opportunity for participation leaving no space for real influence (Edelenbos & Klijn, 2005, p. 434). Therefore, project managers must be sensitive to balance between enabling the potential to actually develop the project and ensuring representation.

The willingness of stakeholders to cooperate is another important prerequisite criterion important for effective participation. This can be understood as the readiness of participants, particularly the project sponsor, for two-way dialogue and the openness to input. Proponents of participatory approach state that genuine efforts are needed to create a “community of interest and dispute” in order to reach an effective outcomes (Benn et al., 2009, p. 1573; Morsing & Schults, 2006, p. 328). If there is no willing to cooperate, the process will not be mutually beneficial, but rather “expensive, time-consuming and even lead to counterproductive activities” (Morsing & Schults, 2006, p. 335). Thereby, it is genuine interest of project owners in implementing the outcomes of participatory process is often questioned, as many stakeholders experience little capacity to act on the issues raised during participatory process (Petts, 2008, p. 830; Reed, 2008, p.2421; Rowe & Frewer, 2000, p.10). Therefore, the willingness to cooperate relates more to the project management than the stakeholders.

Considering the project phase when stakeholders should be involved, authors agree that stakeholder involvement from the beginning and throughout the project is essential to realize the benefits of participatory approach to decision-making (Gopnik et al., 2012, p. 1141; Raven, 2009, p. 569; Reed, 2008, p. 2424; Rowe & Frewer, 2000, p.14). When potential benefits of the projects are not communicated to the stakeholders in the early stages of the project conflicts may arise concerning the project plan (Olander & Landin, 2008, p. 554). Thus, it is important to have a proactive approach to stakeholder participation and shape societal acceptance from the very beginning of the project rather than being reactive when opposition has already formed.

Before implementing any participation method it is important to define the agenda and communicate it to all the stakeholders involved (Edelenbos & Klijn, 2005, p. 426; Rowe & Frewer, 2000, p. 16). The objectives of participation should be clear for everyone who is involved and agreement should be reached on that regard (Rowe & Frewer, 2000, p. 15; Reed, 2008, p. 2425). In more intensive forms of participation, stakeholders involved have a possibility to shape the agenda and propose what issues and concerns they want to discuss (Reed, 2008, p. 2424). Nonetheless, a defined agenda is important for stakeholders to know before the participation process what is possible and what can be expected.

**Criteria for the participatory process**

Having described the four prerequisite criteria for stakeholder participation, the following section will discuss the criteria that the actual process of participation should meet including transparency, the process design, facilitation and access to information. Thereby, the way how a chosen method of participation is implemented, i.e. the participatory process is a crucial condition for “good” outcomes later (Edelenbos & Klijn, 2005, p.435; Reed, 2008, p. 2423).

The main idea of an effective participatory process is to create the capacity for participation. It is generally accepted that a participatory process must be transparent,
meaning that stakeholders involved understand the agenda of participation, the method used and most importantly, what the outcomes are. Transparency may be reached, for example, by publishing in newspapers information about the procedure and its outcomes (Rowe & Frewer, 2000, p.15).

While a defined and agreed agenda is an important prerequisite for the effective participation, one must pay attention to the process design to include elements “such as time phasing, descriptions of the roles of participants in the process, policy conditions, participation method and rules to handle conflict” (Edelenbos & Klijn, 2005, p. 426). A well-designed participatory process leaves little space for confusion regarding the scope and mechanisms of participation exercise (Bruijn & Leitjen, 2007, p.64; Rowe & Frewer, 2000, p.16). As was mentioned above, the structure and rules should be communicated to all parties and agreed on to increase transparency of the participation (Bruijn & Leitjen, 2007, p.64; Edelenbos & Klijn, 2005, p. 426; Rowe & Frewer, 2000, p. 16).

The criteria of deliberation and attention to power asymmetry are largely dependent on the facilitation. This is because a high-skilled and independent facilitation is claimed as very important to enhance capability of different parties to participate and ensure fairness and transparency of the process (Reed, 2008, p. 2426; Rowe & Frewer, 2000, p. 13). Scholars have theorized that in an effective participatory process, a “deliberative space” is created, where a meaningful dialogue and debate can lead to a common understanding and knowledge so decisions beyond self-interests can be reached (Benn et al., 2009, p.1573; Parkins & Mitchell, 2005, p. 529). Consequently, the facilitator plays an important role in creating this space by maintaining positive group dynamics, managing conflicts and controlling power asymmetry (Flyvbjerg et al., 2002, p.111; Richards et al., 2004). The facilitator should ensure that each party has an opportunity to share their concerns and that the critical assessment will follow (Benn et al., 2009, p. 1570). In addition, the facilitator should make clear for all the parties what decisions they can influence and how the decision will be reached (Benn et al., 2009, p. 1573). As the skills described above are very important to ensure productive negotiation and decision-making, it is recommended to outsource this position to an experienced facilitator (Reed, 2008, p. 2426). However, others state that project managers should not outsource participation processes in order to be fully involved (Raven, 2009, p. 57). This is because if a third party is paid by the project owner, it difficult to persuade the participants of the independence and impartiality of the facilitator (Rowe & Frewer, 2000, p. 13). This discussion has shown the importance of the facilitator to create deliberation and balance power asymmetry, although the difficulty lies in ensuring the independence of the facilitator.

Lastly, another criteria that influences the capacity for participation, is whether stakeholders have access to the appropriate resources (information, material and time resources) (Petts, 2001, p. 993; Rowe & Frewer, 2000, p. 15). To participate in exploratory dialogue that can lead to effective outcomes, the parties involved should have information about the project which they can rely on while making a decision. Common practice for the participatory processes is inviting the experts that can shed light on concerns of stakeholders. It is also important to ensure that there is enough time for participants to shape their opinion after all the relevant information is provided to make an input into the final outcome (Rowe & Frewer, 2000, p.15). Therefore, the process of stakeholder participation can be implemented to increase the possibility for stakeholders to come to effective outcomes in a positive environment, ultimately leading to societal acceptance.
Criteria for the outcomes of participation

The literature suggests a number of criteria to evaluate outcomes of stakeholder participation. There it is claimed, that the final success of stakeholder participation can be measured by overall satisfaction of the actors involved with the decision made (Edelenbos & Klijn, 2005, p.424). From a project manager’s perspective, satisfaction with the outcome is higher when the project can be realized according to its initial vision, whereas from a stakeholder perspective, satisfaction is higher when the outcome is aligned with their interests (Raven, 2009, p. 566). This brings a fundamental tension and when the topic of discussion shows conflicting interests, as is often the case, participatory process will lead to a compromise outcome which all parties should agree on. Therefore, the criterion of actors satisfaction is nearly impossible to fulfill, showing that stakeholder participation, at least in terms of outcomes, can never be totally successful.

Therefore, researchers have looked into alternative criteria ranging from implementation of decisions, to evidence of input in final decision and social learning. Considering this, it is highly important that the final decision shows evidence of stakeholder input (Edelenbos & Klijn, 2005, p. 424; Petts, 2001, p. 220), and is actually going to be implemented (Rowe & Frewer, 2000, p.14). Furthermore, two-way learning between participants in society has been mentioned as important feature of effective outcome (Bull et al., p. 999; Cuppen, 2012, p. 26; Reed, 2008, p. 2423), however, it is not explicitly explained in the literature how can this learning be measured. Therefore, these emergent criteria should be seen as intermediate goals that can be reached in order to define the extent of outcomes that have been achieved by stakeholder participation.

This section on the theory of stakeholder participation has shown the importance this degree of involvement has to improve societal acceptance. Thereby, it was put in relation to other forms of involvement like informing and consulting, showing that each has its own purpose and that there is no universal standard. Rather there are several methods that can be in each of these to involve stakeholders to a certain degree. Furthermore, it was shown that the effectiveness of participation does not depend on what method but on the criteria that it should fulfill. These criteria can be grouped into three categories namely prerequisite, process and outcome, in which each criterion was described. With these criteria fulfilled, stakeholder participation can be implemented effectively, meaning that it will lead to an improvement of societal acceptance.

2.4 Societal acceptance for mega projects through participation

The literature review has shown that mega projects require societal acceptance and stakeholder participation is one way to achieve this. Thereby, theory has shown that this will ultimately lead to more successful mega projects. Figure 2 presents the proposed theoretical framework for creating societal acceptance for mega projects through stakeholder participation. This section will strengthen this framework, by reviewing how the challenges faced by mega projects largely stem from external stakeholders, as well as showing the importance of societal acceptance for the success of mega projects, and how stakeholder participation is the most effective to improve this.

It begins with the insight that mega projects are significantly different to “normal” projects in terms of scope, financial investments, duration and number of stakeholders involved. Such characteristics constitute a complex, risky environment that makes implementation of a mega project quite challenging (Chang, 2013, p.628). In fact, it was observed by scholars that mega projects are often running over time and budget and are not successful (Giezen,
Because of “a very strong social attribute” (Jia et al., 2011, p. 821), mega projects are becoming popular (van Marrewijk, 2007, p.290) as a mean of regional development. Despite that it is a common case when mega projects are expected to effectively solve social conflict by delivering social and economic benefits (Flyvbjerg et al., 2002, p.4); they often create new unrest (Jia et al. 2011, p.817-818). Consequently, scholars realize the importance of external stakeholder management in mega projects for success (Chang et al., 2013a, p.1139). This makes societal acceptance a must for a mega project success (Olander & Landin, 2008, p. 557) as it has to not only reach time, scope and budget objectives but also meet the needs of society (Jia et al., 201, p. 821). Thus, ensuring societal acceptance should be a primary objective for project management in mega project context.

It is argued that societal acceptance depends on how the diversity of interests among project stakeholders is treated (Olander & Landin, 2008, p. 561). More specifically, the task for stakeholder management is to create the mechanisms that bring expectations and concerns of multiple mega project stakeholders into the arena for discussion to overcome disputes concerning the project (Stringer et al, 2006, p.15) and reach the alignment with the project vision (Raven, 2009, p. 565). This moves the focus of stakeholder theory in mega projects to the notions of participation and dialogue (Morsing & Schults, 2006, p. 325; Bakens et al., 2005, p. 156). Therefore, societal acceptance is best improved through employing stakeholder participation with external stakeholders.

As societal acceptance is crucial for mega project success, stakeholders should be actively involved (Flyvbjerg et al., 2002, p.89). Several degrees of involvement have been presented like informing and consulting. However, informing stakeholders through a
variety of communication channels is not enough to align the expectations of stakeholders and gain societal acceptance for a mega project. Therefore, taking into account the complexity of a mega project environment and a high societal value, the most intensive type, namely participation is needed (Johannessen & Olsen, 2011, p. 31). Whilst several methods are available to project managers, it is the effectiveness of implementation that is the most important to increase societal acceptance (Reed, 2008, p. 2421). Therefore, just placing stakeholder participation in mega projects is not sufficient to improve societal acceptance. Hence, several criteria for evaluating the prerequisite, process and outcome of stakeholder participation were proposed. This proposition completes the theoretical framework showing not only that but how stakeholder participation should improve societal acceptance for mega projects.

However, the literature review also showed that there is a lack of theoretical knowledge on whether these criteria are universal and even fit the mega project context. As the purpose of this thesis is to investigate how stakeholder participation should be implemented to improve societal acceptance for mega projects, in following sections of this thesis are going to evaluate this theoretical framework. Thereby, the proposed framework will be evaluated and developed for the mega project context by assessing whether criteria suggested by scholars are relevant for mega project context, as well as whether adding, removing and adapting criteria are necessary. This development of theory and its implications will then be covered in the discussion, leading to the final conclusions. Before, however, the methodology will show what considerations were made to investigate this theoretical framework, and how stakeholder participation can lead to societal acceptance for mega projects.
3 Methodology

This section will present the research process that has led to the findings. Thereby the steps will be to explain the roots of our worldview as researchers, what research strategy was employed, the data collection and analysis methods and limitations of the research. At each point certain decisions will have to be made, given certain options. Our aim is to make our decision-making process as transparent as possible, always referring to our research objectives and previous decisions made about the methodology, to make a comprehensible and traceable discussion of why we believe that a case study with semi-structured individual interviews, with documents as supportive sources of evidence, under a critical realist stance will fit best to our research question.

3.1 Philosophical stance

Before considering from which direction the research question will be approached, it is important to discuss what philosophical stance, we as researchers have. This includes our ontological and epistemological position as well as our collective preconceptions and assumptions. By ontology, we understand “the nature of the world and what we can know about it”, whereas our epistemology defines “how it is possible to know about the world” (Snape & Spencer, 2003, p.16). Based on these definitions, we identify with critical realism and empathetic neutrality, respectively, as our philosophical stance.

3.1.1 Ontology

Given the definition of ontology put forth previously, it is our mission to describe in what way the social reality is constructed in our view. Thereby we have to position ourselves on a continuum of the two extreme views, realism and idealism (Snape & Spencer, 2003, p.11).

Before doing so, we will describe what is meant by both views. Realists argue that there is an external reality unaffected of social beliefs or understanding (Snape & Spencer, 2003, p.16), and it is only our knowledge of the social world that affects our behavior (May, 2011, p.12) and not vice versa. Opposing this, idealism sees reality as only “knowable through the human mind and socially constructed meanings” and that no other reality exists (Snape & Spencer, 2003, p.16). It should not be assumed that are no rules, as they are needed to understand and recognize each other, but they are not universal, subject to interpretation and thus make human behavior unpredictable (May, 2011, p.14).

Of these two views, our stance leans more towards realism. However, we recognize that what we will capture during our research will not be the actual external reality. There are several influencing and non-controllable factors met in many social science endeavors. Our conceptualization of stakeholder participation in mega projects is intentionally going to simplify the data gathered (Bryman, 2012, p.29) for others to make sense of this external reality. Obviously there are several nuanced views between these extremes and one is critical realism. It is realist because it shares the belief of an external reality, however also idealist because it reasons that we can only know about reality through constructing mental and social meanings (Snape & Spencer, 2003, p.16). Through this bipolar view, it becomes clear that in search of the true external reality, concepts are probably provisional (Bryman, 2012, p.29). As our research is set out to investigate on and improve stakeholder participation, a social construct of rules, in a new context of mega projects, it could be that we have to restructure what is currently known. Therefore our ontological position is critical realism.
3.1.2 Epistemology

Having clarified in what way the social reality is constructed in our view the next step is to describe the dependence and influence we, as the researchers, have on the world we know. That is what the epistemological discussion comes down to. Clearly, this also relates to the ontological discussion via research traditions such as constructivism (Snape & Spence, 2003, p.11). Two epistemological positions are positivism and interpretivism, each again on opposite ends of a continuum. These will be outlined in the following before a stance will be taken.

In positivism, growing from the natural sciences, objectivity is fundamental, leading to generalization and explanation (May, 2011, p.8). The common consensus is that whatever was observed is a fact and lead to rules of human behavior in the social sciences (Snape & Spencer, 2003, p.16). Interpretivism, as the name suggests, means that subjective processing of the researcher impacts the social world and vice versa (Snape & Spencer, 2003, p.17). Both, positions are not satisfying to answer our research question.

We agree to some extent with the interpretivist view that natural science methods are not applicable to discover the social world (Snape & Spencer, 2003, p.17), but given our ontological position are interested in conceptualizing it. As critical realists, context plays a central role to understand causal mechanisms underlying stakeholder participation (Bryman, 2012, p.29). Therefore we follow the proposition of some researchers for ‘empathic neutrality’, “a position that recognizes that research cannot be value free but which advocates that researchers should make their assumptions transparent” (Snape & Spencer, 2003, p.13-14). Therefore we are motivated to make our prior understanding of the research area, our motivation as well as major assumptions clear to allow us and others to reflect on the influence that the research context had on shaping the concepts resulting from our research efforts.

3.1.3 Researchers’ preconceptions

It is necessary to describe the preconceptions we have due to our academic background and previous experience which potentially might influence our research.

At the time of the study, we were both studying a Master’s in Strategic Project Management (European), meaning that we had the opportunity to experience project management education in three different European countries. Although we had no explicit courses on stakeholder participation, the focus of many courses included stakeholder management, internal or external. In other words, we both have a strong perception, that satisfying stakeholders is the major aim of a project. Through our studies we have come in contact with techniques to achieve this. Furthermore some lecturers had a background in mega projects, using such projects as examples in their teaching. In addition, passing in courses like risk management, organizational change or research methodology in business research, gave us the necessary preparation to tackle this thesis. As the literature review should show, we were able to approach and discern not only stakeholder participation, but also mega projects and build a theoretical framework that combined both.

Besides this postgraduate education, we both have very different backgrounds. One of us is from Russia and has a background in business and economic studies, with professional experience in human resources. The other, from Germany, has studied mechanical engineering and project management on the Bachelor’s level. This will allow us to view this complex topic from differentiated angles. For example, given that we will be
confronted with a diverse stakeholder group, we can relate and adapt to each respondent and their background. Furthermore, we expect our preconceptions not to lead to a strong bias in the research. Besides our efforts to conduct this research under ethical standards, it is especially that we have no stake in the “Datteln 4” project that should make us neutral.

3.1.4 Researchers’ motivation
The ambition to research stakeholder participation and mega projects stirs from several sources. One motive for us as students was to use this case study to test and expand our experience thereby extending it beyond the rule-based knowledge we have come to acquire in our studies. According to Flyvbjerg, this is the highest level in the learning process (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p.223), and will help us develop our case repertoire that will help us as practitioners. Next, the mega project context is interesting for us as this category of projects can be seen as the pinnacle of project management, an endeavor of high complexity, high uncertainty, and countless stakeholders, to name a few challenges. Researching on such an area is guaranteed to be enticing. Finally, as mentioned before, we have not had a course solely on stakeholder management during our studies, making this thesis the ideal opportunity to focus and develop our knowledge base on this subject area. Given these benefits, it was a simple decision to rule in favor of this research topic over other project management areas.

3.2 Research strategy
As different research strategies are possible (Saunders et. al., 2009, p. 141), this section aims to clarify the strategy that seems appropriate for our research. This will start with a discussion about our approach in terms of choosing between qualitative or qualitative, and deductive or inductive. Then, the rational for choosing the social research methods will follow. Finally, the case study design will be described.

3.2.1 Qualitative, deductive approach
Firstly, we need to choose between quantitative or qualitative; and deductive or inductive approach. It should however be noted that the distinction in both pairs is ambiguous and that some scholars see it as outdated and impractical (Bryman, 2012, p.35). Nonetheless, it was attempted to show what tendency this research approach has taken.

Broadly spoken, a quantitative approach “generates or uses numerical data”, whereas a qualitative deals with non-numerical data (Saunders et al., 2009, p.151). Therefore, qualitative data is advantageous for our research efforts as we immerse in a deep data pool, where we want investigate the stakeholders’ perceptions. In addition to this our critical realist ontology reminds us to consider the context in our efforts (Bryman, 2012, p.408). As this context is also a complex one, research participants will “need time to reflect both on the issue itself and on their own thinking and will require facilitative questioning to help them in the process” (Ritchie, 2003, p.32-33). Usually if one decides for qualitative research then it is assumed that the research process will follow the process of induction (Bryman, 2012, p.25; Ritchie, 2003, p.23). This association is not plausible as theories can also be challenged using a qualitative approach (Snape & Spencer, 2003, p.14), which is the outset of this thesis.

If we consider induction to be the concluding of patterns and associations directly from observations of the social world and deduction as the generation of propositions after a logical theorizing process (May, 2011, p.30; Ritchie, 2003, p.23), then we must however also consider that our research could be partially inductive. Ontologically this is also what distinguishes critical realists from positivists: “the identification of generative mechanisms
offers the prospect of changes that can transform the status quo” (Bryman, 2012, p.29). However we see the principle of deductivism (Bryman, 2012, p.29) to relate closer to our case study approach (as the next section will show that it is mainly evaluative), in that we investigate if and how relevant the framework provided by the stakeholder participation theory is in the mega project context. Hence our research approach can best be considered qualitative, deductive given our research objectives and context.

3.2.2 Social research methods

Since qualitative, deductive approach is considered to be the most appropriate for our research, we can now argue on the choice of research methods. Social research methods are chosen as this thesis is based on a social setting and project management, naturally like all management studies, is placed within the social sciences. Common methods available to social science researchers are, but not exhaustively: experiments, surveys, histories and case studies (Yin, 2009, p.2; Saunders et al., 2009, p.141). We recognize that there are more methods, but the four discussed in the following best fit to our philosophical stance. However, the main focus will be to reason the rationale for selecting the case study over others for our research objectives.

The different methods all have certain circumstances and processes through which data collection setting should be created. For an experiment, the researcher must be able to precisely separate and then manipulate objects from their context to analyze limited, isolated variables (Saunders et al. 2009, p.142). The aim is to produce “general, context-independent theory”, according to some however social science has failed to do so (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p.223). Instead its use could be attributed to acting as a “gold standard” for rigor and precision, pertaining to positivist research philosophies (Saunders et al., 2009, p.141). Surveys attempt to include the context to some extent although gaining deep understanding is high unlikely as it is a difficult task to delineate a few selected variables (Yin, 2009, p.18). Furthermore “the data collected by the survey strategy is unlikely to be as wide-ranging as those collected by other research strategies” (Saunders et al., 2009, p.144). Submerging more into the phenomenon of non-contemporary events, histories try to unravel past events in search of gaining access to in-depth knowledge (Yin, 2009, p.18). Here, as in the case study, there are usually also more variables than data points. The main difference between the case study and histories is that two sources of evidence (see section 3.3.1) namely interviews and observations are possible (Yin, 2009, p.11). Beyond this there are several advantages for our thesis that the case study has over the other methods of social research presented here. The ability to answer how and why questions, requiring little control over events and the suitability for contemporary and complex phenomenon were the four strengths we identified.

Our research purpose is to answer the “how” question of stakeholder participation in improving societal acceptance for megaprojects. Firstly, our research question is to identify if and “why” stakeholder participation does lead to societal acceptance, meaning that we require several perspectives. But the context of the megaproject also requires a “holistic, comprehensive and contextualized” discussion, which the case study provides in contrast to experiments or surveys (Lewis, 2003, p.52). Furthermore this specialist area of project management of extremes cases could lead to falsification i.e. rejecting or augmenting generally accepted practices (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p.226). For this situation, “the case study is well suited for identifying “black swans” because of its in-depth approach: What appears to be ‘white’ often turns out on closer examination to be ‘black’” (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p.228).
Through this research we want to strengthen social science, by adding a rigorous case (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p.219).

Given the aforementioned boundaries that social acceptance and megaprojects bring with them, it is hardly possible to assume control over events. For example it is difficult to test what effects a specific criteria for stakeholder participation will have on societal acceptance. Instead we have more variables of interest (as there is a necessity for in-depth understanding) than data points (Yin, 2009, p.18). In contrast to an experiment where the researcher is required to have this contextual control, our research question was exactly to find out what environment the stakeholder participation should be created and what influence it has on societal acceptance. Therefore, also a survey would have restricted us in exploring new factors (Saunders et al., 2009, p.146). This lack of control over the phenomenon like required in an experiment does not mean that we are not free to choose the variables we want to inquire.

This links to the discussion about contemporary issues and the advantage case studies naturally have over histories. A case study is defined as “an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence” (Robson, 2002, p.178). Therefore one must be able to observe a present phenomenon, but one also can generate data using live resources. Again, understanding contextual specifics of mega projects requires this first-hand data generation (Yin, 2009, p.18). Given that the case project studied is presently being undertaken, we had the possible to gather this live data.

Lastly, the most decisive reason to choose the case study as our research strategy was determined through the complex phenomenon we are studying. Not only do social researchers agree that on this advantage (Yin, 2009, p.18) but also respected practitioners rely on it (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p.219). The other arguments for it lastly reduce to this complexity that we have to deal with in order to extend the knowledge base on this frontier (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p.223).

3.2.3 Case study design
The decision to conduct a case study is not evasive enough to describe the research strategy and given the previous discussion on the approach, we must further design the case study. Indeed, there are various variables that further distinguish case studies from each other including, but not limited to: type, time-horizon, sample size and sample selection. In the following these key defining factors (that were either consciously chosen or pre-determined given the research circumstances) will be presented and their implications analyzed.

Case studies as most qualitative research methods (Table 3) can have four main functions, namely contextual, exploratory, evaluative and generative. Generative, also known as exploratory research is still believed by some to be the only appropriate application of case studies (Yin, 2009, p.6). This misunderstanding of a hierarchical view negates that “case studies have a distinctive place in evaluation research” (Yin, 2009, p.20). At the lowest level of learning, case studies will certainly lead to learning (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p.224). More connected to our research, we do not only describe a certain phenomenon i.e. stakeholder participation in a complex mega projects context, but we also analyze the effectiveness of this intervention (Yin, 2009, p.20). In order to achieve this, the data collection will revolve around processes and outcomes (Ritchie, 2003, p.23). Obviously, our case study is not purely evaluative. We will have to demonstrate how stakeholder participation is achieved.
(contextual) as well as relate why this is particularly necessary in mega projects (explanatory). Furthermore, we aim to develop project management theory in this distinct area (generative), well aware of the restrictions of our research. Therefore this case study is placed on the evaluative domain of qualitative research, although it also has functions in other ways.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contextual</td>
<td>describing the form or nature of what exists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanatory</td>
<td>examining the reasons for, or associations between, what exists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluative</td>
<td>appraising the effectiveness of what exists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generative</td>
<td>aiding the development of theories, strategies or actions</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Table 3: The functions of qualitative research (adopted from Ritchie, 2003, p.27)

The next defining characteristic is the time horizon of the case study. Although this case study could have been longitudinal, there are certain considerations that show that this would have exploded the scope of this thesis. For example, it would have required observing stakeholder participation on two or more occasions, which however is difficult in such endeavor of long duration. Setting this against the research objective, the question remains open if this would have yielded more benefit. Instead, the data collected could compensate some of this, for example through retrospective comments and document analysis. The analysis and limitations will have to be the deciding factor later, however given the circumstances we believe that a cross-sectional perspective (Saunders et al., 2009, p.155) of many evidence sources will create valuable data.

There are also several arguments in favor of limiting the number of cases, moving from multiple to a single case. Firstly, case studies are known to be time-consuming. And in order to have a contextual and in-depth understanding, it becomes even harder to achieve for more than one case (van Merrewijk et al., 2008, p.593). Our research focus clearly shows that we expect to see stakeholder participation in a critical case of project management given the mega project context. For one, this means we can apply the theoretical framework to an extreme environment and extend the theoretical base (Yin, 2009, p.47). However generalization here should not be overestimated, rather the impact of a single, unparalleled case should be considered (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p.228). The presentation of the case (see section 4.1) will later show, how extreme this project is and what value it has for evaluating and furthering stakeholder participation theory.

Choosing this single case is probably the most difficult step (Yin, 2009, p.52), however “the strategic choice of case may greatly add to the generalizability of a case study” (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p.226). Instead of studying a common situation of stakeholder participation, we decidedly choose mega projects for two sampling reasons (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p.229). Firstly, an extreme case like this includes more stakeholders, more contextual challenges and more social impact, allowing more information to be revealed. Secondly, there is a greater chance to discover deeper causes, improve the confidence that propositions will hold true and underline effects.

In this sense, sampling for a case study was bound by the aforementioned characteristics. The “Datteln 4” project came to our attention as it was a mega project currently underway in Germany that was attracted public attention. Furthermore it is using a stakeholder participation method, namely the “Kraftwerksforum Datteln”, which is a forum for actors of the community and region (see section 4.1.1). Therefore it brought together the three
main areas of interest (mega projects, stakeholder participation and societal acceptance) making it a suitable case for investigation.

3.3 Data collection
This section seeks to present the data collection methods. First of all, we will explain why we have decided to prioritize interviews as a source of evidence and use documents as a reference in accordance with our philosophical stance. When this will be clarified, the arguments for our decision to use semi-structured individual interviews in combination with a document analysis in our case study research strategy will be given. We will finalize the discussion on data collection explaining how the interviews were conducted and the data from the documents was obtained in the light of the research methodology.

3.3.1. Sources of evidence
Our choice regarding sources of evidence will now be explained. There are two general genres of data that can be collected: naturally occurring and generated data (Ritchie, 2003, p.34). Each have distinctive qualities for case studies and have to be collected in certain ways. Many of the methods used today in qualitative research were developed with the intention of capturing data in its natural setting (Ritchie, 2003, p.34). Some even see this as a contrast between the quantitative and qualitative approaches (Bryman, 2012, p.408). We, however, follow Ritchie (2003) in the belief that data generated in artificial setting can still be associated as qualitative. The following will compare and contrast both groups, leading to the decision to carry out interviews supported by document analysis, thereby combining both in a mixed qualitative methods data collection. These will now be outlined.

Naturally occurring data includes such techniques as (participant) observation as well as documentary, discourse and conversation analysis (Ritchie, 2003, p.35). Any methods where we as researchers have to be present in the live environment of stakeholder participation, were revoked in the research strategy earlier (also pointing out there is an overlap or misalignment between the distinction of research strategies, methods and techniques), documentation analysis remains as the only possibility. Documents can range from existing public to procedural and personal documents and can be studied for their tangible or intangible content (Ritchie, 2003, p.35). Thereby the analysis should always consider the specific purpose and audience that they were written for. Once, completed the results can be useful for case studies in order “to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources” (Yin, 2009, p.103). Therefore we will use the opportunity that naturally occurring data is present and easily accessible to strengthen our findings, however the majority of our data will be generated.

Again, there are several ways to collect re-processed and recounted data such as biographical methods or interviewing individuals, pairs/triads, or groups (Ritchie, 2003, p.36). The biographical method, also known as the life history method, “emphasizes the inner experience of individuals and its connections with changing events and phases throughout the life course” (Bryman, 2012, p.712). As our research neither is interested in how the stakeholders develop because of the project (rather vice versa), nor was it possible to collect data over a longer period of time, an interview form will be used. As shown above, the choice depends on the number of participants per interview, which will be discussed later. In general, interviews are used to understand an interviewee’s opinion and reasons underlying it (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008, p.145; May, 2011, p.31). For a case study these can be vital in order to gain insight to human interaction (Yin, 2009, p.108). As
our research revolves around issues, such as fairness and perceived effectiveness of stakeholder participation, using interviews seemed ideal.

As we have found that both documents and interviews can provide the data and insight required, we must decide the preferred method. However, there is also the possibility of combining qualitative techniques (Ritchie, 2003, p.37). Our philosophical stance as well as our case study strategy (Yin, 2009, p.118) assures us in believing that several sources of evidence are needed to pursue the true external reality. Furthermore our epistemological position dictates that we place our role as researchers in the background. Therefore, we will prefer the generated interview data as our primary data source, as it gives “participants a direct and explicit opportunity to convey their own meanings and interpretations through the explanations they provide, whether spontaneously or in answer to the researcher’s probing” (Lewis, 2003, p.57). Natural data, which for us is secondary data derived from documents, is also preferable to cover the contextual background, in our case the mega project, due to the substantive context delivered (Lewis, 2003, p.56-57). Hence, we have decided to prioritize interviews and use documents as a reference in accordance with our philosophical stance.

Before actually explaining how the data was collected in reality, one decision pertaining to the interview’s level of structure and number of participants per interview had to be made. For the former, a continuum shows the possibilities with a quantitative end of standardized surveys to a qualitative end of unstructured conversations with complete freedom of questions and answers (May, 2011, p.132). As we have before dismissed the survey as a research strategy, only the semi-structured and unstructured interviews will be discussed. A semi-structured interview is distinguishable through key questions posed to respondents with the possibility of probing to clarify and elaborate on answers given, thereby giving more depth (Arthur & Nazroo, 2003, p.111; May, 2011, p.134). Less standardized forms are ‘topical interviews’, where the interviewer follows a checklist to loosely structure questions around a certain event or process (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008, p.143; Rubin and Rubin, 1995 cited in Arthur & Nazroo, 2003, p.28). However semi-structured interviews are advantageous as they ensure meaningful comparability, yet allowing a sufficient flexibility in answering (May, 2011, p.135). And it must be recognized that “inevitably, some interviews will provide more useful information than others … Only by comparing a series of interviews can the significance of any one of them be fully understood. And, in the long run, each interview will add to the final story” (Gerson & Horowitz, 2002, p.211). For this reason of structured comparability and because we have a specific focus for the interviews together with the document analysis (May, 2011, p.135), the semi-structured is deemed fit for our research objectives.

Considering the number of respondents per semi-structured interview, we can choose between individuals or groups, whereby the former the most common choice is (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008, p.144; Ritchie, 2003, p.36-37). Thereby our decision should not be aimed at finding a method that will deliver the ‘truer’ answer; rather we should realize that divergent results are possible comparing individual and group interviews (May, 2011, p.138). Personal interviews provide detailed data on individual’s perspectives, subject coverage and responses to complex constructs, processes and outcomes (Ritchie, 2003, p.36-37). A focus group will highlight the group norms and dynamics as well as their collective understanding of a phenomenon (Bryman, 2012, p.502; May, 2011, p.137). As we are investigating on social acceptance, perceived participation and opposing stakeholder interest and perspectives, only a one-to-one setting will provide the needed
security for respondents to share their views (Lewis, 2003, p.58). Hence we have decided to use semi-structured individual interviews in combination with a document analysis in our case study research strategy.

3.3.2. Method for primary data

Now that all decisions prior to the actual collection of the data have been made, we can now explain how the individual semi-structured interviews were conducted in reality. In order to clearly describe this process, it is necessary to refer directly to the case of “Datteln 4” (see section 4.1). Four characteristics were of central importance especially to meet the ethical research standards: the sample, the setting, the topic and interview guide; and the transcription process. This will lead us to the final primary raw data which was analyzed together with the secondary data.

Considering the assumptions concerning ‘society’ and ‘stakeholder participation’, it was near to use the list of forum participants as our population from which we would choose who to interview. Given the scope of this thesis and the complications in contacting participants, it was not possible to consider all participants, but rather we focused our efforts on a cross-section of the forum. Our aim was to have an interview with at least one respondent from every stakeholder group (e.g. churches, social, business) indicated in the participation list on the forum website (IFOK GmbH, 2013). However, there were actors that were resting their participation in the forum, which made them unattractive to our research (their responses may not be recent or distorted over the course of time). Next, the contact to some actors was not possible due to their non-response to our request. All others were open to conduct interviews with us, however due to the expected saturation of data we restricted the sample population to seven respondents. There were three actors that we presumed to have central importance for our research: the project manager, the communications manager (both from E.ON GmbH) and the facilitator (from IFOK GmbH). Next we did not further pursue setting interview appointments if that stakeholder group was already represented through one respondent. It was also possible for us to include one special case interview, the talk with a representative of the BUND. This was attractive for us as we had found evidence that this stakeholder was invited to the forum, however declined (IFOK GmbH, 2013). Including this respondent to our population would allow us to investigate for what reasons, this clearly opposing stakeholder choose not to participate. Hence our final sample population of interview respondents included eight stakeholders of the power plant (Table 4).

The setting for the individual interviews was mainly influenced by the researcher-respondent distance, meaning that the respondents were situated in Germany whereas we were researching from Sweden. Therefore our medium of communication was the telephone, which in turn allowed us to clearly record the spoken word. Furthermore the interviewees were given total freedom to choose the surrounding. Our impression was that all interviewees were not influenced negatively during the conversation with us. Given that the project included only German stakeholders, we offered all respondents the possibility to converse in German. Most interviewees (six of eight) choose this in fear of not being able to give sufficient answers. In line with good ethical research behavior, we reiterated our research interest, personal background, the structure of the interview and further research steps (including offering to share the results with them) during each interview. Through sending the transcripts and offering to make the interviewees name and position confidential, the stakeholders were allowed to review the raw data, correcting any misunderstandings or providing clearer answers. However, at the time of submitting this
thesis no such requests were made. Rather positive responses about the research process were received. Therefore we trust that a safe environment could be set-up meeting ethical standards, improving the quality of primary data collected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder Group</th>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Reference name</th>
<th>Interview duration (min)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Project team of E.ON GmbH</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project manager</td>
<td>Andreas Willeke</td>
<td>“project manager”</td>
<td>36:40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications manager</td>
<td>Franziska Krasnici</td>
<td>“communications manager”</td>
<td>34:38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Moderation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFOK GmbH</td>
<td>Ralf Eggert</td>
<td>“moderator”</td>
<td>35:34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representative of the German Confed. of Trade Unions (DGB)</td>
<td>Ludwig Kerkhoff</td>
<td>“union rep.”</td>
<td>14:41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cities and regions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representative of the city of Datteln</td>
<td>Karl Marscheider</td>
<td>“city rep.”</td>
<td>25:58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education and social initiatives</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representative of the kindergarten “Familienzentrum Johanniter-Kinderhaus”</td>
<td>Yvonne Lange</td>
<td>“kindergarten rep.”</td>
<td>17:36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Citizens</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident</td>
<td>Uwe Padberg</td>
<td>“resident”</td>
<td>29:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-participant</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representative of the environmental NGO BUND</td>
<td>Thomas Krämerkämper</td>
<td>“NGO rep.”</td>
<td>ca. 20 (note: this interview was not recorded)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: List of interview participants

Given that the interview design chosen was to be semi-structured, our question guide should cover all topics we were interested in, while providing enough flexibility to gain depth. That said the guide (see Appendix 1) was divided into separate topics, organized in a logical flow, thereby aiding the interviewee to answer the questions. These questions in turn were suggestions to the interviewer. However, this does not mean that all topics and questions were covered nor was the order fixed. Rather the flow of conversation: the need to clarify, deepen a response; or newly arising topics defined the actual interview. In that sense, it was necessary to adapt the guide depending on the respondent, so four types were written (for E.ON; for the moderator; for the other forum participants; for the forum non-participants). Thereby there were particular questions for one group, but also an overlap. The topics were related to the criteria established in the theoretical framework, directly or indirectly. For example by asking by asking “What does a regular meeting look like for you?” we expected to find about both the agenda of the meeting as well as the process design and access to information. Or by asking the moderator “What is your role as a moderator? How do you prove that you are independent?” inferences could be made in the
facilitation and the purpose of the forum. So altogether, this guide was designed to ensure the maximum coverage and depth rather than on the frequency of similar response.

In order to handle this plethora of audio content, the interviews had to be transcribed. Thereby the guiding principle was to reduce content without losing meaning. As most interviews were held in German, it made sense to first transcribe, check the transcription and then translate. The reliability of this translation should be relativized given the fact that one of us is a German mother tongue speaker, having also attended a translation course in his previous studies. All interviews were transcribed in such a manner that clear statements, opinions, views, concerns and suggestions could be discerned. Finally, as there was a clear guide on relevant topics, accounts that were seen not to contribute to the research were disregarded. These interviews transcriptions are considered as the raw primary data that will be analyzed together with the secondary data from documents.

3.3.3. Method for secondary data
As it has been established in the previous section on the sources of evidence, documents will be used as supporting secondary data for the primary data from the interviews, which is a common practice in research (Saunders et al., 2009, p.258). This necessary for the research question, in order to provide a contextual setting as well as a comparative data set to the research findings (May, 2011, p.191; Saunders et al., 2009, p.280). Therefore this section will outline what sources were used, how the data was obtained from the documents in the light of the research methodology.

The document data sources available to us during this research came from two board areas: mass media and private sources (Bryman, 2012, p.550). The former included online newspaper articles (local and regional) as well as broadcast and online articles from a West German regional TV channel, WDR. The latter was composed of both information presented on the forum website (webpages, press releases and forum newspaper) as well as any information from E.ON’s company website. Although the section 3.5. will evaluate these sources, it should be noted that again most of the data was in German, meaning that if it was used it had to be translated. Making this effort was however sensible, as it was possible to understand the project and forum context prior to the interviews and we could check statements made later.

After the primary collection of documents and evaluating their quality, we mined the data for content. That means that we stayed true to our critical realist stance on the basis of “how the document represents the events which it describes and closes off potential contrary interpretations and possibilities through a particular construction of reality as self-evident” (May, 2011, p.213). Hence factual information was gathered especially on the timeline of the project, its basic characteristics, and the responses of society to its construction. The presented structure, the members as well as the processes and outcome of the forum were the second genre of data. Together this was organized in order to add to the case presentation in the data analysis. In addition, documents were re-visited even certain facts or situations had to be cross-checked or clarified during or after the analysis of the interviews. Therefore the method for gathering data from documents could support and augment the findings of the interviews, in order to make a holistic case study.

3.4. Data analysis
Following the data collection, this raw data from the individual semi-structured interview transcripts and the notes from documents have to be analyzed following a certain
procedure. In light of our research strategy and our research question, the template analysis has been identified as the best option in order to draw compelling and logically traceable conclusions. This section will identify it as the most suited technique, the steps of analysis the raw data underwent and what principles were followed in during the analysis.

3.4.1. Rationale for template analysis
Thematic analysis, the production of a coded template representing textual data (King, 2004, p.256), is relatable to many approaches including grounded theory, critical discourse analysis, quantitative content analysis and narrative analysis (Bryman, 2012, p.578). Other qualitative analysis methods include analytic induction, however this was not suited for the single case setting as requires “the collection of data until no cases that are inconsistent with a hypothetical explanation (deviant or negative cases) of a phenomenon are found” (Bryman, 2012, p.567), which it was not considered here. Instead the focus will be on comparing grounded theory with thematic analysis.

Firstly, thematic analysis fits very well with our critical realist stance as it facilitates the surfacing of underlying social rules while attempting to prove that the researcher is not influencing the depicting of this reality (King, 2004, p.256). Grounded theory on the other hand is more inductive as it aims to build a convincing logic story deriving from the multitude of data (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008, p.172). In thematic analysis on the other hand themes are defined beforehand, but are adapted, added and removed during the process (Bryman, 2012, p.567; King, 2004, p.256). The definition of theme that has been appreciated here that is “A category identified by the analyst through his/her data that relates to his/her research focus; that builds on codes identified in transcripts and/or field notes; and that provides the researcher with the basis for a theoretical understanding of his or her data that can make a theoretical contribution to the literature relating to the research focus” (Bryman, 2012, p.580). This meant that we were able to use the theoretical framework developed in conclusion of the literature as a basis for the analysis, which was not possible with the grounded theory. However this does not mean that a template fixed a priori and then the data is checked against it, but the initial template is affected by the data (King, 2004, p.259). Furthermore, for grounded theory is more structured than thematic analysis, meaning that one cannot as easily adjust it to the specific requirements of the study (King, 2004, p.257), which makes its inductive character weigh even more. However there are other characteristics that we will consider when analyzing, for example that grounded theory preserves the context and time or that it is closer to the raw data by retaining ambiguity and contradiction (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008, p.175). However and in conclusion, our analysis process will relate heavily to template analysis as it allows us to examine different groups working in a collaborative setting and produces clearly structured conclusions on our case study (King, 2004, p.268).

3.4.2. Analysis steps
At the beginning of our analysis, as mentioned above, our initial template was largely influenced by the theoretical framework. The balance had to be found being too structured and suffocating the chance for new ideas against being too loosely and not being able to make sense (King, 2004, p.259). Therefore we used our interview guide including the main topics of our theoretical framework, namely prerequisite, process and outcome criteria. For example, answers relating to the invitation policy were firstly associated with the prerequisite criteria. Next, we familiarized ourselves with the data again, including listening to the conversations, reading the transcriptions (May, 2011, p.153). During this we reminded ourselves of the research focus, checking the literature review and sensing
how the data meets or contradicts the theory (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008, p.178). Next the actual conceptualization begins, where the interview transcripts were coded that met in our research interest and especially using those that were repeated across interviews (Bryman, 2012, p.580; Easterby-Smith et al., 2008, p.178; King, 2004, p.257). Thereby codes were “essentially descriptive, requiring little or no analysis by the researcher of what the interviewee means” (King, 2004, p.257). As we could definitely see several similarities, we were able to use some criteria names as concepts for grouping codes on a lower level, however there were emerging themes as well. By lower level we are referring to the concept of hierarchical coding, where high-order concepts can have several concepts within in an attempt to structure codes (King, 2004, p.258). After this first iteration of identifying, coding and conceptualizing the raw data, reflecting on the data was necessary in order to comprehend the developed template created and checking with the original data (Bryman, 2012, p.580; Easterby-Smith et al., 2008, p.179). Thereby several changes became necessary (for example splitting “stakeholder representation” into “stakeholder identification” and “stakeholder selection”). This type of modification King (2004) would describe as “changing scope” with others being “insertion”, “deleting” and “changing higher-order classification” (King, 2004, p.261). Through this second iteration and the following steps of fine-tuning our template during the analysis, we were able to reach our final template organizing all the relevant data (see Appendix 2 and Appendix 3).

3.5. Research quality criteria of trustworthiness
In this final section, we use the opportunity to evaluate our research methodology, examining the robustness of our sources, methods, neutrality and the potential of our findings. This will be done by accessing the quality criteria of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability, respectively for each part of the methodology, although there will be an overlap between them. Together we will be able to access the trustworthiness of the research (Bryman, 2012, p.390). An alternative set of measures we could have used is reliability and validity, which however relate more to quantitative studies (Saunders et al., 2009, p.156). This is because these criteria assume that every account about the external reality is absolute, whereas our critical realist ontological stance clearly stipulates that our knowledge is shaped through social reasoning (Guba & Lincoln, 1994 in Bryman, 2012, p.390). It must be noted that Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggest that authenticity be also measured, however this quality category has not penetrated scientific research since its conception (Bryman, 2012, p.393). Therefore we will only ensure the trustworthiness of research and show what we have done to reduce the possibility of reaching a false answer to our research question (Saunders et al., 2009, p.156).

3.5.1. Credibility
This first quality criterion is the most important, because it examines how credible our sources of information are as these “accounts of social reality” determine the foundation of our research (Bryman, 2012, p.390). Therefore we will show what considerations were made for the interview data and documents used in our research.

For our interviews, what made us most aware of the credibility of the data was being aware that these are social encounters (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008, p.149) and not simply acts of collecting data (May, 2011, p.141). This means that despite our efforts to confirm to scientific standard, we aware that interview data is not flawless. For example, interviewees may have not delivered the truth in its entirety due to the complexity and connected time need to convey such information (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008, p.149). Beyond this, the events could be remembered inaccurately or incomplete, because the individual was just
not aware of them (May, 2011, p.158). Especially in mega projects this may be the case as many complex issues arise over a long period time. In order to reduce the possibility of these circumstances influencing the analysis, we clarified before with the respondents what was expected of them and what perspective they should take when discussing stakeholder participation (May, 2011, p.141). As a follow-up, we submitted the transcripts to the interviewees for validation so that there were no misunderstandings both from the respondent and the interviewee (Bryman, 2012, p.390). Believing that this was sufficient, we took no further measures, as our research interest was to investigate how people consider stakeholder participation (May, 2011, p.159).

What was considered for the interview data is largely valid for the documents used as secondary data, although here the freedom to influence the data was even greater. “Thus, what people decide to record, to leave in or take out, is itself informed by decisions which relate to the social, political and economic environment of which they are a part” (May, 2011, p.215). We aware that in the case of “Datteln 4” this social conflict was very heated, however we were reliant on these non-scientific sources in order to inform ourselves about the case. Therefore we decided to gather information from various areas of society from local/regional press, E.ON and NGOs. Furthermore we were conscious of personal opinions or agendas influencing information, which is why we denoted them as such or avoided that information all together. Besides that we were reliant on the goodwill of the authors, although we believe that we were able to give a holistic and balanced picture of the case.

Lastly, the case study design allowed us to use multiple sources of evidence, which meant we were often able to corroborate information provided by one source with that of another source (Van Merrewijk et al., 2008, p.593; Yin, 2009, p.115-116). Obviously there were restrictions of this, especially concerning the opinions and views of individuals we had to rely on their accounts. However there were areas of overlap with the documents used, without which we would have not been able to understand and develop our findings in the same way. Therefore we believe that through our efforts in data collection, we were able to collect more accurate data.

3.5.2. Dependability

Having discussed the credibility of our sources in depth above, it was impossible to separate this from the methods used to attain them and their dependability. However, looking at this criterion should show that a chain of evidence has been maintained (Bryman, 2012, p.392; Yin, 2009, p.40). Firstly, this was achieved by clearly stating in each major decision for the thesis (for example what research question, which research strategy, etc.) of options available and presenting what trail of thought lead to the final choose. Secondly, we pay attention to presenting samples of the data collected, how we analyzed it and how we reached the conclusions from it. We do not assume that our research is repeatable and will yield exactly the same findings, however the presentation of our research should show that one can trust on the method in its entirety and that it makes logical sense.

3.5.3. Confirmability

Confirmability, another aspect of trustworthiness, deals with us, the researchers directly and if we “confirm” to the standard of science (Bryman, 2012, p.392). Having extensively described our preconceptions of this research, we must prove that we were “empathically neutral” as dictated by our epistemological stance. We will show this on the example of
how we mastered the tension between subjectivity and objectivity (May, 2011, p.139) during the interviews. Here an interviewer must be free of prejudice, but also be empathetic in order to develop trust in the respondent (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008, p.147-148; May, 2011, p.140). We achieved this by clearly stating to each interviewee at the beginning what our research question was, what topics we wanted to cover with them in the interview and how we would treat their results later. During the interviews, we also never openly criticized, manipulated or behaved unprofessional in any other way that would make us negatively influence the interviews. Instead, we tried to understand the views of the respondents. This meant letting them talk freely, helping them to formulate their answers (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008, p.144) and designing the interview to match what things were important to them in our topics. From this “full engagement” we switched to “detached analysis” in our data analysis (May, 2011, p.140). Here, it was important that we were not guided by our personal attachment to the person, but rather saw their position in the forum by using their role names. Another technique we employed is that one of us conducted and transcribed the interviews and the other led the analysis. Although it is hard to judge our confirmability personally, this example should show that this research meets the quality set to researchers.

3.5.4. Transferability

Lastly, ensuring the transferability of our findings to other situations in theory and practice is of interest to give value to our research efforts. For this we must define how far the domain of generalization could reach (Yin, 2009, p.41), which we will do particularly during the discussion chapter (see chapter 5). Often the single case study is criticized for not having enough breadth (Bryman, 2012, p.392) as well as being too deep to make sense of the social reality (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p.237). We follow Bent Flyvbjerg (2006) in his view towards both alleged shortcomings of the case study. Firstly, he states that formal generalization through rules of social reality is only one source of knowledge advancement, and that the case study’s strength also lies in the learning generated that can be transferred to other situations (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p.227). Secondly, from this learning and the rich data problems in common understanding can be uncovered (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p.237). Therefore we recognize that single case study is limited in solving the research question for a socially indisputable law. Rather we are sure that our results will provide a strong case study and that they are sufficiently transferable to other similar situations.

From the evaluation of our methodology, we realize the strengths and weaknesses in terms of trustworthiness. Having examined the credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability of the essential parts of the thesis, the potential was created for us to correctly examine the social reality and come to a well-founded answer to our research question.

This concludes the methodology chapter. The research possibilities were presented, arguing in each point for the best choice to approach this research area. The final decision was to collect and analyze data from semi-structured in-depth interviews with individual participants of the forum and publically-available documents related to the case. Previously, it was explained how we decided for a qualitative, deductive research strategy using a specific case study design. Therefore now the data can be presented and analyzed in light of the theoretical framework developed previously.
4 Data Presentation & Analysis

This chapter aims to show the processed data from the case study, evolving to the modified theoretical framework. This will start with a brief presentation of the “Datteln 4” project and stakeholder participation forum to establish a contextual reference for the case study findings. The analysis part will follow where the findings on the criteria of the theoretical framework are examined in-depth by referencing to the responses from the interviewees and the theories from scholars. This leads us to a new case-based framework, the implications of which can be discerned in the discussion.

4.1 Case presentation

This section is aimed to provide background information on the coal power plant “Datteln 4” project located in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany. The main areas to be covered are introducing the case, constructing a timeline of major events of the project and the current outset. As this thesis focuses on the stakeholder participation used for the “Datteln 4” project and specifically the so-called “Kraftwerksforum”, or just forum, its role in relation to the project and other channels of communication will be described, its defining characteristics (like participants, major events and examples of topics discussed), closing as well with the current status. This will be done mainly in order to reiterate common understanding of the project and forum. Therefore, for example, we will not discuss such topics as the forum’s purpose as these topics are relevant for the analysis in relation to the other criteria of effectiveness. Rather, the following information should serve as a contextual reference for the case study findings.

4.1.1 The “Datteln 4” project

The “Datteln 4” project is undertaken by the energy provider E.ON to build one of the most advanced hard coal-fired power plants in the world (E.ON GmbH, 2013), probably the last of its kind in Germany (Sorge, 2012). With this high technological challenge and a scope including a target of producing 1100MW gross output, and an investment around €1.2 billion (E.ON GmbH, 2013), this construction of a single-block power plant is clearly a mega project considering the defining characteristics presented in the literature review (see section 2.1.1.), not to mention the other complexities, uncertainties which will be presented. The project implementation is done without a general contractor (Willeke, 2012). Also, it is fully privately financed by E.ON, meaning that the project will not be handed over to the local, state or national government as is a common agreement in other countries (“project manager”). It is important to note that the project scope includes the single-block power plant plus a harbor for shipment of coal, connections to the rail and public electricity net, and connections to the district heating (Willeke, 2012; E.ON GmbH, 2013). This introduction of the “Datteln 4” project leads us to the reasons for why undertook this endeavor.

These reasons can be broadly divided into two main areas of opportunities that E.ON wanted to meet. The first one relates to the political situation in Germany. Here it must be noted that the German national government has made political and legislative efforts to transition the energy supply to relying more on renewable energy. However, E.ON emphasizes that having coal-power plants, especially ones as modern and efficient as “Datteln 4” are indispensable to balance volatile energy supply from solar and wind energy (Sorge, 2012). Besides this political agenda, several economic aspects convinced E.ON. Firstly, E.ON has been running a three-block power plant “Datteln 1-3” since the 1960s, providing rail energy and district heating at an efficiency rate of 38% (“Datteln 4” is planned to 45%) (Reinle, 2010). These blocks have reached their technical life-end and
should therefore be replaced (Reinle, 2010). Secondly, the location of “Datteln 4” (just across the old power plant) is logistically interesting with four canals intersecting (for coal supply), existing infrastructure from “Datteln 1-3” and a node of the railway power network (Willeke, 2012). Especially the latter is important as 25% energy demand of the German rail operator, Deutsche Bahn, will be covered, one key customer E.ON wants to serve (WDR, 2010). Other customers, the last economic incentive in favor of “Datteln 4”, include the public power grid and 100,000 homes that will be provided with district heat (WDR, 2010). With this political outset and economic benefits, in addition to the key figures around the project, now the timeline of “Datteln 4” will be presented.

The major events of this mega project stretch from 2004 to December 2013, including approvals and legal proceedings in 2007, court decisions finally stopping construction in 2010, and re-planning of regional plans until June 2013. Obviously, there are several intermediate events, which will be covered and many less important, which cannot be discussed for matters of clarity.

In 2004, the project began with the “start of specific planning and liaison work” (Willeke, 2012) under the assumption that the project will be completed by the beginning of 2011 (Sorge, 2012). The construction plan was set-up by the city of Datteln in March 2005, leading to the first protests (Reinle, 2010). In the same year, E.ON began with its public consultation procedure as legally demanded (Willeke, 2012). These actions then led to the town council’s preliminary approval of the land-use plan in 2007 (Willeke, 2012), and the first partial construction permit, allowing E.ON to begin with the construction of “Datteln 4” in February of that year (Willeke, 2012; Reinle, 2010). After this approval, E.ON was no longer legally obligated to consult the public, however began with the forum meetings in the “Kraftwerksforum” in May 2007, meeting approximately every three months after this point of time (IFOK GmbH, 2013).

Nonetheless, by the end of the year, legal proceedings against the preliminary approval and construction permit were started (Willeke, 2012) after a local farmer and resident of the neighboring town Waltrop had sued against the zoning plan (Neuhaus, 2013). In the next years, the tension between the opposing sides of E.ON and local residents backed by environmental NGOs such as the BUND (Friends of the Earth Germany) increased, best illustrated by one factual debate. Where the proponents claim that the new power plant is eco-friendlier as it produces 20% less CO2 per KWh than average coal power plants; the opponents pointed out that “Datteln 4” would emit six million tons of CO2 per year over the next 40 years (WDR, 2010). Finally, on September 3rd, 2009, after 31 months of construction, the zoning plan was declared void by the higher administrative court (Willeke, 2012; Reinle, 2010). Reasons for the decision included the discrepancy between local and regional planning, and the violation of requirements of state planning (Willeke, 2012; Reinle, 2010), and that environmental and societal protection were not considered sufficiently (Reinle, 2010). After the refusal of appeals, the court decision became final in March, 2010, leading to a halt of construction (Willeke, 2012).

In addition to this, E.ON lost the political backing after the state elections in May 2010 as the new government of social-democrats and environmentalists was heavily disputed about the future of the coal power plant project (Neuhaus, 2013). After raising the benchmark for the power plant, the state government finally allowed that the regional plan could be changed. So in June 2013 the regional authorities presented their final report that had analyzed that “Datteln 4” permitted on the existing site even after construction has begun.
(Neuhaus, 2013). The state government has now, in December 2013, accepted the report, initiating a completely new procedure for the permission to deviate from the objectives (Neuhaus, 2013). This can be rated as positive news for E.ON, although it is clear that several approval procedures have to be completed, not to mention the local city zoning plan that relies on the regional plan, and so new suits are expected (Neuhaus, 2013). And the time is running out, as “Datteln 4” has to be up and running, before the older power plants “Datteln 1-3” are switched off in March, 2014 (IFOK GmbH, 2013). Hence, the future of the power plant project remains uncertain.

Besides presenting the timeline of “Datteln 4” so far, this section should underline the societal impact, challenges and risks that make this a megaproject. Given the social conflict that the project has created pertaining to a multitude of the stakeholders, it becomes clear why stakeholder participation is needed in mega projects. As this section has however only touched upon the forum used in this case example, the following section will deal with the key features, relation to other channels of stakeholder communication, examples of discussion points in the forum and its current status.

4.1.2 The stakeholder participation forum “Kraftwerksforum Datteln”

As has been mentioned above in the timeline of the project, in May 2007 the “Kraftwerksforum Datteln” met for the first session under the moderation of IFOK GmbH, a leading international strategy and communication consultancy. It was initiated by E.ON as per requirement due to the past positive experiences, according to the project manager, Andreas Willeke (“project manager”). The purpose of the forum, although declared as being to lead to joint factual understanding, open discussion and solution finding for the region (IFOK GmbH, 2013), has to be analyzed deeper in the analysis (see section 4.2.). What is common knowledge, is that this stakeholder participation forum, the unit of analysis of this thesis, has since then been meeting in mainly non-public sessions every 3 months, including special events (IFOK GmbH, 2013).

Over the course of sessions, the members have changed according to the interviews, although the website of the forum (IFOK GmbH, 2013) only presents one case in January 2008 where one group left (because they were displeased with the protocols) and two new members joint the forum. Furthermore, several interviewees reported that they joined later (“kindergarten rep.”; “city rep.”; “resident”). What is however confirmed by both the moderator personally and the website, is that many stakeholder groups are resting their membership (“moderator”; IFOK GmbH, 2013). Therefore, the current forum seating includes groups and individuals from various areas of society (Table 5). Besides these participants, several guests have visited the forum.

Before moving on to the process and outcomes of the forum, it is important to place this stakeholder participation forum in context to other channels of communication that are used for the “Datteln 4” project by E.ON and other stakeholders. In doing so, the data presented will show that the forum is in fact central to many other tools, but that also some have a greater effect on it. One should note, for example, that before the first preliminary approval, E.ON was legally required to receive public comments, present the planning documents (repeatedly and in several steps), as well as respond to demands for public explanations (“NGO rep.”). However, apparently E.ON found it necessary to initiate the forum. Under this new banner, the forum itself decided to have information booths in Datteln and Waltrop (“city rep.”) although respondents were unclear if this booth was actually more for E.ON to promote itself (“resident”). Besides this, the press, the internet
websites and a newspaper by the forum itself ("communications manager"), the forum communicates mainly by e-mail ("resident"). The other tools that E.ON uses like an open telephone ("communications manager"), an information center at the power plant site, or direct contact to citizens ("project manager") can also only be seen as secondary to the forum, which uses processes that lead to an outcome that the other channels of communication are not targeted on and can probably not achieve.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder group</th>
<th>Name of organization</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project sponsor</td>
<td>E.ON GmbH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cities and regions</td>
<td>City of Datteln**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>City of Waltrop*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>District Recklinghausen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>Chamber of Commerce and Industry (IHK)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Union for Mining, Chemistry, and Energy (IG BCE)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>German Confederation of Trade Unions (DGB)**</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chambers of Trade (Handwerkskammer)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education and social initiatives</td>
<td>Caritas association of Datteln</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family Centre Johanniter Kindergarten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>City Kindergarten Datteln**</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Workers’ Welfare Organization (AWO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Churches</td>
<td>Catholic Church Community St. Josef*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizens’ clubs and initiatives</td>
<td>Former Citizens’ Network Pro Meckinghoven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vestnet*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizens</td>
<td><em>Four local residents</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderation</td>
<td>IFOK GmbH**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Members of the "Kraftwerksforum Datteln": *membership is resting, **chosen interviewee (IFOK GmbH, 2013)

As mentioned above, the forum is a non-public reoccurring event where the key external stakeholders of “Datteln 4” come together to discuss the project and its implications. The main processes that have been mentioned are reaching a factual consensus, discussing open points and trying to find solutions that all sides can live with (IFOK GmbH, 2013). Hence, it was obviously shown in the interviews that the agenda for every session is to go through the individual steps for the various points of conflicting positions ("resident"; “kindergarten rep.”; “city rep.”). One example is that the roads leading to the power plant site were damaged by the construction equipment ("union rep."). A representative of the city of Datteln presented what measures could be taken against ("kindergarten rep.") with E.ON accepting to take care of the matter by building a tire washing station for exiting trucks ("communications manager"). Naturally, there is more depth to this example, but it should sketch out what processes occur in the forum.

Through the various sessions of the forum several outcomes were proclaimed to having been made (Figure 3). Although the data analysis will investigate deeper into how the forum rates these outcomes and how they are reached, it can be noted that no evidence was found that the forum leads to substantial changes in the project. Furthermore, also no images, plans or solid sources of proof were presented on the website or other media, showing the actual change that has been made. Therefore, we were reliant on the observations of the interviewees and how they were informed about these changes. However, there is substantial evidence both from the interviews and the documents analyzed that list the outcomes of the forum.
4.2 Analysis of stakeholder participation

This section will examine the data gathered from the individual semi-structured interviews transcripts and supported with the data from the documents. The findings from interpreting and categorizing the evidence on existing, added and amended criteria suggested by literature will be presented and discussed by discovering the similarities and contradictions between the case data and the theoretical propositions.

4.2.1 Prerequisite criteria in the forum

As is stressed by some scholars (Bull et al., 2010; Edelenbos & Klijn, 2005; Morsing & Schults, 2006; Raven, 2009; Reed, 2008; Rowe & Frewer, 2000) there are several important prerequisite criteria for effective stakeholder participation. These criteria are the following: early involvement, stakeholder selection, defined agenda and willingness to cooperate. However, during the data analysis process it became clear that not all the data can be incorporated into these criteria, making a new set of prerequisite criteria necessary (Table 6). Thus, the need for one more prerequisite criterion, a clear purpose of participation, emerged. Furthermore, it was necessary to split stakeholder representation into stakeholder identification and stakeholder selection. The findings from interpreting and categorizing the evidence will be now presented.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literature</th>
<th>Case evidence</th>
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<tr>
<td>Stakeholder representation</td>
<td>Stakeholder identification</td>
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<td>Early involvement</td>
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<td>Defined agenda</td>
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<td>Willingness to cooperate</td>
<td>Willingness to cooperate</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Clear purpose</td>
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Table 6: Comparing prerequisite criteria proposed by literature with case evidence

“Solutions for the region

- Construction traffic and noise reduced: Note from the forum that some suppliers use the access to the children's hospital = > new sign with notice to the regular site entrance at children's hospital and note by E.ON to the contractors
- Clear detour signs: Through the discussion in the forum larger signs for the diversion of the bicycle track will be mounted.
- New option for cooling down exhaustion: Transparent and controversial discussion on the cooling tower exhaust pipe. New alternative meets approval in the forum.
- New district heating connections: Theme district heating is discussed via the information stands in the forum. Re-examination which settlements can be connected to the grid. First offers are currently being created.
- Sustainable transparency: environmental monitoring will be implemented with new measuring points, detailed environmental report, the possibility for control
- Strengthened civil dialogue: through the website, the forum newspaper, information stands and citizens events = > concerns and questions of the citizens are included comprehensively and introduced into the forum. Questions of citizens can so be quickly routed and handled on a neutral platform.”

Figure 3: Sample on the proclaimed outcomes of the forum from the 2nd year review (IFOK GmbH, 2013)
Stakeholder identification

It is claimed by scholars that identification of stakeholders is crucial to ensure societal acceptance for a project (Jia et al. 2011, p. 820), however it may be difficult to identify all the stakeholders (Reed, 2008, p. 2424). The data collected shown that attention was paid to stakeholder identification as an important initial process in ensuring representativeness of stakeholders in the forum. As evidenced by the interview with the communications manager, the endeavor to find both “positive and negative ones and invite them to come and sit on one table” was undertaken. Furthermore, the interviewees reported the use of stakeholder analysis of the region and stakeholder mapping as a tool to understand who important stakeholders are and invite them to participate. One more stakeholder identification tool employed was the interviews with the public during which was asked: “should we talk to another person? Do you think somebody else is important to talk to?” (“moderator”). The project manager also mentioned that later an advertisement in the newspaper was employed as a mechanism to identify project opponents and bring their perspectives into the forum. Moreover, as it can be spotted from the interviews with project participants, some stakeholders were identified by those already involved into the project as “a participant of the forum can invite or can suggest new members” (“communications manager”). Thus, several different mechanisms were implied to overcome the difficulty of stakeholder identification.

Stakeholder selection

It is stressed by scholars that for quality decisions a variety of perspectives must be considered and involved into participatory process (Bull et al., 2010, p. 999; Petts, 2001; Rowe & Frewer, 2000, p.13). This suggestion was put into action in the case as the project manager stated that the main principle for stakeholder selection was to make sure “that the composition was as heterogeneous as possible get” to ensure fruitful stakeholder dialogue on major issues and concerns. Consequently, the intention was to include in the power plant forum “simply all kinds of churches, associations, political parties, trade unions” (“project manager”) plus local community members, in particular those who were critical. However, the decision was made to exclude the politicians “because they are very well involved in the formal procedure” (“moderator”), and focus was to be on community dialogue. As the interviews revealed, quite a diverse range of stakeholders is participating in the forum, including: trade union representatives (DGB), people from neighborhood close to the power plant site, citizens of Datteln, representatives of the city and project team, to name a few. Moreover, the data collected shown that such a representation covers both proponents and opponents of the power plant.

Nevertheless, the critique was raised that the big NGOs and active citizens’ opposition groups “were more strongly represented in the initial phase and active, but then they left the forum over time” (“project manager”) what resulted in the lack of “really outspoken opponents of the project” (“project manager”) in the discussion. In addition to that, data evidence proved that the “the main critical stakeholders did not really attend this kind of forum” (“communications manager”) at all, though they have been invited by E.ON. These points raise the question about the balance in the forum as it was claimed by the participants interviewed that “not the citizens that are in the majority but the project sponsors, the moderators and the management” (“city rep.”), thus the project side is dominant. Despite the evidence of imbalance between proponents and opponents in the forum, both the project manager and the moderator stated that ones who left the forum “made their points and gave their ideas and information and opinion” (“moderator”) and this “does not mean that it is not controversially discussed today” (“project manager”).
Academics also point out the need to maintain small group dynamics (Reed, 2008, p. 2424). The challenge of reaching an appropriate number of participants when selecting stakeholders was also raised by the interviewees. To inform a wider audience on the initial stage of engagement the forum was open for everyone. However, according to the project team, for the deeper and more productive discussion it is very important to “have a trustful environment” (“communications manager”) by maintaining “a small circle, between 10-20 people” (“project manager”), “the decision must be who is allowed to attend” (“communications manager”). Relating to that point, several participants mentioned and found appropriate the formal voting procedures utilized to select new forum members. From this it can be concluded that there is “a certain amount of control” (“resident”) which, from one side, allows them to “exclude anyone who disturbs the course of the forum” (“resident”), but, from the other side, creates a risk for imbalanced representation of interests.

The case data also revealed the challenge of creating and maintaining the motivation to participate which hasn’t been discussed in the literature. As the data evidently shown, the participation “hasn’t been the best in last years” (“resident”) mostly because “a fatigue effect has entered” (“project manager”) as the project implementation is stopped and it is difficult for people in the forum to stay dedicated for so long. Since the forum was established, participants keep changing as some leave and others join. Thus, ensuring stakeholder representation is an on-going task and identification and selection become replicable processes.

Early involvement
There seems to be a common agreement among the authors that stakeholder involvement from the beginning of the project is essential (Raven 2009; Rowe & Frewer, 2000; Reed, 2008). The case evidence of the same was found during the data analysis. The moderator stated that “earlier the better” referring to early involvement and this view was supported by the project manager responding “absolutely” to the question “whether it makes sense to do it earlier”. In line with that, one of the forum participants stressed the importance of early involvement even more, claiming that one “not only should but must” put emphasis on starting stakeholder involvement at the beginning of the planning phase.

Concerning the case of “Datteln 4”, both the project manager and moderator pointed out that the power plant forum “was a relatively early realization” (“project manager”) and “E.ON was the first, or very earlier, in their decision to communicate with stakeholders in a way like a round table” (“moderator”), comparing to other projects. Nevertheless, he also clarified that earlier start was possible and “would have been great” while several stakeholders also support this opinion (“it would have been good” (“kindergarten rep.”); “some things would have gone better probably” (“resident”); “I would imagine that the whole process would have been different” (“city rep.”). The BUND representative added to this discussion, claiming the forum came too late as one reason for not participating (“NGO rep.”)

Literature suggests that earlier communication of potential benefits of the project leads to less conflicts concerning the project plan on the later phases (Olander & Landin, 2008, p. 554) This was confirmed by the case data, for example through statements like “the sooner people are informed that there is not such a high resistance but one has a broader or more-founded opinion why one is against the one or the other” (“kindergarten rep.”). The interviewees shared the opinion that people are more open to have a discussion at an early
stage especially in cases where conflicting views might arise on the benefits and risks of the project. Consequently, if stakeholders are brought together through a participation platform, like this forum, during the planning phase and are better informed, then public resistance to the project is lower and the opportunity to shape common understanding is higher.

On the other side, the interview with communications manager disclosed challenges for early involvement. It was claimed that the planning phase might be “not the right time to get the engagement with the local stakeholders” as “if you haven’t planned, how you can discuss about a project?” Thus, when nothing has been planned and the content for the dialogue is not built yet, the scope of discussion is too vague and in “the worst case, you [are] talking about nothing” (“communications manager”). In addition to that even when plans are presented the “imagination of the individual citizen is actually not there” (“city rep.”). However, a dilemma arises when stakeholders are confronted with a fait accompli, where what they had imagined is not matched by reality, but they have no possibility to influence (“city rep.”). Thus, although it may seem indisputable to involve stakeholders as early as possible, even the planning phase might be not the right time for intensive stakeholder participation. In conclusion, it can be stated that, regarding the time, early stakeholder is important to realize benefits of participation, however, this prerequisite criterion is difficult to ensure.

Defined agenda
According to Rowe & Frewer (2000), it is very important to define the agenda for the participation exercise. This should be done to fix the scope of issues and concerns that need to be discussed to avoid any misunderstanding about it (Edelenbos & Klijn, 2005, p. 426). The interview data revealed that the project team treated setting an agenda with consciousness. As the communications manager stated, it should be clear “what is the content we can discuss and what is not”, so “everybody who is attending the forum must be aligned with everything” (“communications manager”). The moderator supporte this view stressing that “it’s very important not to promise more than you can keep in these dialogue forums” (“moderator”), thus, it was expressed to the stakeholders that discussions about stopping the project are out of the scope of the forum. The power issues and capacity to influence the project that this non-negotiable brings will be discussed later (see section 4.2.4. and section 4.2.2. respectively).

As defined in the literature (Reed, 2008, p. 2424), in more intensive forms of participation, stakeholders involved have to have a possibility to set the agenda and raise the questions they what to discuss. The communications manager agreed that “it is really important, that the forum is created to give the participants the possibility to discuss what is important to them and they, of course, can set up the agenda” (“communications manager”). Therefore, though “the moderator of the forum always suggests an agenda” (“communications manager”) which is then discussed before the next meeting takes place and “everybody is free to give their ideas, their things they want to talk about” (“moderator”). Thus, in the end, “it is mainly a decision of the participants of the forum” (“communications manager”).

The interviews and the forum website revealed that on the initial stage agenda included fundamental topics such as: “should we need such big power plants at all? Because we have the renewable energy act and the German energy transition”, “Do we need a hall for the coal or is it sufficient if we take the coal just beside the power plant without any hall?”
Now “it’s more a discussion without going too deep” on topics like “health care, emissions, also noise, water sewage and heating of the channel in the vicinity” (“moderator”) and “how the project is affecting the environment, humans, and traffic” (“communications manager”), the “sponsor reports from site, the city regularly reports on the procedures and a planning forecast” (“city rep.”). As it is important to communicate the agenda to everyone involved (Rowe & Frewer, 2000, p. 16), the power plant forum does so by sending out invitations with the agenda 3–4 weeks before the next meeting session, which are consequently discussed (“kindergarten rep.”). After that discussion sticks to the agenda without the possibility to deepen particular topics or bring other topics in the forum directly (“kindergarten rep.”).

**Willing to cooperate**

Readiness of project participants for the two-way dialogue is important for effective participation (Morsing & Schults, 2006, p. 328). Thus, the willingness to cooperate and to listen to other perspectives should be there. The interviews revealed that the project opponents question the genuine efforts from the project owner’s side and believe that the willingness to listen was not given because their concerns were completely ignored in this first planning session and the contents were arrogantly not discussed (“NGO rep.”). On the other hand, the communications manager and the moderator expressed the view that many efforts to involve opponents into the discussion were done: “we asked them to join a discussion … we asked them if we should make a public debate … every time we were open and asked them in different ways, but they didn’t want to” (“moderator”). Thus, it is argued from the project side that E.ON wanted to have a dialogue but opponents “decided that the forum is too fixed” (“moderator”) and “that E.ON is not really talking to them” (“communications manager”). The project manager added to that with a proposition that “the power plant opponents who are in some way working for organizations, were encouraged by their organizations not to participate because it is perceived in principle as a concession or cooperation with E.ON” and that “there were people who belonged to citizens' initiatives, which would also have liked to come, but they got told by their organizations that they would not like to see that” (“project manager”).

Such a misunderstanding and missing readiness for dialogue seems to be connected to the fact that the forum came too late, after the plan approval procedure, when decisions were made “early on a political level, which afterwards cannot be corrected by any committee” (“resident”). At the point of time when the forum was established E.ON had no intention to discuss whether the power plant should be build or not that resulted in negative perception of the forum as a marketing event from the opposing groups who decided “to focus their energy to making the project not possible in the formal way” (“moderator”).

**Clear purpose**

Though scholars mention that the purpose of participatory process must be kept in mind while choosing the relevant methods to realize it (Davidson, 1998, p. 14; Reed 2008, p. 2424), they don’t emphasize the clear purpose as an important prerequisite criterion of effective participation. However, in case data the opinion is presented that it is crucial to “set up the purpose beforehand and ... clarify this in an early stage” (“communications manager”). It was decided though, to define clear purpose as one more prerequisite criterion for stakeholder participation as this is not only important for the project team to choose the right methods but also for the participants to understand the idea behind participation. As for the “Datteln 4” project, the project manager considered stakeholder participation to be “a contribution to increase acceptance ... as it is very important in such
infrastructure projects to have the acceptance of the population” (“project manager”). Consequently, the power plant forum came as a solution to bring opponents and proponents of the round table, let them have “a very fact-oriented discussion” (“moderator”) and “establish a meeting point” (“communications manager”). Thus, the public has an opportunity to “create their opinion” (“moderator”) about the project. From the perspective of the project team, the forum also was set-up to understand the views and minds of the project stakeholders and review actions according to them (“communications manager”). While the project manager referred to the forum mainly as “a tool to exchange information to the topics”, the moderator described the discussion nature of the forum and, furthermore, the communications manager emphasized that the forum “enables stakeholders to really participate in the planning”.

The communications manager expressed the view that the purpose should be clear for all the participants (“communications manager”). Different elements of the forum’s purpose founded through the interviews (information exchange, open critical discussion and solution finding) are stated on the forum website, so available for every participant. Interviews with participants also shown that the purpose was explained “but only very roughly” (“resident”) to them before they got involved into the forum. It can be said that clarifying the purpose should be a replicable process considering the changes among the forum participants through the long time period of involvement.

Although the purpose of participation through the forum was defined and communicated, the interviews revealed that the perception of the purpose differs among participants, consequently, shaping their opinion about the effectiveness of the forum. Some participants agreed that the purpose of the forum was “to bring all groups together to get rid of prejudice” (“resident”), to discuss “the pros and cons” (“kindergarten rep.”) and create a space where “the general public has a say, and that information is also carried into public” (“union rep.”). Meanwhile, other participants questioned the solution finding element of the forum purpose, stating it is “90% an information event to keep alive with some side topics, which could maybe be interesting” (“resident”). Furthermore, the most critical opponents stated the forum to be “an event for the E.ON marketing to improve its image” (“NGO rep.”) and “only intends to push through the power plant legitimation and to support it in a communicative manner” (“city rep.”). The data shown that the perception of the purpose is connected to the individual expectations that participants had about the forum. Thus, the expectations of the stakeholders, which will be discussed in the following sections (see section 4.2.4.), should be considered when setting the purpose of participation.

4.2.2 Process criteria in the forum

The literature suggests that the outcomes of participation are dependent on the process that leads to them (Bull et al., 2010; Edelenbos & Klijn, 2005; Morsing & Schults, 2006; Raven, 2009; Rowe & Frewer, 2000; Reed, 2008). The following set of process criteria is proposed by scholars: independent facilitation, process design, deliberation, access to resources, attention to power asymmetry and transparency. However, regarding to the data received through the interviews the decision was made to merge criteria of access to resources, deliberation and attention to power asymmetry into influence criterion as both create possibility to influence the input and output of the process. The criterion of transparency will be emphasized later with other underlying issues (see section 4.2.4.). The following section will present these differences in the process criteria (Table 7).
Facilitation

Scholars emphasize an importance of facilitation for an effective participatory process. It is generally accepted that having a highly skilled and independent facilitator plays a crucial role in enhancing capability of different parties to participate (Benn et al., 2009, p. 1570; Richards et al., 2004). From the very beginning, the forum is operating under moderation of IFOK GmbH, a leading consultancy company with proven experience in stakeholder involvement. The moderation of the forum is fully financed by E.ON (“project manager”; “moderator”) which is common in public engagement (Rowe & Frewer, 2000, p. 13).

In line with theoretical perspective, the project manager emphasized that a neutral and objective facilitation is a must to “ever bring a sense” (“project manager”) of the forum and realize the benefits of participation and (“project manager”). The moderator agreed stating “we have the neutral position and that is important for us ... we are over the positions” (“moderator”). However, both pointed out that it is a challenge to persuade participants in independence and impartiality of the moderation (“project manager”; “moderator”). As the forum is paid from the project owner side and, thus, “is the Achilles heel of the whole construct” because “if E.ON paid the whole, then, of course, everyone assumes that we manage the whole forum” (“project manager”). The project manager stated that there was no opportunity to avoid such a situation as “if we would say, each participant pays for the forum, then we would have no more participants”. The moderator described the solution in proving independence of moderation “in every step, in every word, in every comment ... in the procedure and the discussion”: “we had interviews in the region and talked to important stakeholders, we talked to them and from the beginning we told everyone that we are paid by E.ON ... we made that absolutely clear against E.ON that we need the freedom and neutral position to work ... so they give us the freedom to facilitate in the way we want to do it ... there is absolutely no link between paying and results of the dialogue” (“moderator”).

Despite the possibility that those involved perceive the moderation as biased and not objective, the project manager claimed that “participants would have certainly confirmed that Mr. Eggert does not act on the part of E.ON, but actually acts as a kind of supporter acts for those who are not so professional, but rather critical, ask questions to them accordingly as also be addressed” (“project manager”). As for participants, in general they agreed that the forum “is well moderated” (“kindergarten rep.”) and “one has to applaud IFOK”. The interviews revealed that the moderator make sure that “various methods are explained well” (“kindergarten rep.”), the topics are “really treated and not left to be fizzled out” and “even if a single one in the forum had a question or need for clarification, it was discussed to the end without ruffle or excitement” (“resident”). For those environmental organizations and citizens who don’t perceive the forum and the facilitation as unbiased it was proposed to choose their format of participation, however, “generally that was not so well perceived” (“project manager”).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literature</th>
<th>Case evidence</th>
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<tr>
<td>Process design</td>
<td>Process design</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent facilitation</td>
<td>Independent facilitation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Access to information</td>
<td>Influence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attention to power asymmetry</td>
<td>Transparency</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deliberation</td>
<td>[moved to underlying issues]</td>
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Table 7: Comparing criteria for the process proposed by literature with case evidence
Process design
The framing for participation that includes policy conditions, tools and methods for discussion and basic rules (Edelenbos & Klijn, 2005, p. 426) should be designed to make clear the mechanisms of participation exercise (Bruijn & Leitjen, 2007, p.64; Rowe & Frewer, 2000, p.16). According to the forum participants, the “power plant forum is always well structured” (“kindergarten rep.”). The moderator told that there was no official guideline but at the first meeting some basic rules were agreed on like “let people explain their points, don’t interrupt, we don’t want to talk aggressive”. Before every forum meeting the participants receive the minutes of the last meeting via email to review everything, and then it is always an agenda setting procedure (“resident”). Finally the schedule is always available with open points (“resident”). With an invitation the participants are told what they can and can’t do on the forum, also different methods are explained by the moderator (“kindergarten rep.”), so everyone is informed about the framing.

During the forum meeting topics fixed in the agenda are processed very structured. Presentations of different topics, for example construction process up to date, are done by the speakers or experts using the tools like Power Point. On the initial phase presentations were more detailed: “In previous years, there have been particular topics about which we discussed, for which I have then put together information material. If you want to present the topic of dust emissions, then you have to put together a lot of information, photos, graphics and such” (“project manager”). Now, when everyone is well informed and the basic discussions are over, the presentations are shorter with an update to the current status (“communications manager”; “project manager”). Visual information like pictures from the side is commonly used to increase the understanding of the participants.

After the presentations the Q&A session and discussion follows (“kindergarten rep.”; “union rep.”). Similar to presentation format, the methods used for discussion have changed since the forum was established. In the beginning joint fact finding method was used to discuss and state pros and cons and reach the common understanding on a topic (“moderator”). Now it is more discussions with not going too deep, “to have an image of the opinions in the forum” (“kindergarten rep.”). Different methods are used to give people the opportunity to express their opinion: “sometimes you use special methods like the flash feedback, sometimes you have interviews, or bilateral discussions in a telephone call and ask “What do you think about it?” get arguments” (“moderator”). Working groups are also used as a method in the forum to engage participants into discussions on project related issues and create new solutions (“kindergarten rep.”). Finally, after each meeting there is a protocol available with everything that was done during the forum session.

Influence
The literature suggests that stakeholder participation process aims to create deliberative space where different topics can be discussed taken into account different, even controversial, perspectives (Benn et al., 2009, p.1573; Parkins & Mitchell, 2005, p. 529). To achieve high quality decisions parties involved should be able to influence the input of the process (agenda) and the output (decisions made). Thus, the capacity to influence the project decisions should be created through the process. From the interview data it is clear that participants have a possibility to influence the agenda and decide what topic they should talk about next time (“moderator”; “resident”; “kindergarten rep.”). Moreover, “they can choose experts if they want to have a special expert” (“moderator”). As it was mentioned in previous sections (see section 4.2.1.), participants can also decide who they
would like to participate in the next forum session. Thus, the participants can influence the input of the process. Before each meeting session participants “have an opportunity to search in the internet or contact an expert to have a background knowledge” (“union rep.”), so they are capable to bring their opinions into discussion. Participants are also free to create their own discussion groups (“moderator”). For example, where are several working groups on regional engagement, “working for the common good of the city Datteln” (“kindergarten rep.”). Through the forum the decision is made which projects should be supported and can be sponsored.

According to the moderator, during the discussion everybody has a chance to make their points, give their ideas, share information and opinions while others listen (“moderator”). The participants confirmed on that stating they could bring “critical opinions in the forum”, “express my personal opinion or what I heard from my personal environment”. Moreover, the project manager emphasized the fact that even the opponents are allowed to present their position and bring their experts so “one then could see the pro and contra positions” and make his own opinion. The moderator continued on this point, telling it is important that both sides can influence the discussion and work out the facts together to decide “what is true, what is not clear and what is common mind from both experts and do we have points which are controversial” (“project manager”). The coal power plant has disadvantages for the region, so the forum gives local stakeholders the opportunity to argue the conflict points and find the solutions by sharing and discussing different opinions (“moderator”). Thus, there is possibility to influence the project and change some project decisions through the forum.

However, one should “not overestimate the influence” (“city rep.”) as the scope of discussion is limited due to non-negotiable that power plant will be built anyway. “E.ON said at the beginning we don’t want to change our coal, the size and the location” (“moderator”), so “the audience is not sitting together to discuss if the project should be built or not” (“communications manager”). Consequently, the opponents of the project stressed that they don’t see the possibility for major influence as it is not possible to influence the final decision on the project in principle (“NGO rep.”). Others are not participating, because “they think: “There is nothing important, that I might miss. It doesn’t matter if I’m not there” (“resident”), “we talk or discuss about sideshows, one cannot discuss much at the moment, because of the construction is stopped and all legal matters are not clarified” (“resident”). Moreover, the project manager agreed that there is an impression “that, at such a forum you cannot do much” (“project manager”). In fact, though there is a possibility to influence discussion, the forum had no legal decision-making power (“moderator”). Thus, it is also important if suggestions made with stakeholder input are realized or not that will be discussed in the next sections.

4.2.3 Outcomes criteria in the forum

Literature suggests several criteria for the outcomes (Edelenbos & Klijn, 2005; Raven, 2009; Rowe & Frewer, 2000; Reed, 2008) which account for effective stakeholder participation. These criteria are the following: actors’ satisfaction, evidence of input, implementation of decisions and social learning. The evidence on these criteria was found in the interviews transcripts and documents. However, the criterion of actors’ satisfaction was moved to underlying issues (see section 4.2.4.). The findings from interpreting and categorizing the evidence will be now presented (Table 8).
Table 8: Comparing criteria for the outcomes proposed by literature with case evidence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literature</th>
<th>Case evidence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actors’ satisfaction</td>
<td>[moved to underlying issues: as “expectations”]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence of input</td>
<td>Evidence of input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation of decisions</td>
<td>Implementation of decisions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social learning</td>
<td>Social learning</td>
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Evidence of input
As participatory process ideally serves to let stakeholders play an active part in the project, the outcomes of participation should contain the evidence of stakeholder input (Edelenbos & Klijn, 2005, p. 424; Petts, 2001). According to the interviews, after every forum session the protocol is made that summarizes everything discussed in the forum (“resident”; “moderator”; “kindergarten rep.”). The moderator also writes the press release and the decisions made in which the information that the participants have provided is made reference to (“city rep.”). Thus, the participants can see if the perspective they shared is reflected in the final document and is clearly understood. As the moderator explained, the forum members can afterwards check if the information is correct and all the discussion points are presented and give their comments if they are not agree with something (“moderator”). All the documents that are results of the forum are then available on the website (“moderator”). The forum website presents the evidence of the case when one of the forum participants was not satisfied with the quality of the protocols. However, the allegations were unitedly renounced by the other forum members as they confirmed that the protocols created contain the controversial discussions and all opinions are reproduced correctly (IFOK GmbH, 2013).

Implementation of decisions
The literature emphasizes that it is very important to implement the decisions made through the participatory process (Rowe & Frewer, 2000, p.14). The interviewees claimed that the number of suggestions that the forum sessions brought have been realized. Though no additional proof of the same was found on the forum website or media sources, we rely on the observations of the interviewees presenting evidence that the changes actually took place. As the moderator emphasized, “the forum had a lot of results and changed the plans of E.ON” (“moderator”). Some participants believe the same stating “participation changed the project. Some single things have been changed and those were decidedly coming from the forum” (“union rep.”). Where participants had suggestions it was worked out by E.ON (“moderator”; “communications manager”) and the project plans have been changed “because E.ON recognized that they can do something here, sometimes it is more expensive, but they could do it and they did it” (“moderator”). However, E.ON has the final decision about bringing changes into the project, so sometimes they said “it is not possible”. Moreover, the project manager stated that “although a protocol is always written, I do not sit there for days afterwards with the protocol and recapitulate it all again”. Therefore, it might be said that the points incorporated in the protocol are more suggestions than a real decisions and not all of them receive an attention from the project side when it comes to implementing the changes.

Nevertheless, a couple of changes was done due to the forum. For example, the decision to the monitoring of the power plant was extended (“communications manager”), a washing station for the truck wheels was implemented (“communications manager”), the whole water management was worked out (“moderator”), and the detour signs were installed (IFOK GmbH, 2013). The decision was also made through the forum to sponsor some
projects on regional engagement and these projects got money ("kindergarten rep."). However, it is difficult to say whether some changes in the project planning documents concerning, for example, alternative cooling down exhaustion, new district connections and the production will be implemented in a way it was agreed on because the project is stopped. On the other side, the project opponents shared the view that no fundamental changes can be implemented because the most critical aspects are non-negotiable ("project manager"; "NGO rep.").

Social learning
As it is stated on the forum website, information exchange in order to create a common understanding is what the forum aims to achieve (IFOK GmbH, 2013). The case data presents the evidence of the knowledge exchange, learning and increase in degree of awareness between participants. The moderator noted that as a result of the power plant forum, “everyone is very well informed” ("moderator"). Most of the forum participants shared this view and pointed out the forum is “very informative” ("resident") and they “always feel well informed after the forum” ("kindergarten rep."). Moreover, some of the interviews claimed that the forum enriches the understanding of the topics that are discussed as “one has a complete picture” ("kindergarten rep."; "project manager"). Another admitted the forum was very useful to see both sides and make their own opinion ("resident"). As one member concluded, she doesn’t find the project as bad as before because of her participation in the forum ("kindergarten rep."). Furthermore, participants not only improved their understanding of the project but learned how to develop and discuss ideas that they find useful in other aspects of their lives ("kindergarten rep.").

As for the project representatives, the forum brought better understanding of citizens concerns that was taken into account by the project team ("communications manager"; “project manager”). The project manager found out through the forum that “even if it is possibly not justified it seems to trouble people” and “the one is what the objective facts are, the other is but how it is perceived by the population”. Consequently, interaction with stakeholders was changing to consider specifically those priorities. The new channels of communication like information stalls and regional engagement groups appeared to strengthen further the information and knowledge exchange between the E.ON and the local stakeholders.

Furthermore, the suggestion was shared by the moderator that it “would be nice if the forum stays alive after the coal power plant (if it would start working)” ("moderator"). That would be particularly good for the knowledge exchange and learning between the citizens of Dattlen and E.ON. However, this opinion is not supported by the project representatives who don’t see the need for having the forum after establishing the plant (“communications manager”).

4.2.4 Underlying issues in the forum
From the case data it became clear that there are some underlying issues that interviewees refer to when talking about stakeholder participation. These issues are: transparency, power, atmosphere and expectations. Although, transparency and, to some extent, power were included in the theoretical framework as process criteria, they are considered to be the underlying throughout the entire stakeholder participation as they seem to shape the perception of the forum by the participants. This assumption makes the four underlying issues important to analyze. In this last section the data will be presented and analyzed, and
a new case-based framework will be proposed. In the following discussion chapter a new case-based framework and its implications will be discussed more in-depth.

**Transparency**

The underlying issue of transparency is important to analyze in this section as it influences the perception of the participants about the forum and, therefore, can serve as an indicator for the general acceptance of the stakeholder participation. The literature touches upon this issue suggesting that “by being transparent, it is likely that public suspicions about the sponsors and their motives may be allayed” (Rowe & Frewer, 2000, p.15).

The frame for participation including the purpose, stakeholder selection procedure, the basic rules of the forum, was set and communicated to all the participants (“moderator”). Furthermore, the topics set in agenda were very openly talked about until everyone was clear about them (“union rep.”). The moderator also pointed out that information that could lead to conflict later was released from the very beginning, for example that the moderation is financed by E.ON and there are non-negotiable points that are out of the scope of the forum discussion (“We don’t want to change our coal, the size and the location. That was not negotiable.” (“moderator”)). Therefore, there is an evidence for a formal transparency of participatory process in “Datteln 4” case. Moreover, the interviews revealed that the forum sessions are also perceived as transparent by the participants (“union rep.”; “city rep.”; “kindergarten rep.”).

The case data also shown that the outcomes of the forum are quite transparent. The forum web site was created to collect all the information about the forum and its outcomes. The moderator also explained, that they “created a lot of documents to make clear what the forum has done, what was the discussion” (“moderator”). As was discussed in previous sections, there is always a protocol available and the minutes of the previous meetings, press releases in media (“resident”; “kindergarten rep.”). It is also worth mentioning, that the communication between the participants in between the forum meetings is transparent: “we communicate with each other” (“resident”; “if one has heard anything or was approached by a citizen or by another institution, then that is carried around immediately” (“union rep.”)). This not only makes clear that there is formal transparency in terms of documents, but also that participants are transparent amongst each other.

Although in general the forum perceived as transparent, some concerns were still shared about the purpose of participation and stakeholder representation. Some participants told that it is a “90% information event” (“resident”) and there is a feeling that only proponents are present on the forum (“kindergarten rep.”), though the purpose which was communicated includes critical discussions and joint planning. The opponents of the project agreed with this view and even stated that the purpose of the forum is not what it seems, but that serves only the marketing intentions of E.ON (“NGO rep.”). Therefore, the purpose of the forum could have been clarified better to diminish suspicions about the motives of the project owner. To conclude, it can be stated that transparency is important to ensure on every stage, from setting and communicating the purpose to implementing the decisions, to improve the general acceptance of the stakeholder participation and consequently societal acceptance.

**Atmosphere**

The atmosphere of the forum is very important as it seems to influence the perception of participants. The communications manager emphasized that a trustful environment should
be created to make sure that every stakeholder is engaged ("communications manager") and other participants agreed on that ("city rep."); "project manager"). "The best which you can do to set up an environment, where everybody can get the information they would like to and get the possibility to discuss it in a secured and trustful environment" ("city rep."). The project manager believes that although the power plant forum is performed tough in the topic, the atmosphere in less aggressive as opposed to other projects ("project manager"). As he has "never experienced a situation where the emotions were so cooked up that someone would leave the room", it is possible to communicate very well with the participants of the forum ("project manager"). In line with that, the participants stated that "the atmosphere is very comfortable" ("resident"), "pleasant and less business-like" ("city rep."). The local neighborhood representative pointed out how he was welcomed from the beginning onwards and was never discriminated for being an opponent of the power plant. Moreover, "people were very glad, that someone out of that section indicated interest and wanted to help" ("resident"). Thus, the participants believe that the forum created an open and trustful atmosphere.

It should be noted that to begin with the atmosphere was worse and that the forum managed to improve this. As the moderator explained, the situation wasn’t the same before the forum. On the formal procedures "the opponents didn’t even shake the hand of the E.ON people, even to say hello, so they just walked by. The atmosphere was very frozen." ("moderator").

Power

The underlying issue of power seems to have the most shortcomings in the forum, making it very critical to analyze in this section. As it was mentioned in previous sections (see section 4.2.1.2.), the forum intended to be as heterogeneous as possible in terms of stakeholders represented. However, many critical opponents of the power plant found no basis for a dialogue and refused to participate. As a result, there is the feeling “that only PRO power plant sits in the forum” ("kindergarten rep.") as “the group of the power plant critics is too small” and “the interests of opponents and citizens have too little weight” ("resident"). The project manager agreed that in last two years the really outspoken opponents of the project are missing ("project manager"). Therefore, it seems like the power discrepancy is relevant for the power plant forum as some participant feel that they are “too small to be able to exert influence there” ("kindergarten rep."). Therefore, there are fewer opportunities to bring critical opinions to the round table and discuss topics controversially when the most critical perspectives are not represented.

Another weakness of the forum besides the actual power distribution is the extent of power the participants have. Although the participants can set the agenda and make suggestions for the changes in the project, E.ON are the ones to define non-negotiable points and make a final decision whether the suggestions will be implemented. In the end, forum doesn’t have any legal power ("moderator"). This seems to be the main reason why the opponents are not participating in the forum. The most critical point whether the power plant should be built or not is non-negotiable ("project manager"; "communications manager"; "moderator"), so for opponents the forum discussion is too fixed to bring any substantial changes (“NGO rep.”). Therefore, the most critical opponents feel “the barriers were too hardened, it could simply not be resolved” ("resident") and they are not given a power to make an input into the project through participation in the forum. Thereby, it can be concluded that there is a problem in power distribution that influences other criteria and gives the stakeholders a negative perception that the forum could not fulfill its potential.
Expectations

Expectations management seems to be very important for effective stakeholder participation ("moderator"). The interviews exposed to some extent the different expectations the stakeholders had about the participatory process. Some of these expectations were met but some were not, resulting in different degrees of actors’ satisfaction.

Several participants shared the view that they expected to “get first-hand information ... not through the media, which may be misleading” (“kindergarten rep.”) and to share information (“city rep.”) “instead of always only consuming information which is made by E.ON” (“communications manager”). Some participants stressed they expected to listen to both opinions of those who are interested in the power plant legitimation and who are against (“city rep.; “resident”). Thus, one of the common expectations was information gathering and exchange to have a better understanding of the project and different stakeholders’ perspectives (“project manager”). The responses of the interviewees presented the evidence that this expectation was met. Several participants seem to be satisfied with the forum and tell their expectations about information exchange are fulfilled (“union rep.;” “kindergarten rep.; “resident”).

However, some participants also expected to have a “serious and comprehensive discussion” (“city rep.”) of the critical topics and participate in the planning process by giving suggestions for changes in the project plans (“resident”; “city rep.”). This expectation was not completely satisfied. As was previously discussed, there is a lack of opponents among the forum participants so the discussion is missing critical perspective. At the same time, the possibility to influence the project is limited because of non-negotiable points and the power asymmetry. Though, after some critical discussions several suggestions have been reflected in the protocols and accepted by the E.ON, they are not substantial changes. Consequently, the expectations of the stakeholders which expected more possibility to discuss and influence the project through the forum were not fully satisfied. Due to this fact, the public interest to the forum “subsided significantly in the last 1.5 years” (“project manager” ) as there is a perception that the forum is good for giving and receiving information but not more than that (“project manager”; “resident”; “city rep.”).

Hence, according to the moderator, the expectations management is very important to “not promise more than you can keep in these dialogue forums; we never gave the feeling that E.ON should change their mind” (“moderator”). However, there is evidence that in the case of “Datteln 4” the formulation of the forum purpose was not explicit and, as some participants mentioned, it was communicated very briefly to them (“resident”) that leaves some confusion about what to expect or not. Therefore, it is very important to align different expectations about the participation and reflect them in the purpose of stakeholder involvement. Moreover, it is important to monitor the satisfaction of different stakeholders with the outcomes of the participatory process. It can be said that to a great extent the actors’ satisfaction with the outcomes is dependent on whether the expectations about the process have been met or not.

4.3 Theoretical framework vs case-based framework

Considering the similarities and differences between the theoretical framework and the case data that were analyzed above, a new case-based framework is presented (Figure 4). Generally, it can be said that the two frameworks have the same structure with common...
features. Nominally, the main two changes relate to the criteria and the underlying issues. For the former, the criteria were added, removed or adjusted according to the analysis. For the latter, the four underlying issues were added to the bottom to graphically present that these should be considered throughout the stakeholder participation process and influence the effectiveness of the technique. Obviously these changes of the framework as well as other less apparent findings from the analysis must be studied further in-depth which will happen in the following discussion chapter.

![Mega project context diagram](image)

**Figure 4: The new case-based framework**
5 Discussion

This chapter will discuss the implications the research findings have, in terms of the three objectives that were set in the introduction. Therefore, according to the first objective, the general assessment will be made of whether stakeholder participation actually improves societal acceptance for this mega project. Based on the insight that it does, the following section will examine if and to what extent the criteria proposed in the theoretical framework are relevant for mega projects, in order to satisfy the second objective. As the third objective was to develop the framework according to the context of mega projects, the last section will present the changes (such as the underlying issues). Fulfilling all these research objectives will finalize the discussion, leading to the conclusion of this thesis.

5.1 The general stakeholder participation link in mega projects

As the first objective was to investigate whether stakeholder participation actually improves societal acceptance for mega projects, this section will discuss this general link.

To begin with the case evidence will be recapitulated and summarized, before it will be shown what restricted the extent of societal acceptance. Lastly, the room for development for the forum “Kraftwerksforum Datteln” is discussed, showing that stakeholder participation does improve societal acceptance but total acceptance is near impossible.

5.1.1 Stakeholder participation improves societal acceptance

From the analysis it became noticeable that stakeholder participation in mega projects can lead to improved societal acceptance, although the latter is difficult to measure. There are several accounts in the case of “Datteln 4” that provide evidence of this link. On the one hand, both the project manager and the moderator stated that previous experience with projects (which were most likely mega projects) lead them to expect that stakeholder participation would improve societal acceptance. For E.ON, the value of such a process must be undoubtable, as they have made this a standard process. On the other hand, the views of the external stakeholders were generally positive. Most participants showed that they had some feeling of engagement and ability to influence the project. Some even recognized that the dialogue within the forum relativized some of the preconceptions they had about the coal power plant construction. This also added to the trust and mutual understanding that participants had for each other stemming from the transparent and fair atmosphere. Obviously, some inference has to be made from these accounts both about the participants’ acceptance and about that of the wider community, which will be discussed later. However, the evidence from the case study does show that, as proposed in literature (see section 2.4.), stakeholder participation like in the forum can also improve societal acceptance for mega projects.

5.1.2 Restrictions to the extent of societal acceptance

The extent to which societal acceptance could be reached through stakeholder participation is restricted, as shown in this case study. Firstly, it should be noted that the positions towards “Datteln 4” may be righteous, meaning that some parts of society cannot be convinced, because their concerns are sound with or without stakeholder participation (see section 6.4.). Nonetheless, this decides the positions that participants enter the discussion with, setting the frame of possibility. For example, E.ON clearly stated from the beginning of the forum that they were not willing to change the scope and location of the power plant. Therefore their unwillingness to cooperate reduced the frame of discussion and hence the extent to which societal acceptance could be reached. Furthermore it underlines the
propositions made by researchers, which have already stated that implementing such practices is not easy due to resistance from both project sponsors and local actors (Arnstein, 1969, p. 3). Therefore the case shows that although a forum for a mega project may improve societal acceptance its effectiveness is restricted through the positions and flexibility of stakeholders.

5.1.3 Suggestions for improvement of stakeholder participation

Despite the positive evidence and the restrictions presented above, there are points, like the stakeholder representation, transparency of the purpose, and the degree of participation, where the forum could have led to more societal acceptance. The following will discuss this room for improvement, showing the difficulties to realizing this in reality. Firstly, several participants including the project manager see that the representativeness of society could have been better, especially in terms of opposing opinions. Although this may directly relate to the restrictions made above, this problem may have been solved if the forum would have been implemented earlier, where these restrictions were probably not as evident. However, this leads to the dilemma on the early involvement criteria (see section 5.2.1.). Secondly, the moderator and project sponsors could have been more transparent is the purpose they intend for the forum. With this, reference is made to evidence from participants and non-participants who perceived this stakeholder participation technique and related methods (such as the information stands) more as information events or even marketing possibilities than a chance for society to be an active part in the project. Rather E.ON should have made clear what their intentions are with the forum, presenting and sharing information openly (as requested by participants) as well as signalizing when challenges in allowing participation changed the purpose. Lastly, the case also shows that true participation i.e. actually allowing stakeholders to change the project was not fully achieved, while also presenting the difficulties. Rather, in a mega project (that is a huge investment after all) the reluctance of project managers to share decision-making power seems higher (Koppenjan et al., 2011, p.740). Nonetheless, this case also shows what happens if the concerns of key stakeholders are not even considered (for example the legal action taken by BUND, the environmentalist NGO). Therefore project sponsors must be more sensitive towards the concerns of stakeholders (Edelenbos & Klijn, 2005, p.419; Lawrence, 2006, p. 283). In conclusion, there is a void of potential to improve societal acceptance that remains to be discovered, although it seems difficult to reach these higher levels.

After investigating the case of “Datteln 4”, it can be concluded that stakeholder participation does improve societal acceptance for mega projects, however only to a certain extent. This insight relates mainly to the positive accounts made by participants, but also the restrictions and shortcomings that are difficult to overcome in this context. Therefore stakeholder participation cannot be seen as a stand-alone solution (as mentioned by the project and communication manager), but rather as one effective tool of many others (Reed, 2008, p. 2425). However, the foundation for examining this general link further in-depth in order to see how relevant the theoretical framework is for mega projects.

5.2 The relevance of the theoretical framework for mega projects

The previous section presented the evidence on the link between stakeholder participation and societal acceptance in mega projects concluding that stakeholder participation can potentially improve societal acceptance. Now the task is to examine, using the findings from the data analysis, how relevant is the theoretical framework for the mega projects context. This will be discussed going from the general structure of the framework to three
groups of criteria and separate criteria inside them. By doing so, the second objective of the thesis will be satisfied.

From the analysis of the interviews it is evident that three groups of criteria could be distinguished as in the theoretical framework: prerequisite criteria, process and outcome criteria still hold true for mega projects. Therefore, the general structure of the framework did not change drastically because of the specific context. In line with the literature (Blackstock et al., 2012, p. 113; Reed, 2008, p. 2421), the analysis demonstrates that there are interconnections between the groups of criteria. It can be said, that the prerequisite criteria influence the construction and substance of the participatory process which, in turn, determine the final outcomes. For example, the process design is dependent on how many stakeholders are represented and what agenda is defined; or the implementation of decisions is dependent on whether the project owners are ready to cooperate and change the project. Hereby, the synergy effects, both positive and negative, between criteria should be taken into account when implementing and evaluating participatory practices. Moving further, it can be concluded from the interviewees’ responses, that most of criteria proposed by scholars (see section 2.3.4.) and incorporated into the theoretical framework also proved to be relevant for mega projects. However, there are some peculiarities revealed through the data analysis which are important to emphasize that will be discussed on each group of criteria and separate the criteria inside them.

5.2.1 Relevance of the prerequisite criteria
Most of prerequisite criteria suggested in the literature proved to be relevant in the mega projects context. These are: early involvement, willingness to cooperate and defined agenda. Through the data analysis the evidence was found also on stakeholder representation, however, this criterion was adapted to meet the context and will be discussed later as well as the new prerequisite of clear purpose.

There are several accounts in the case of “Datteln 4” that provide evidence that the early involvement is highly relevant (see section 2.3.4.), but also should be emphasized more in mega projects. The negative influence that a later start of the forum has on the participatory process, such as the limited possibility to influence the project, and unwillingness to participate from opponent’s side, demonstrate the need for active involvement as early as possible. On the other hand, the analysis revealed the challenges for early involvement that literature does not mention. The planning phase might be not the right time for intensive stakeholder participation because the scope of discussion is too vague and because stakeholders can accept the project but later confront, if they realize that what they had imagined on the planning phase is not matched by reality. Thereby, it can be concluded that, early stakeholder involvement is relevant and of a high importance, however, the possibility remains that it will not prevent the confrontation later.

The willingness of project participants for the two-way dialogue also proved to be important, and, as the case example demonstrates, influences the process and the outcomes of stakeholder participation. From the data analysis it is noticeable that stakeholders’ willingness to cooperate depends on transparency of the purpose, process and outcomes of participation, whether their concerns were ignored or not, and especially on the early involvement. Meanwhile, low willingness to cooperate proved to influence stakeholder representation and consequently the quality of critical discussion. However, the data analysis also touched upon the difficulty to ensure actors’ willingness to cooperate in mega projects. As mega projects require huge investments from the project sponsor, the project owner makes decisions to create planning certainty about the project and these decisions
cannot be changed later (see chater 2.1.2). At the same time, mega projects bring some substantial disadvantages (i.e., ecological damage, social safety issues) that restrict the willingness of affected stakeholders (i.e. environmental parties and local community) to accept the project and have a base for the dialogue. As a way to improve the willingness to cooperate from stakeholders, project sponsors must be more sensitive towards the concerns of stakeholders and try to involve them as early as possible. However, because of the highly conflict nature of some issues about the mega projects this might still not be completely achieved.

Through the data analysis it was concluded that a defined agenda leads to more effective participation in mega projects. From the information provided by participants it is evident that defined and communicated agenda creates a better understanding of the scope of the discussion. Moreover, the importance of letting the stakeholders to shape the agenda, which was suggested in the literature for the effective participation (Reed, 2008, p. 2424), proved to be relevant. The literature has not discussed but proved to be relevant in mega project context is the changing nature of the agenda because of the long period of the participation. Thereby, project managers should make the changing nature of the agenda a common practice for stakeholder participation, giving the stakeholders possibility to define what they want to discuss and change the agenda when needed.

5.2.2 Relevance of the process criteria

Through the data analysis the evidence was found that process criteria of independent facilitation and process design are hold true for mega projects (see section 2.3.4.). The other criteria (deliberation, attention to power asymmetry and access to resources) will be discussed later as the case evidence that rather one criterion of influence should be used for mega projects.

Supporting the theoretical proposition (Edelenbos & Klijn, 2005, p. 426), the case evidence revealed the importance of a process design for effective participation. From the responses of the forum participants it can be concluded that the established framing for participation that includes policy conditions, tools and methods for discussion and basic rules creates the perception that the process is well organized and structured. Furthermore, it improves the process because participants are familiar with the basic rules, the agenda and the methods used for discussion. What was also discovered through the case study was that the basic rules of dialogue did not change, but the methods used changed since the forum was established (e.g. the agenda and the purpose of the forum). Thereby, as mega projects are characterized by long duration (see section 2.1.1.), it makes sense to set a dynamic framework to increase effectiveness of the process.

In line with the theoretical perspective (Flyvbjerg et al., 2002, p.111; Richards et al., 2004), the data analysis also proved that a neutral and objective facilitation is a must to realize the benefits of participation in mega projects. A well moderated process leads to a more comprehensive discussion and gives the participants the feeling that their perspective is valuable. However, the challenge of persuading participants of the impartiality of the moderation pointed out by scholars (Rowe & Frewer, 2000, p. 13) is even stronger in mega project context. The mega projects owners face a dilemma to sponsor the facilitation that creates doubts about its independency, or to make participants to pay that will decrease significantly the number of stakeholders willing to participate. In the case of “Datteln 4” the former was chosen which is considered to be a common practice (Reed, 2008, p. 2426). The solution is seen in proving independence of moderation continuously. Furthermore, the experience of the facilitator is proved to be very important as stakeholder participation
in mega projects is a long process and quite challenging because of the conflict substance (see section 2.1.1.) and fixed positions of some parties.

5.2.3 Relevance of the outcome criteria

All the outcomes criteria seem relevant for mega projects. The actors’ satisfaction, though, was removed from the outcomes criteria group as it was regarded even more important which is why it will be touched upon later (see section 5.3.3.).

The case demonstrates that individual perception of the forum depends on whether the perspective of the participant, is actually reflected in the protocols. When the participants have a feeling that their input is not reproduced correctly in the protocols their willingness to cooperate decreases. Therefore, the outcomes of the participation should be very transparent so everyone can check if critical opinions are reflected or not. To ensure a stronger input of different parties, the possibility to influence the outcome should be created through the participatory process as these criteria proved to be strongly connected. Furthermore, the theory suggests that the implementation of the decisions made is important to realize the benefits of participation and improve societal acceptance (Raven, 2009, p. 566). The data analysis shows that E.ON’s decision to bring some changes into the project according to suggestions from the forum protocols is improving the company’s image and societal acceptance for the project. However, the case example also shows that in mega projects stakeholder participation may not have legal power. Consequently, the implementation of decisions is highly influenced by the willingness of the project sponsor to change the project. Finally, as evident from the data analysis, social learning as an outcome takes place in the “Datteln 4” case. Though it can’t be measured directly, there are accounts for the knowledge exchange and common understanding that stakeholder participation aims to achieve. As social learning is beneficial for all the parties, it might be particularly value for communities habituating mega projects to have participation even after the project implementation to maintain the knowledge exchange between the parties, for example as a platform for regional development.

After examining the relevance of theoretical framework for the case of “Datteln 4”, it can be concluded that the relevance of most criteria still hold true in mega projects context. Furthermore, the strong synergy effect exists between the different criteria. Because of the complex nature of mega projects, some criteria were found more difficult to ensure because of the challenges and unsolved dilemmas described above. The framework has to be developed further to meet the specific of mega projects.

5.3 The further development of the new framework of mega projects

As the previous objectives mainly aimed at investigating if the theoretical framework is relevant, the following section will deal with the last research objective. Here the focus lies on developing the proposed theoretical framework in order to match the mega project context and thus the repeated controlling of criteria, the changes in the criteria, as well as the consideration of underlying issues will be discussed. These three main alterations were made based on the emergent evidence and therefore pertain to the exploratory function of this case study. Hence these further developments will most likely require further research in order to support the new framework of mega projects.
5.3.1 Repeated controlling of criteria
The long duration, the nature of conflict and the finding of new participants make it necessary to repeatedly control the criteria. In other words, the checking if prerequisite, process and outcome criteria are still met, has to be carried out more than once in the mega project context. The following will discuss the evidence that suggests that this development of the framework was necessary and what the implications are. First of all, the long duration of mega projects is a very practical matter that has to be considered when employing stakeholder participation. As the case presentation showed, the forum has been active for over six years, making it obvious that it must have changed over time. For example, the content of discussion has moved from deep and controversial to rather informative or unsubstantial discussions as interviewees pointed out. Therefore the process design had to be changed, evident through the reduced frequency of forum sessions. Also the evidence of input, an outcome criterion, had to be collected thoroughly and summarized on several special meetings and after that the purpose of the stakeholder participation was emphasized again, a prerequisite criterion. In addition to the long duration, the nature of the conflict is another reason why there should be repeated controlling of the criteria groups. Here the various disputes that have influenced the forum in terms of the agenda that was possible. For example, the legally-binding construction stop of “Datteln 4” in 2010 made it unnecessary to discuss changes on the building itself. Rather this shifted the influence stakeholders had and hence the agenda of the forum. A third contextual challenge relates to the stakeholders of the forum. Not only did the stakeholders represented in the forum change over time, but the stakeholders’ attitude also changed. This meant that the moderator had to change the stakeholder selection process after the first session by openly inviting stakeholders to join. In addition attention should be paid to the motivation to participate over years, shown by the perceived lacking attendance lately in the forum. This means that the moderator might have to find different forms of reaching stakeholders effectively. These contextual challenges make repeated controlling of the criteria groups necessary. The implications for this in other mega projects is that the stakeholder participation should be dynamic enough to meet these challenges, however further research should be carried out to see the effects of this strategy. Nonetheless, the emergent evidence shows that such a consideration should be made for mega projects.

5.3.2 Changes in the criteria
Next, the changes of the individual criteria will be discussed, why it was necessary to add, remove, or adapt each and but particularly what implications as well as challenges these developments have. These include: the division of stakeholder representation into stakeholder identification and stakeholder selection; the addition of the criteria clear purpose and; the merger of three process criteria into influence. The relocation of transparency and actors’ satisfaction into the underlying issues will build a bridge to the last development of the new framework for mega projects.

The first development of the criteria is the division of stakeholder representation due to the contextual challenges of the mega projects. The identification and selection of stakeholders, as the evidence shows, are both individually important for the effectiveness of stakeholder participation and each can be designed more or less independently of the other. For example, the determining of the stakeholder map for “Datteln 4” was a lengthy process that was repeated by the moderation for the sake of the stakeholder participation. There the stakeholders were interviewed in an iterative process and later they had the chance to invite other stakeholder themselves. This shows that this procedure was not
owned by one party, nor was it standardized or only carried out in the beginning. Although the same counts for the selection as well these procedures were not carried out simultaneously. One example of this is that although individual stakeholders could identify stakeholders, the forum participants had to decide if they were selected to participate, whereby the invitations are always sent by the moderator. This makes these processes individually important to evaluate, and consequently lead to the implication that the stakeholder representation must be coordinated between the two. The challenge thereby is to maintain a balance of proponents and opponents. As can be seen in the case, the participants could influence this balance and as opponents were in the minority it is questioned whether this imbalance is perpetuated through this. In other words, more proponents will vote for more proponents to join, intensifying this imbalance. Despite this threat that could occur in other cases, the participants seemed eager to create a balance. Therefore the criteria of stakeholder identification and stakeholder selection should replace stakeholder representation; however the effects of these two separate procedures should be subject to further research.

A criterion that should be added to the prerequisite criteria is clear purpose. Here the raison d'etre for stakeholder participation should be precisely and repeatedly presented by the leading body, in this case the project sponsors, who sets this and commissions the moderator accordingly. Especially for mega projects it is important that this criterion is evaluated on several occasions as it shapes the process but also is influenced by external events. The case shows evidence that the moderator presented this purpose to the participants in several years after initiation (IFOK GmbH, 2013) as well as to stakeholders joining later (“resident”). Furthermore putting emphasis on the purpose could lead to improvements in the societal acceptance as it will be more obvious what the project sponsor intends with the forum. At this point it should be noted, that the purpose should not be confused with the agenda but rather with the objectives that the stakeholder participation aims to achieve. Furthermore, the body deciding on the purpose should consider the expectations of the stakeholders, as this is an underlying issue. These points signalize that there are several challenges and undiscovered areas, like how this criteria should be best fulfilled. Nonetheless, the case has shown that a clear purpose seems necessary in order for stakeholder participation to be effective in mega projects.

Besides these two changes in the prerequisite criteria, there is a change in the process criteria that should be discussed. This is the merging of access to information, attention to power asymmetry and, deliberation into one single criterion, namely influence. The first reason why this combination is logical for any project is that influence is the primary reason why all these points are necessary. For example if access to information does not lead to stakeholders being able to influence the project then there is no purpose to flood stakeholders with documents. Furthermore all three former criteria are interrelated through their ability to create influence. This can be seen in the case, as the forum created a deliberative space through granting participants access to information as well as aiming to have a balance of opponents and proponents. The analysis also showed that influence should rather be considered in terms of what participants can change in terms of stakeholder participation and on the project itself. The participants of the “Kraftwerksforum Datteln” had more influence on the way the forum should be structured than on the project itself. However, this does not imply that a balance should be created, but rather underline that these two aspects are quite different, which could be the focus of future research as this case does not provide sufficient evidence. Lastly it should be mentioned that power asymmetry should not be covered exclusively by influence but that
is an underlying issue, as the next section will show. Rather influence should be seen as those more tangible aspects that allow stakeholders to influence the project as well as participation technique.

These three changes in the individual criteria have shown that there are substantial further developments that should be made for the new framework based on the case evidence. Although there is need for further research to verify if these changes really match the context of mega projects, the new set of criteria seem viable. Rather they should increase the potential of stakeholder participation. However there are two criteria adjustments, moving transparency and actors’ satisfaction to the underlying issues, which must be discussed in the following section.

5.3.3 Consideration of underlying issues
This consideration of the underlying issues is probably the most significant modification of the framework. It is here that the focus is put less on fixed criteria but on the subjective perception of participants on the degree of involvement. These four issues, transparency, atmosphere, power and, expectations, together influence every criteria to a certain extent, thereby becoming the foundation of the stakeholder participation. For this reason, the next section will examine, why it is important to consider these in mega projects, showing examples of their impact on criteria, and what implications this insight has, both on a theoretical and practical level.

The four issues are not unknown in the literature (e.g. transparency in Rowe & Frewer, 2000, p.15). However, no researcher in the literature review put attention to these directly, but rather touches upon them in different areas. However, as the data analysis showed, that in the case there are several accounts of how stakeholders saw these underlying issues as shaping the effect of stakeholder participation, positively and negatively. The reasons for this insight are not clear, but the most obvious seems the context characteristics of mega projects (i.e., variety of perspectives among the stakeholders). The most important of these appeared to be the problems in power, where several stakeholders found that the forum could not fulfill its potential. On the contrary, most participants acknowledged that the atmosphere in and around the forum was amiable. Together with the other two issues, these could serve as indicators for the general acceptance of the stakeholder participation and thus societal acceptance. Furthermore the individual criteria could also be assessed considering these indicators. For example, evidence of input relies on a transparent process where the power balance is maintained and the expectations of the stakeholders are aimed to be met. In this way, both the fulfillment of individual criteria as well as the consideration of underlying issues can be facilitated. It can be concluded, that more attention should be paid throughout the stakeholder participation to the transparency, atmosphere, power and, expectations in the future, especially for mega projects.

Nonetheless, it should be remembered that this thesis was not aimed at investigating on these underlying issues, therefore further research is required. In order to confirm these, the methodology should be designed such that the subjective perception and the influence of each issue on stakeholder participation could be discovered. Furthermore these issues could be the source of other criteria that could be measured more tangibly both by researchers as well as practitioners. Hence, the further development on the underlying issues is interesting however remains to be further explored.

The previous section has focused on the third objective, where the further development of the new framework for mega projects should be discussed. Therein it became clear that the
repeated controlling of criteria, the changes in the individual criteria as well as the consideration of underlying issues is necessary in the mega project context. During this discussion the implications and challenges of these improvements became apparent as well as the need for further research. At this stage, however it is concluded that the proposed theoretical framework has to be adapted in parts in order to match the mega project context.

From this discussion, the implications of this research became apparent. Following the three objectives that were set, the main findings were examined. This showed that the theoretical framework proposed is suitable for mega projects but only to a certain extent. Firstly, it was concluded that also in mega projects that stakeholder participation generally leads to societal acceptance. According to the second objective also the relevancy of the theoretical framework in most parts was matched for mega projects in terms of the prerequisite, process and outcome criteria. Lastly, the evidence from the case, showed that further developments are needed, exploring new venues of research like the underlying issues of subjective perception. Hence, the conclusions on the research question can now be drawn as the objectives were met.
6 Conclusion
This last chapter will present the concluding remarks of this thesis. Firstly, we will answer the research question by summarizing the findings from the previous chapters. Further, the theoretical and practical contributions of the thesis will be revised, followed by a discussion on social and ethical issues. Despite all our efforts, here we also recognize the limitations of our thesis findings related to such topics as generalizability, which translate into the suggestions for future research.

6.1 Summary
This thesis aimed to investigate how stakeholder participation should be implemented effectively to improve societal acceptance for mega projects. In order to do so, a literature review of mega projects, societal acceptance and stakeholder participation was undertaken. This review evolved into a theoretical framework with a focus on certain criteria that should be fulfilled to improve societal acceptance for mega projects through stakeholder participation. Following and in alignment with our ontological and epistemological stance of ‘critical realism’ and ‘empathic neutrality’ respectively, the qualitative, deductive approach and case study research strategy were selected. The coal-power plant “Datteln 4” project was selected as the case example to examine the relevance of the theoretical framework in the mega projects context. With this purpose, the data (collected through semi structured interviews and documents) was analyzed using the template analysis technique. Considering the similarities and differences between the theoretical framework and the case data, a new case-based framework was presented. This led us to the discussion where, to fulfill our research objectives, it was assessed whether stakeholder participation improves societal acceptance for mega projects; the relevance of the theoretical framework was examined; and the further developments of the framework to meet the mega project context were discussed. From this research process, now the conclusions will be drawn and an answer to the research question will be given.

6.2 Research findings
Having completed the fulfillment of our research objectives (see chapter 5), finally we can conclude with an answer to the research question: How should stakeholder participation be implemented to improve societal acceptance for mega projects?

Through this evaluative research, a new case-based framework of stakeholder participation for improving societal acceptance for mega projects was generated (see chapters 4 and 5) to answer the research question. First of all, the evidence from the case study made it possible to conclude that, as proposed in literature, stakeholder participation (i.e. a forum) can improve societal acceptance for mega projects by creating a feeling of engagement, building trust and mutual understanding between the parties, and changing the negative preconceptions about the project. However, the extent to which societal acceptance could be reached is restricted by the flexibility of the stakeholders regarding their positions that influence their willingness to cooperate. Therefore, stakeholder participation is not a stand-alone solution, but rather one effective mechanism of stakeholder involvement. Nonetheless, there is a void of potential to increase the effectiveness of stakeholder participation in mega projects in order to reach higher levels of societal acceptance.

To implement stakeholder participation in a more effective way the prerequisite, process and outcome criteria, which proved to be relevant in mega projects context, should be met (see chapter 5). Stakeholders must be involved as early as possible and be ready for a dialogue; the concerns to be discussed should be defined and the impartially facilitated
process should be designed in terms of the basic rules and methods utilized. The outcomes of the participation should contain the input from participants and be implemented, and the social learning should happen. However, concerning contextual challenges specific to mega projects, ensuring several criteria like early involvement or independent facilitation is highly problematic. Moreover, long duration and the nature of conflict make repeated controlling of the criteria necessary. Thus, the stakeholder participation should be rather dynamic than static for mega projects.

Furthermore, the new developments of the theoretical framework should increase the potential of stakeholder participation for improving societal acceptance for mega projects. The clear purpose needs to be defined, stakeholder identification and stakeholder selection designed and evaluated separately, and the possibility for participants to influence the process be ensured. However, what seems to be essential in mega projects is to put more focus on the subjective perception of participants. Therefore, four underlying issues, transparency, atmosphere, power and expectations, are the foundation of stakeholder participation. Each criterion is influenced by one or more of these issues, especially in mega projects. Hence, the further developments are important to consider in mega projects to improve societal acceptance through stakeholder participation.

### 6.3 Theoretical and practical research contribution

Having presented the answer for the research question, this section will now revise the theoretical and practical contribution of the thesis.

From a theoretical perspective, this thesis contributed to the research gap in the theories of mega projects and stakeholder participation. For mega projects theory it brought insight into the stakeholder management specifically societal acceptance which is critical for mega projects success. For stakeholder participation theory it opened a new direction of study, as previously stakeholder participation had not been explored sufficiently in mega projects context. The thesis critically evaluated the existing literature and complemented it with several amendments and new developments. The attempts to design stakeholder participation in a way that it can improve societal acceptance for mega projects evolved into a new theoretical framework. This framework can contribute to the theories of mega projects and stakeholder participation and set a basis for the further research in these areas.

From the practical point of view, this thesis brought an insight into the mechanism to manage expectations of multiple stakeholders to improve societal acceptance that can potentially contribute to successful delivery of mega projects. Although the transferability to other cases, industries and countries cannot be guaranteed because of the nature of the research, it is possible to learn from the results which to some extent will be relevant for other cases. The findings from the “Datteln 4” case study can be useful for the mega projects practitioners who deal with a lack of public support, as they suggest how stakeholder participation should be implemented in effective way to improve societal acceptance. For example, it could show how to prevent protests and legal proceedings. Another example is that project managers can become aware of seemingly peripheral issues that are, however, significant problems for society by using stakeholder participation. Therefore, the thesis contributes through developing a framework that can be used to implement stakeholder participation in a more effective way. Lastly, this tool is one way for project sponsors to get in close contact with societal stakeholders which can have a great impact on the success of a mega project.
6.4 Social and ethical issues

Obviously, in projects like the subject of this thesis with a tremendous social and environmental impact and the subsequent involvement of stakeholders, social and ethical issues of relevance for the overlap between mega projects, stakeholder participation and societal acceptance must be discussed. Therefore, this section will discuss on both the positive arguments, as well as the negative concerns, with the implications of this research.

Stakeholder participation has several social benefits including social learning and the possibility to influence projects and, hence, it can be seen as a part of the ethical strategy of project sponsors. As this thesis has repeatedly underlined how a forum for one project can lead to stakeholders of the community meeting on other occasions, learning how to communicate in such situations and thus gaining experience in dealing with complex problems. More importantly, when the society is allowed to participate in a project, to a certain extent it is given the possibility to shape the mega project to their liking. This also includes social development, where initiatives and organizations are supported. This thesis even demanded further considerations from project sponsors, such as paying attention to underlying issues. Therefore, this thesis has shown that stakeholder participation can generally be considered as good from an ethical perspective.

However, there are fundamental concerns with the notion of acceptance, the influence on perception, and hidden agendas that have been underlined by this thesis which might perpetuate social and ethical issues. From using societal acceptance as the final goal, it can be inferred that society should no longer oppose but tolerate a project, even if the project in total is unacceptable. Rather a project should only be built if society genuinely has an interest in the project. Thus, the feeling of a hidden agenda remains, meaning that stakeholders have no actual influence and stakeholder participation is only used to silence protests until it is legally impossible to stop a project. With developing the framework and increasing its effectiveness, new possibilities have been given to practitioners to misuse such tools. For example, now that atmosphere has been identified as an underlying issue, efforts could be made to create a lulling environment. Although it was repeated by the moderator and project manager in this case that no intention was made to persuade opponents, the opponents did feel that business interest guided their actions. Therefore, stakeholder participation should not be generally seen as ethically sound, but rather the deeper intentions of project sponsors should be explored.

Therefore, a balance must be found in the extent to which stakeholders participate in the project planning, and to what extent project sponsors commit to these changes. This means that social and ethical issues are highly relevant in this topic and should be considered constantly.

6.5 Limitations of generalization

Although the section 3.5. has discussed the limitations of this study in-depth, this opportunity in the conclusion should be used to present the limitation of generalizing from the findings of the discussion. Firstly, it should be recognized that this mega project had to deal with very context-specific challenges as shown in the case presentation (see section 4.1.), like the legal proceedings and political indecision. This influenced and restrained the possibilities of the forum. While such situations may occur in other mega projects, stakeholder participation where legal power is granted to stakeholders may lead to other implementation designs. Secondly, every mega project is unique so the transferability to other cases, let alone other industries and countries cannot be guaranteed, even though the
theoretical framework was more or less relevant for this mega project case. Therefore and thirdly, the further developments on the underlying issues could have been so essential for the subjective perception of the stakeholder participation because the social conflict here was already heightened. However, other contextual challenges like the stakeholder map, the project scope and a time frame, as well as the use of stakeholder participation typical for other mega projects can be well addressed with the new framework. Therefore, we believe that this thesis has come to deductible and logically traceable conclusions that are relevant for other mega projects or other cases of stakeholder participation.

6.6 Further research
Further research on stakeholder participation in mega projects is needed in light of the methodology and the discussion. Relating to the former, efforts are needed to get more breadth in terms of more cases, as well as other focus areas. From the discussion it became clear that there are several concepts that need to be researched in the future.

Methodologically, this research focused on gaining in-depth insight on one case study through interviewing of the forum participants. Firstly, it would be beneficial for our new framework if it could be assessed in and compared to other mega project cases, preferably in other environments (e.g. countries, industries, etc.). Furthermore, it became apparent that the subjective perception is difficult to measure through this form of data collection. Rather ethnographic techniques should be used to observe the stakeholder participation and those included, best over a longer period of time. Through these different methodologies the findings of this thesis could be strengthened and advanced.

From the discussion and limitations of the case study, areas for future research became apparent. For example, different involvement strategies and their interplay with stakeholder participation should be examined in other cases in light of their influence on societal acceptance. What might be of interest to practitioners, how criteria should be prioritized in order to know where to focus efforts particularly to improve societal acceptance. Future research could also investigate on the changes made in the theoretical framework. One example is the influence criterion, which summarized previous criteria, where researchers could examine further ways to ensure this, like educating stakeholders. But more importantly, further research is needed on the underlying issues and their impact on stakeholder participation. Therefore, this thesis has built the foundation for further research on stakeholder participation, societal acceptance and mega projects.
References


Personal communication


Appendix 1: Interview guide: Datteln IV

Stakeholders/Forum participants

Invitation:
- Since when do you participate?
- How often?
- Who invited you?

Position/expectations:
- What was your interest in the forum?
- What were your expectations of the forum?
- Have they changed over time?

Experience:
- What other channels of communication have you experienced? With E.ON? Or in other projects?
  (If yes, what was different to the current forum?)

Initiation:
- What was the forum purpose and program?
- How were they communicated to you?
- Were they clear for you?

Process:
- What does a usual meeting look like for you?
- How can you prepare for a forum meeting (time/information provided; other resources you can use (bringing in experts))?

Influence:
- Tell us about a time where you could voice your opinion?
- What was the discussion after that?
- What was the final outcome and how you get to know about it? (media, forum newspaper, reports, emails)
- Is this a common situation?

Outcome:
- How satisfied are you with the output of the forum in general?
- How do you think the project/forum changed because of your participation?

Project life-cycle:
- How different do you think the forum and its outcome would have been, had it existed from the project planning phase?

Overall impression:
- How fair/transparent/organized do you think the forum is?
Moderator
Role:
- What is your role as a moderator?
- How do you prove that you are independent?
- From your previous experience (especially with other mega projects), what is special about this forum?

Forum context:
- What does it mean when certain groups rest their participation in the forum?
- What kind of contextual challenges convinced you that a forum was necessary for this project?

Invitation policy:
- How was decided who could participate? When?
- Was it open, or only selected stakeholders?
- Did everyone agree to participate?

Processes:
- What was the forum purpose and program? Who set them?
- How was it communicated?
- How do you make sure that everyone is treated equally?
- What (other) principles do you follow – structure, rules for conflicts/etc.?

Outcome:
- How are decisions made?
- How do you make sure that everyone agrees to it?
- How are they communicated?

Project life-cycle:
- How different do you think the forum and its outcome would have been, had it existed from the project planning phase?

Project team
Project details:
- How was the project financed?
- Is the public body in any way a project shareholder? Is the project and power plant entirely in the hands of EON and will always be?

Forum context:
- What kind of contextual challenges convinced you that a forum was necessary for this project?

Experience:
- What other channels of communication are used for Datteln 4?
- Do you previous experiences of forums with other projects? (If yes, what was different to the current forum?)

Invitation policy:
- How was decided who could participate? When?
- Was it open, or only selected stakeholders?
- Did everyone agree to participate?

Position/expectations:
- What is your interest?
- What were your expectations of the forum?
- Have they changed over time?

Process:
- What was the forum purpose and program? Who set them?
- How was it communicated to others?
- What does a usual meeting look like for you?

**Influence:**
- What are the non-negotiable points for you?
- How do you think the forum and the participants that attend?

**Outcome:**
- How do you consider the outcome?
- How does it influence the project?

**Project life-cycle:**
- How different do you think the forum and its outcome would have been, had it existed from the project planning phase?

**Overall impression:**
- How fair/ transparent/ organized do you think that the forum is?

**Future challenges:**
- Where do you see the future of the forum?

**Effectiveness:**
- Is it worth it? (in terms of time and cost? Does it help you in other areas of PM?)
- What were your lessons learned?

**Non-participants**

**Invitation:**
- Were you invited?
- Since when do you not participate? Why?

**Position/expectations:**
- What was your interest?
- What were your expectations of the forum?
- Have they changed over time?

**Initiation:**
- What was the forum purpose and program?
- How were communicated they to you?
- Were they clear for you?

**Process:**
- Were there process reasons that you didn’t participate? (Transparency, fairness, participants?)
- What would have to change for you to participate?

**Outcome:**
- How satisfied are you with the output of the forum in general even if you aren’t present?

**Project life-cycle:**
- How different do you think the forum and its outcome would have been, had it existed from the project planning phase?
- What you have participated then?
Appendix 2: Final template structure for data analysis

0. Case presentation
   0.1. The “Datteln 4” project
   0.2. The stakeholder participation forum “Kraftwerksforum”

1. Stakeholder participation
   1.1. Prerequisite
      1.1.1. Stakeholder identification
      1.1.2. Stakeholder selection
      1.1.3. Early involvement
      1.1.4. Defined agenda
      1.1.5. Willingness to cooperate
      1.1.6. Clear purpose
   1.2. Process
      1.2.1. Process design
      1.2.2. Independent facilitation
      1.2.3. Influence
   1.3. Outcome
      1.3.1. Evidence of input
      1.3.2. Implementation of decisions
      1.3.3. Social learning
   1.4. Underlying issues
      1.4.1. Expectations
      1.4.2. Transparency
      1.4.3. Atmosphere
      1.4.4. Power
## Appendix 3: Coded and categorized data in final template

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Evidence from interviews and documents – Units of analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0. Case presentation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.1. The project</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes it is completely funded by E.ON. (&quot;project manager&quot;)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Will the project be handed over sometime to the State or the local government? That happens in other countries, but in Germany it is unusual. The private company is investing with its own money and builds. (&quot;project manager&quot;)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The power plant is completed to 70%, (&quot;resident&quot;)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>nobody knows if the power plant will start its work in the future or not. (&quot;moderator&quot;)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should the decision be made, that it continues, then it will still take 1.5 years until it can be finished to be operational. (&quot;resident&quot;)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUND collected signatures against the power plant (&quot;kindergarten rep.&quot;)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUND representative listed public channels that were used: public comments, presentation of planning documents (repeatedly and in several steps), public explanation demanded - everything in the period 2004-2007. During this time, the BUND and other critics undertook intensive, technical and legal, studies on the problems, errors, etc. of the project. Court proceedings took time from 2007 to 2012. He also mentioned, that court confirmed concerns and reviews of the power plant opponent. (&quot;NGO rep.&quot;)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Channels of communication</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>medium of the press (&quot;city rep.&quot;)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>the public press (&quot;kindergarten rep.&quot;)</td>
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<tr>
<td>I know about the info booth that is organized by the power plant forum, actually by E.ON, in the city center. It is rather an information booth of E.ON as power plant operator itself to create more closeness to citizens and to promote themselves. (&quot;resident&quot;)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>information booths from E.ON individually where the project manager with the press officer converses with citizens (they experience more support than criticism.) (&quot;city rep.&quot;)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>We also do information stalls as DGB do information stands in the pedestrian zones, where the individual unions present and offer themselves. So then talk to the individual citizens. (&quot;union rep.&quot;)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>information stands are done in Waltrop and Datteln by IFOK (&quot;city rep.&quot;)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For me personally, is most important is that we are in an interval of several weeks over and over again in the pedestrian zone of Datteln and talk directly with the people. (&quot;project manager&quot;)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Info Center from E.ON where there is an exhibition with information material but on the other side events concerning the German energy market and power plant planning. (&quot;city rep.&quot;)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the information center, which we built relatively early. It serves as the primary point of contact for people seeking information or wishing to engage in criticism. (&quot;project manager&quot;)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>the very classical channels that we inform of the power plant, such as local newspapers, websites, pamphlets. (&quot;project manager&quot;)</td>
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</table>

81
Internet, the power plant website of town Datteln ("city rep.") publish a kind of newspapers to inform stakeholders ("communications manager") small residents and citizens meeting ("city rep.") always available by telephone ("communications manager") construction site tours ("project manager") I also have plenty of opportunities to converse directly with opponents of the respective parties or interest groups ("project manager") we get the protocols by e-mail and the list of participants. Apart from that everything runs through the forum meetings. ("resident") some discussions from outside the dialogue have such a big influence on the dialogue. Like the rulings of the administrative court. This decision of the court was very important for the dialogue. ("moderator")

0.2. The forum

Forum

in March 2005 interest in the citizenry, to engage in dialogue extremely low - there were always these waves. In the citizenship it was at the beginning very few, then in process steps there were more again ("city rep.")

this forum was started in 2009 or 2010 ("moderator")

Our last meeting in the stakeholder forum was, I think, 5 weeks ago on October, 23rd. The next meeting that we will have will be in the end of January or beginning of February. ("moderator")

We started in a particularly difficult situation. ("project manager")

I would not necessarily view as a challenge in terms of difficulty. ("project manager") the decision to hold a forum, was not a decision of the project management (by me or my colleagues), but a decision of the company ("project manager")

When the construction freeze was announced and it came to a stop, then came more and more questions from the town and citizens. Rather that the clarification in this area has not been comprehensive enough. ("resident")

I think, that the forum might revive if the decision is made someday if the power plant is continued to be built or not. Everything depends on that. ("resident")

Topics
discussion about renewable energies. ("kindergarten rep.")

Whether coal power plants are needed at the moment, because we have the renewable energy act and the German energy transition. So should we need such big power plants at all? ("moderator")

emissions, also noise, the coal hall, water sewage and heating of the channel in the vicinity. ("moderator")

what measures have been taken to make noise and traffic prevention. ("kindergarten rep.")

there were concerns that the residents feared that if a large coal power plant with large coal storage and conveyor belts was built, then you may soon not be able hang up whites because they become black and the coal dust flying through the area. ("project manager")

district heat grid, of course is a permanent topic, the new power plant will replace the old one, it should for a long time already and accordingly secure the district heat supply of the city. ("resident")

do we need a hall for the coal is it sufficient if we take the coal just beside the power
plant without any hall. ("moderator")

substation matter where E.ON built the substation next to the power plant to convert current. the citizens and the environment was worried if they want to use it as back door solution to force the commissioning of the power plant. ("resident")

During the construction phase was one thing that the access roads to the power plant were getting more and more destroyed. citizens of Datteln of course went on the barricades and approached us ("union rep.")

1. Stakeholder participation
1.1. Prerequisites

| 1.1.1. Stakeholder identification | I think we have advertised even in the newspaper that participants were wanted for the forum... and so a group of participants was found. ("project manager")

a neighbor who is active in the forum, asked me if I would not be interested in being active and representing my opinion and view there ("resident")

We checked the region. We made this analysis and stakeholder mapping. Then we decided together with E.ON who we would ask for an interview. And in these interviews, we asked the participant: “Should we talk to another person? Do you think somebody else is important to talk to?” had some more interviews. Then we decided ... who should sit at the round table. ("moderator")

stakeholder analysis and finding the key players, to find positive and negative ones and invite them to come and sit on one table (“communications manager”) Nowadays, a participant of the forum can invite or can suggest new members (“communications manager”) |

| 1.1.2. Stakeholder selection | Selecting procedure offers also on a regular basis kind of an open forum, so if there is need for informing a wider audience (“communications manager”) Then we decided ... who should sit at the round table. ("moderator") you can exclude anyone that someone could disturb the course of the forum, exceed the scope that one has a certain amount of control. ("resident") the forum decided if I should be invited or not. ("resident")

For one meeting I took part as a guest. Then there was basically an open vote or it was asked if someone has objections. (“resident”)

2nd round of invitation: we started this round table, we asked the participants if this is ok and you can choose if you want to have more people or if this is sufficient. ("moderator")

their decision must be who is allowed to attend (“communications manager”) Categories of stakeholders don’t want to have politicians at the round table from the city council in Datteln, because they are very well involved in the formal procedure.

to do a forum with the people who are important like citizens’ initiatives, IHK, churches and so on. ("moderator")

it was really important for the forum participants to also have the head of the older power plant in the forum (“communications manager”) we live to some extend in the vicinity of the power plant; count yourself as an opponent of the power plant. – yes (“resident”) I’m a unionist also when the [power plant] is in building, that the trade union aspects are adhered to. This means employees are paid according to union standards and so on (“union rep.”) |
kindergarten management; because this is a power plant which is being built right in front of my institution. The cooling tower I can see from here ("kindergarten rep.")

representative of the city, (responsible for land use planning; The mayor and the first councilor participate rarely) ("city rep.")
speaker in the forum for the DGB. ("union rep.")

Heterogeneity

the principle was that the forum was to be as heterogeneous as possible. I think, that simply all kinds of churches, associations, political parties, trade unions have been requested. In particular those that were critical."project manager"

so the composition was as heterogeneous as possible get. ("project manager")

always have the hope (it is only a small circle, between 10-20 people) that is as representative as possible for the entire region."project manager"

I hope just that what is discussed is representative, for what is thought by a large part of the population."project manager"

At the beginning we had a lot of citizens` initiatives at the round table now they left because they made their points and gave their ideas and information and opinion. ("moderator")

not the citizens that are in the majority but the project sponsors, the moderators and the management ("city rep.")

I`m missing actually in the last 2 years the really outspoken opponents of the project in this round. Which certainly does not mean that it is not controversially discussed today ... ("project manager")

Attendance

the main critical stakeholders did not really attend his kind of forum. But on the same hand they are raising that E.ON is not really talking to them. ("communications manager")

my expectation wasn`t that we have to engage everybody especially the ones who don`t want to ("communications manager")

but the real big NGOs stepped out after 1 or 2 sessions ("communications manager")

The people in the forum have changed ("union rep.")

a fatigue effect has entered. It`s been difficult to stay dedicated so long ("project manager")

Whereby the participations has not been the best lately. ("resident")
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.1.3. Early involvement</th>
<th>Was it early or not</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>This was a relatively early realization also due to positive experience in other projects.</strong> (&quot;project manager&quot;)</td>
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<tr>
<td>I do think that it would have been good if it had begun earlier (&quot;kindergarten rep.&quot;)</td>
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<tr>
<td>E.ON was the first, or very earlier, in their decision to communicate with stakeholders in a way like a round table. That was not very common at this moment. (&quot;moderator&quot;)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUND representative expressed an opinion that the forum came too late (&quot;NGO rep.&quot;)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Potential benefits of earlier start</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>it makes sense to do this sooner? A: Absolutely. (&quot;project manager&quot;)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not only should but must. There decisions are made early on political level, city administration, which afterwards cannot be corrected by any committee. (&quot;resident&quot;)</td>
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<tr>
<td>That would have been perfect. then I would imagine already that the whole process would have been different (&quot;city rep.&quot;)</td>
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<tr>
<td>If one had initiated such a committee before at the planning phase, and then also better informed, so that one had used opponents as multipliers to explain something to the affected members of public, than some things would have gone better probably (&quot;resident&quot;)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>the sooner people are informed that there is not such a high resistance but one has a broader or more-founded opinion why one is against the one or the other. (&quot;kindergarten rep.&quot;)</td>
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<tr>
<td>the people are more open to have a discussion in the early stage when you have a bad situation like in Datteln. (&quot;moderator&quot;)</td>
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<tr>
<td>if you are earlier in discussion and you have a round table of course it’s better, because misunderstandings won’t come up; it’s more good discussion; not too emotional. So the earlier the better (&quot;moderator&quot;)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>whether it would then also would have succeeded in bringing about inter-communal dialogue (&quot;city rep.&quot;)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Problems with earlier start</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Because the imagination of the individual citizen was actually not there. The models were displayed and then it came after the approval procedure, and suddenly everyone was startled: &quot;We did not imagine like this&quot; (&quot;union rep.&quot;)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you haven’t planned, how can you discuss about a project (&quot;communications manager&quot;); Because the worst case, you can do is talking about nothing… we would sit there together without any content. (&quot;communications manager&quot;)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was not the right time to get the engagement with the local stakeholders (&quot;communications manager&quot;)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.1.4. Defined agenda</th>
<th>Actual agenda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Now it’s more a discussion without going too deep because everyone is well informed.</strong> (&quot;moderator&quot;)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>sponsor reports from site (&quot;city rep.&quot;)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>the city regularly reports on the procedures (&quot;city rep.&quot;)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>a planning forecast (&quot;city rep.&quot;)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
agenda item "Regional engagement" ("city rep."); Also what we are doing for the neighbors and the city, like taking care of social responsibility, this was also a big topic ("communications manager")

discussing the plans and the monitoring, and how the project is affecting the environment, humans, and traffic ("communications manager")

of course it was health care things like emissions, also noise, the coal hall, water sewage and heating of the channel in the vicinity ("moderator")

a man wanted to deepen this topic in the forum directly, but where "no" was said. We can take this up additional, we can also in the forum talk about other power stations in England etc. But now we have to stick to our agenda." ("kindergarten rep.")

Setting agenda

The moderator of the forum always suggests an agenda and the agenda is discussed before the next meeting takes place. ("communications manager")

before we decide on the issues that we will deal with next time ("union rep.")
everybody was free to give their ideas, their things they want to talk about ("moderator")

it is mainly a decision of the participants of the forum. It is really important, that the forum is really created to give the participants the possibility to discuss what is important to them and they of course have set up the agenda. ("communications manager")

Communicating agenda

3-4 weeks before we get an invitation where the issues are also included, that we then also discuss. ("kindergarten rep.")

So everybody who is attending the forum must be aligned with everything, which we discussed, because it is clear what is the content we can discuss and what not ("communications manager")

1.1.5. Willingness to cooperate

BUND believes that the willingness to listen is not given ("NGO rep.")

I think or know it well, that the power plant opponents were encouraged by their organizations not to participate. Because it is perceived in principle as a concession or cooperation with E.ON. We had participants who were from nature conservation organizations, we also had people who belonged to citizens' initiatives, which would also have liked to come, but they got told by their organizations that they would not like to see that ... What I find unfortunate. ("project manager")
dropped out rather for conflicts of interest. Those from the opposing groups, could not get it together. ("resident")

I have not experienced unfortunately, the forum also included this citizens’ initiative, but has then dropped out eventually, because the barriers were too hardened. It could simply not be resolved ("resident")

BUND decided not to participate. They told us, they want to focus their energy to making the project not possible in the formal way. They are not willing to take part in the forum they decided that this forum is too fixed and we don’t want to participate ("moderator")

We asked them later to join in a discussion where we made a lot of public events. Then we asked them if we should make a public debate with you and E.ON. Every time we were open and asked them in different ways, but they didn’t want to. ("moderator")
## 1.1.6. Clear purpose

| **This is a contribution to increase acceptance** (“project manager”) |
| **This is not the only medium that we use there, but one of many. This can be seen as classic stakeholder management** (“project manager”) |
| **If we make such new development, we have to install a forum discussion** (“project manager”) |

### Information exchange/ dialogue

- **Creating a communication platform between the project sponsor and the citizens and city** (“city rep.”) |
- **It is a tool to exchange information to the topics currently in the forum for the participants of interest to be discussed** (“project manager”) |
- **90% an information event about the events around the power plant and its environment, what is happening there** (“resident”) |
- **The purpose of the forum is that the general public has a say, and that information is also carried into public** (“union rep.”) |
- **Where’s the pros and cons discussed** (“kindergarten rep.”) |
- **Another way to have a discussion** (“moderator”) |

### Conflict resolution

- **The forum should be an instrument to bring all groups together to get rid of prejudice** (“resident”) |
- **The round table was the key to come into a very fact-orientated discussion. That wasn’t possible without this forum** (“moderator”) |
- **One hand supporters, on the other side people who are against this new built, on one table and clarify the facts and establish a meeting point** (“communications manager”) |

### Joint planning

- **Forum, which enables stakeholders to really participate in the planning** (“communications manager”) |
- **It is not like we make a vote if we should build a hall for the coal or not. That’s not the idea, it’s not a formal or legal procedure and not democratically legitimate** (“moderator”) |

### Communicating purpose

- **I was informed at that time, mainly through my neighbor, who informed me during a private conversation** (“resident”) |
- **The purpose was explained briefly not in detail or the history told. But only very roughly** (“resident”) |
- **In this way it was explained to me in a conversation** (“city rep.”) |
- **We really set up the purpose beforehand, so that everybody knows what we discuss about and what not. You clarify this in an early stage, then every participant will be fine with the project** (“communications manager”) |

### Concerns about purpose

- **Project sponsor, represented by one or more people, and the city are accused this forum was only intended to push through the power plant legitimation and to support it in a communicative manner** (“city rep.”) |
- **To keep alive with some side topics, which could maybe be interesting** (“resident”)
BUND representative shared the view that the forum came as a response to the verdict and the associated complications and is used as a way to convince people of the project. Basically, it is a marketing event ("NGO rep.")

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.2. Process</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.2.1. Process design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structure</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>very well organized</em> (&quot;resident&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>power plant forum is always well structured</em> (&quot;kindergarten rep.&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>When a topic is brought into the forum, then this actually processed really structured.</em> (&quot;resident&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>protocol, so the schedule, open points, available.</em> (&quot;resident&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>we get the minutes of the last meeting sent via mail to review everything, that happened during the last meeting.</em> (&quot;resident&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rules</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>We didn’t have that. We made some points at the first meeting, some rules. But those were very basic like let people explain their points, don’t interrupt, we don’t want to talk aggressive. It should be a good situation. Those were some of the rules. There was no guideline or whatever.</em> (&quot;moderator&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methods</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Basic discussions / with a joint fact finding, we call it.</em> (&quot;moderator&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>you use methods that everybody can give their opinion can talk, can discuss... Sometimes you use special methods like the flash feedback, sometimes you have interviews, or bilateral discussions</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>speakers will then possibly be invited or expert people</em> (&quot;union rep.&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>presented with a PowerPoint and any questions can be asked.</em> (&quot;kindergarten rep.&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Working groups also organized by the forum. This is a method in the forum.</em> (&quot;kindergarten rep.&quot;)</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>the discussion was really more pros and cons</em> (&quot;kindergarten rep.&quot;)</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>the focus is then to get into a dialogue and really discuss different topics. So we cut presentation short and update to current status and then discuss the topic.</em> (&quot;communications manager&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you want to present the topic of dust emissions, then you have to put together a lot of information, photos, graphics and such ... We also have a variety of specific topics where I prepared a few slides...* (&quot;project manager&quot;)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.2.2. Independent facilitation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Work of moderator</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>It really is well moderated. I know that now from the other group for regional engagement, where various methods are explained well.</em> (&quot;kindergarten rep.&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>There one has to applaud IFOK, they really only close the topic, when it really treated and not left to be fizzled out.</em> (&quot;resident&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>they indeed nagged until it was treated sufficiently for all involved. Even if a single one in the forum had a question or need for clarification, it was discussed to the end without ruffle or excitement.</em> (&quot;resident&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>I would say, the participants ... will have certainly confirmed that Mr. Eggert does not act on the part of E.ON, but actually acts as a kind of supporter acts for those who are not so professional, but rather critical, ask questions to them accordingly as also be addressed</em> (&quot;project manager&quot;)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We are neutral: I think that is very important, that we are neutral, because E.ON has no profit if we talk in their way. So we have the neutral position and that is important for us (“moderator”).

we are over the positions (“moderator”).

you have to take care that every argument is coming into the round table. Nobody has to be afraid of giving comments. (“moderator”)

Independence of moderation

of course, it is also clear that the Forum can only ever bring a sense if Mr. Eggert can moderate unbiased and absolutely neutral and objective, he does too. (“project manager”)

We are paid from E.ON; so they give us the freedom to facilitate in the way we want to do it. They paid for that. There is absolutely no link between paying and results of the dialogue. (“moderator”)

We made that absolutely clear against E.ON, that we need the freedom and neutral position to work. It’s not their idea as well (“moderator”)

If you facilitate, you have to be clear in every step, in every word, in every comment, in every facilitation that you are neutral. (“moderator”)

It’s not just one time saying this, you have to be neutral in every step you make in the procedure and the discussion. That’s the basis. If you really have the neutral position, that’s the basic work. (“moderator”)

When we started with interviews; that was the first point that we said. We had interviews in the region and talked to important stakeholders, like citizens’ initiatives, or politicians, IHK and a variety of interview partners. We talked to them and from the beginning we told everyone that we are paid by E.ON (“moderator”)

This is also the Achilles heel of the whole construct. I can’t imagine no other alternative. If we would say, each participant pays for the forum, then we would have no more participants, however if each would require something like this takes place, then you want kindly E.ON to pay, if E.ON paid the whole, then, of course, everyone assumes that we manage the whole forum. Therefore, the dilemma is then always at such a forum, or similar events ... I do not know really how to get out of this dilemma comes out. (“project manager”)

So I’ve offered also both environmental organizations and the citizens’ initiative on several occasions, for example: “I come to your events, and you can then choose to the format. I also come to you now and talk there with you.”, which I’ve partially done. Generally that was not so well perceived. (“project manager”)

1.2.3. Influence

Agenda input

topics we should talk about next time or who should participate. Those were decisions they could make. Or how is the website designed (“moderator”)

But the group can decide what topics they want to talk about, it’s not up to us to do that. (“moderator”)

I also brought critical opinions in the forum also brought up a painful topic, where one rather is willing to overlook, because it does not correspond to his interest, from E.ON’s side (“resident”)

We talk or discuss about irrelevancies, one cannot discuss much at the moment, because the construction is stopped and all legal matters are not clarified. it has come to a standstill. discusses about sideshows (“resident”)

Capacity for discussion

People have been sitting together for years, have experienced and really discussed
different details about the program (“city rep.”) had their chance to give their points and everybody listened. (“moderator”)

They made their points and gave their ideas and information and opinion (“moderator”)

I of course express my personal opinion or what I heard from my personal environment (friends, relatives, club members or in the environment) (“resident”)

know what will be discussed, for points search the Internet or contact an expert, have a little background knowledge (“union rep.”)

So they can choose experts if they want to have a special expert. We pay that and they can invite them. So they are totally free to create their meetings at the group. (“moderator”)

But in this forum it was openly talked about that should be fixed by the power plant sponsors and so on (roads) (“union rep.”)

course we were open to argue these points. We asked...why they don’t think they want or need a coal power plant like this. So we asked them and this discussion we had a lot of meetings talking about this basic discussion (“moderator”)

The topic was then portrayed sufficiently and in detail, even with an inspection of that area. (“resident”)

We have a lot of discussion in some points of the coal power plant.... where should we have this ammonium plant... So they talked about the advantages of the one idea and the other. detail to write to the project and we have also more issues and topics besides the hard core issues of the power plant. (“moderator”)

At that time some really avowed opponents of the power plant attended several sessions. We even took it so far that we allowed the opponents to present an auditor who then presented his position. We then did it ourselves or had an auditor (“project manager”)

one then gets inside to the facts, of course follows up and gathers facts again, then one has to take back one’s opinions in some areas. (“resident”)

So had expert opinion from both sides looking at the facts and we worked out the facts together, so had at the end some fact sheet, which is about the most important facts and what is true, what is not clear and what is common mind from both experts and do we have points which are controversial. (“moderator”)

there are still several working groups on regional engagement. This has been for 3 years, where different groups come together, working for the common good of the city Datteln and this will be discussed in the power plant forum. And then the power plant forum decides which projects E.ON should perhaps sponsor. (“kindergarten rep.”)

Limitations of influence

We have no decision-making power (“moderator”)

It was very easy, the forum is a way to talk about the issues, but there is no decision. (“moderator”)

not overestimate the influence (“city rep.”)

It was a decision-making process but without a formal decision So it’s not like a decision-making with a voting, but it was of course a decision-making (“moderator”)

no one discusses critical opinions in this committee, so that a promotional event takes place (“resident”)

can see it with the participation of the forum, that the one or the other is not participating, because he thinks: “There is nothing important, that I might miss. It doesn’t matter if I’m not there”. (“resident”)
For some the impression is that, at such a forum you cannot do much. ("project manager")

BUND representative shared the view that it is not possible to influence the final decision on the project in principle ("NGO rep.")

you do not see this as an opportunity to stop the power plant? – no ("kindergarten rep.")

1.3. Outcomes

| 1.3.1. Evidence of input | the result was discussed in the forum and in the protocol it appeared again. ("resident")
|                          | So all the document you can see on the website are the results of the forum. The whole website is based on documents we shared with the whole forum. ("moderator")
|                          | We ask all participants if that correct and fine, is that the discussion? They give us comments and we work that in. ("moderator")
|                          | moderator writes afterwards is the press release and the decisions made ("communications manager")
|                          | we get the minutes of the last meeting sent via mail to review everything ("resident")

| 1.3.2. Implementation of decisions | Participation changed the project. Some single things have been changed and those were decidedly coming from the forum. ("union rep.")
|                                  | sometimes they said it’s not possible, sometimes they changed their plans. ("moderator")
|                                  | We have then initiated as a concrete measure that we install an additional measurement in direction Waltrop so that if the power plant goes into operation, that it can be continuously measured, that actually no higher particulate matter emissions occur.("project manager")
|                                  | because E.ON recognized that they can do something here, sometimes it is more expensive, but they could do it and they did it. the forum changed the plans of E.ON. ("moderator")
|                                  | the forum has a lot of results. The first result was that we don’t need to have this coal hall, but we need other things, there is a long list that E.ON has to do to reduce the dust production during the moving of the coal. They had to do a lot of things. the whole water management that was worked out during the dialogue. And we had a lot of other things, where the participants asked to change the plans and E.ON worked it out. ("moderator")
|                                  | We had a couple of changings, like implementing a washing station for the truck wheels, we also extended the monitoring of the power plant. ("communications manager")
|                                  | The forum has voted on that the project should be sponsored with so much money, I think €2000. ("kindergarten rep.")
|                                  | we are taking the feedback, the discussion content into our thinking ("communications manager")

| 1.3.3. Social learning | do not find it (project) as bad because you participate in the forum? – yes ("kindergarten rep.")
|                      | also informative ("resident")
|                      | always feel well informed after the forum ("kindergarten rep.")
|                      | but one has a complete picture ("kindergarten rep.")
**1.4. Underlying issues**

### 1.4.1. Expectations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expectations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gather/exchange information</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>in the decision-making processes to receive information a bit earlier. what E.ON is planning. What the next steps are. (&quot;kindergarten rep. &quot;)</td>
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<tr>
<td>get first-hand information. And not through the media, which may be misleading (&quot;kindergarten rep. &quot;)</td>
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<tr>
<td>to gather information from the project sponsors &amp; subject experts (&quot;city rep. &quot;)</td>
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<tr>
<td>to share information about our planning process (&quot;city rep.&quot;)</td>
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<tr>
<td>instead of always only consuming information which are made by E.ON (&quot;communications manager&quot;)</td>
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<td>to understand what are the thoughts are of the stakeholders, the people that take part in the power plant forum. (&quot;project manager&quot;)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Conflict resolution --- Get to know both sides</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The forum gives me the opportunity to listen to both opinions value-free, to make my own decision whether it still makes sense to listen further or it is just an alibi-function. (&quot;resident&quot;)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Because I had no other possibility to get to know both sides of the opposing interest groups. (&quot;resident&quot;)</td>
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<tr>
<td>serious and comprehensive discussion (&quot;city rep.&quot;)</td>
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<tr>
<td>exchange of views with those interested in the power plant legitimation but also with critics and opponents (&quot;city rep.&quot;)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>To participate and engage with the project</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>To have the situation, that I have a say. (&quot;kindergarten rep.&quot;)</td>
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<td>open forum for different stakeholders, so that they really get engaged with the project, planning in the different steps and get involved (&quot;communications manager&quot;)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>different expectation, like &quot;When we meet frequently with E.ON, E.ON will make fundamental changes&quot; and of course what went missing there is to actually make any fundamental changes.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>(&quot;project manager&quot;)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Expectations met/not met</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Satisfied</strong> (&quot;union rep.&quot;)</td>
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<tr>
<td>My expectations are thus fulfilled. (&quot;kindergarten rep.&quot;)</td>
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<tr>
<td>When they left they told us everything was perfect and there was a neutral facilitation and the discussion was very fruitful and good (&quot;moderator&quot;)</td>
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<tr>
<td>So it was really good to have the forum in place, for the local view, get the engagement of different stakeholder groups, good local stakeholders really came in</td>
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</table>
and out and that we had a very broad perspective in terms of supporters and also people who are against the project. (“communications manager”)

just is not very effective (“city rep.”)

90% an information event (“resident”)

not really satisfied with the forum (“city rep.”)

For some the impression is that, at such a forum you cannot do much. You can get information or give information but the other that too little can be influenced with such a forum. (“project manager”)

power plant forum outside of the actual sessions is more effective than on the meeting (“city rep.”)

I think, that due to the time situation, that the power plant is more or less stagnating as nothing is happening at the power plant construction itself; has the impression of slumber (“resident”)

Expectations management

But then we never gave the feeling that E.ON should change their mind. That is very important, this expectations management. It’s very important not to promise more than you can keep in these dialogue forums. If somebody comes in thinking that they can stop this project and vote about it that is totally a mistake. That was very important. (“moderator”)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>1.4.2. Transparency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We had some frame, which was set and very transparent, so that everybody that participates here knows, that’s frame (“moderator”)</td>
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<tr>
<td>actually transparent (“city rep.”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it has the feeling that there is an open, transparent dialogue. (“city rep.”)</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is very transparent. We communicate with each other too, it’s no secret that I am being interviewed today. (“union rep.”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you find it transparent? A: Yes (“kindergarten rep.”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If one has heard anything or was approached by a citizen or by another institution, then that is carried around immediately. (“union rep.”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>made no secret of it from the beginning (“resident”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in the forum it was openly talked about (“union rep.”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that is very transparent from the beginning, from the first meeting. – that paid by EON (“moderator”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>there is the news around the power plant, what has changed, and then verdicts are discussed. (“kindergarten rep.”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We created a lot of documents to make clear what the forum has done, what was the discussion. (“moderator”)</td>
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<tr>
<th>1.4.3. Atmosphere</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>for project communication, the best which you can do to set up an environment, where everybody can get the information they would like to and get the possibility to discuss it in a secured and trustful environment. (“city rep.”)</td>
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<tr>
<td>important to keep the trust between different participants (“city rep.”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to really make sure that every stakeholder audience is engaged has the possibility to raise questions (“communications manager”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they have a trustful environment (“communications manager”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You could communicate very well with the participants in the power plant forum Datteln. (“project manager”)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
the discussions in the power plant forum in Datteln have been performed tough on the topic but fair, as opposed to discussions in other forums that have a sometimes more aggressive tone... (“project manager”)

I have never experienced a situation where the emotions were so cooked up that someone would leave the room.... (“project manager”)

At the beginning or when I was welcomed (“resident”)

I think the atmosphere is very comfortable, a very quite work flair, «resident»

less business-like (“city rep.”)

pleasant appointment (“city rep.”)

trustful, open group of people, who really are in dialogue, and talk about the project (“city rep.”)

I was not discriminated for that – about opposition (“resident”)

Actually, people were very glad, that someone out of that section indicated interest and wanted to help. (“resident”)

When we started the situation was not very easy for them. they had these formal procedures the opponents didn’t even shake the hand of the E.ON people, even to say hello, so they just walked by. The atmosphere was very frozen, more or less, more than freezing. (“moderator”)

1.4.4. Power

Power balance

that the group of power plant critics is too small. (“resident”)

power plant opponents and interest of citizens have too little weight. For that, not enough participate. (“resident”)

I’m missing actually in the last 2 years the really outspoken opponents of the project in this round. (“project manager”)

I just have the feeling that only PRO power plant sits in the forum (“kindergarten rep.”)

the barriers were too hardened. It could simply not be resolved (“resident”)

I am too small to be able to exert influence there. (“kindergarten rep.”)

the impression seems to prevail, that this is a tool of communication between the city and project sponsors and is not intended actually for open dialogue (“city rep.”)

Non-negotiable points

Non-negotiable are things, which raise, which do not fit to the legal requirements we need to fulfill. (“communications manager”)

that the audience is not sitting together to discuss if the project should be built or not. (“communications manager”)

E.ON said at the beginning we don’t want to change our coal, the size and the location. That was not negotiable. wasn’t like a mediation where you ask, “Do we want to have this power plant here: yes or no” That wasn’t the idea. (“moderator”)

they have the situation that they don’t want to have this power plant, they gave their arguments and on the other side, E.ON is of course not willing to skip their plans, but the discussion is done. (“moderator”)

The “IG Meistersiedlung” for example has openly resigned because they see no basis for a dialogue (“city rep.”)