

Between ‘deepening democracy’ and ‘window-dressing’ - Explaining policy-effects of dialog-oriented procedures¹

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Abstract:

The effects of dialog-oriented procedures on policies are discussed within both academic and practitioner communities. On one hand, dialog-oriented procedures are expected to deepen democracy in the sense of strengthening the links between public dialog and political decision making. On the other hand, opponents argue that in most cases these procedures are only symbolic window-dressing. We assume that dialog-oriented procedures can be both, and their policy effects depend on certain factors. So far, not much research has been done on explaining policy-effects of dialog-oriented procedures, and much of the past work focused on single case studies or on narrative synopses of very few cases. The paper is contributing to fill this gap through a quantitative meta-synthesis, which combines and aggregates data from primary studies on local procedures. It identifies the variables which make it more likely that dialog-oriented procedures have an impact on policy making (“effective dialog-oriented procedures”). We focus exemplarily on local procedures in Germany. Germany is an interesting case, because its local representative democracy is increasingly complemented with participatory approaches. The findings indicate that particularly comprehensive municipal commitments (financial and infrastructural) for participatory decision making lead to effects on policies. Dialog-oriented procedures have effects on public policies, but only if governments do make real efforts. Based on these findings we suggest to finish the debate whether dialog-oriented procedures have policy-effects or not and to focus on identifying explaining factors

Keywords:

Democratic Innovations, Deliberation, Meta-synthesis, Quantification

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Introduction

Dialog-oriented procedures for example, citizen juries, participatory budgeting and local agenda 21, are proliferating worldwide (e.g. [participedia.net](#)), and a variety of hopes are tied to these procedures. They are expected to deepen democracy in the sense of strengthening the links between public dialog and decision making (policy effects).³ However, opponents argue that dialog-oriented procedures are often window dressing, lip service and symbolic action (no policy effects) (e.g. [Blühdorn 2003](#); [Edelman 1985](#); [Fung and Wright 2003](#); [Malena 2009](#); [Papadopoulus and Warin 2007](#)).

Recent studies have shown that this polarizing debate is misleading. It is no longer the question, whether dialog-oriented procedures are “effective” or not. Accordingly, recent scholars have indicated the necessity to examine specifically, which factors are decisive to make these procedures effective in the sense that they have a real impact on policy-making (e.g. [Geissel 2009](#); [Mutz, 2008](#); [Thompson, 2008](#)). However, not much research has been done explaining effective dialog-oriented procedures, and much of the past work focused on single case studies or on narrative synopses of very few cases. The paper contributes to fill this gap through a meta-synthesis. Meta-synthesis “refers to both an interpretive product and the analytic processes by which the findings of studies are aggregated, integrated, summarized, or otherwise put together“ ([Barroso et al. 2003](#), 154). The question the authors want to respond to in this paper is: What explains effects of dialog-oriented procedures on policies? This question is not only important for academia but also for political actors, if they want their policies to be in congruence with citizens’ preferences.

We apply a methodological approach novel in this field, namely a statistical meta-synthesis of case study findings. In recent years, systematic collection and coding of case study data on dialog-oriented procedures have seldom been used ([Beierle & Cayford 2002](#); [Newig et. al. 2013](#); [Ryan 2014](#); [Ryan & Smith 2012](#); [Spada 2010](#)). The few systemizing studies, which try to combine the findings of case studies, are up to now mainly narrative synopses (e.g. [Delli Carpini, Cook & Jacobs, 2004](#), p. 200; [Goodin & Dryzek, 2006](#)). These narrative synopses are helpful, yet unable to provide a big picture about the actual effects of dialog-oriented procedures. Even more important, they may provide some information about decisive factors leading to these effects, but the testing of hypotheses and generalizable findings is not possible. More systemizing research is needed, which allows for generalization, hypothesis testing and theory development. A meta-synthesis enables the accumulation of “the

³ They argue that by proposing recommendations based on the debate of those affected, policy makers will be better informed about the interests and needs of their constituency.

intellectual gold of case study research” (Jensen & Rodgers, 2001, p. 235). Based on a quantitative meta-synthesis, wide-ranging generalizations, testing of hypotheses and theory development are feasible. The meta-synthesis allows conclusions which would not be possible by single case-studies or by narrative synopses. For more details see the chapter regarding “Data and methods”.

The Federal Republic of Germany is an especially interesting case for scrutinizing local dialog-oriented procedures. Since unification, the local level is becoming a particularly dynamic field for participatory approaches. Indeed, Germany’s local representative democracy is increasingly complemented with dialog-oriented procedures, for example participatory budgeting and local agenda 21 (For more information on the German local level see Heinelt & Vetter 2008).

The paper is structured in the following manner: In the next chapter, the authors give a short overview about the discussion on effective dialog-oriented procedures. Then, we describe the hypotheses that we test in this paper. Next, the methodology and the data are described. The findings of the meta-synthesis are then presented. The paper concludes with a summary of the study’s research contributions and directions for future research.

“Deliberative” or “dialog-oriented” procedures

According to Habermas’ well-known concept, deliberation is characterized as a particular form of communication, i.e. a so-called ideal speech situation. This ideal speech situation consists of certain prerequisites: “free access to deliberation, identity of meaning and saying (Wahrhaftigkeit), comprehensibility (Verständlichkeit) of speech acts, and the elimination of all forms of power except the ‘forceless force of the better argument’” (Rucht 2012, 113). Whereas many European authors draw attention to these strict rules, most US scholars focus on less rigorous principles and regard almost every form of discussion as deliberation (Geissel 2013). In this paper, we follow the less strict comprehension of deliberation or being more precise “dialog-oriented procedures”. Therefore, we use the term “deliberation” or “deliberative procedure” only in the context of the theoretical debate. When referring to ‘really existing’ procedures we apply the term “dialog-oriented” procedure (For this debate see e.g. Kahane, Loftson, Herriman & Hardy 2013; Parkinson & Mansbridge 2013; Talpin 2013).

Explaining policy effects of dialog-oriented procedures? – State of the Art

Factors explaining actual policy effects of dialog-oriented procedures are not yet fully explored in the literature.⁴ Nevertheless, three branches of explanations can be identified: 1) procedure-oriented municipal support 2) comprehensive financial and institutional municipal commitments for participatory decision making, and 3) social-political and socio-economic factors, i.e. wealth, former experience with dialog-oriented procedures, and type of government.⁵

Procedure-oriented support

Some of the explanatory work on effectiveness of dialog-oriented procedures focuses on the procedure-oriented support, which means support limited to the specific procedure. Respective studies emphasize the support and/or participation by the mayor or the city council members:

Wampler (2007, 258), for instance, emphasizes the importance of the involvement of the *mayor*. He has shown for Brazil that an official invitation from the mayor to participate or his/her participation is necessary for policy effects of dialog-oriented procedures. Ryan (2014, 71) systematized participatory budgeting procedures using the method fs-QCA and concluded that “mayoral support alone and no other combination of conditions is sufficient to produce deepened democracy” and more “the absence of mayoral support is necessary for the absence of deep democracy”. Examining a Future Search Conference in Olching, a commuter municipality north-west of Munich (Germany), Oels (2003, 28) found out that the early support of the mayor, facilitates the dialog-oriented procedure’s effectiveness. As the mayor engaged in providing “limited administrative support” (Oels 2003, 243f) for the specific procedure, the Future Search Conference provided strong results that had an impact on the political decision making. These recent empirical research results lead to the following hypotheses:

⁴ Studies on dialog-oriented procedures emphasize the impact on participants mainly on micro-sociological and psychological aspects, such as change of participants’ preferences or gain of knowledge (e.g. Delli Carpini, Cook and Jacobs, 2004; Fishkin, 1999; Rosenberg, 2005) or interactions and developments within deliberative groups, i.e. the quality of deliberation (e.g. Baechtiger 2005, Fishkin 2009, Grönlund, Setälä & Herne 2010). This experimental research is important but since these experiments have by definition no effects on policy-making, only effects on individual participants and developments within the deliberating group can be studied.

⁵ Font, Smith, Galais and Alarcón (2016) discuss further explaining factors of effective dialog-oriented procedures: Institutionalization, quality of the procedure, number of proposals, involvement of other authorities, and divergent proposal related factors such as for example costs of proposals and support for specific proposals. However, we cannot test these factors adequately with the data gathered in our study.

H₁: When a mayor participates in a specific dialog-oriented procedure, its policy-effect is more likely.

H₂: When a mayor supports a specific dialog-oriented procedure, its policy-effect is more likely.

Other studies focus on the engagement of *city council members*. Effects on policies are likely, if the “degree of support for participation across the party and political spectrum” among city council members is high (Ryan & Smith 2012, 12; also Ryan 2013 and Bingham 1986). They do for example advertise the specific dialog-oriented procedure on their website or participate in meetings. Oels (2003, 262) concluded that the participation of city council members is considerable as she found out that in particular “non-participating councilors were skeptical” about the results of Olching’s Future Search Conference. Additionally, the reluctance of most city council members to engage in the conference process led to a defensive handling of the conference results. Examining a large-scale civic engagement process centered on health-policy issues in Canada, Barrett, Wyman and Coelho (2012, 199) emphasizes the attendance of those who make the decisions. They stated that a “direct result of their involvement was to consider all other streams of input through a ‘citizens' lens’”. Thus, it seems reasonable that in dialog-oriented procedures participation and support of city council members have an influence on policies. It is therefore hypothesized that:

H₃: When city council members participate in a specific dialog-oriented procedure, its policy-effect is more likely.

H₄: When city council members support a specific dialog-oriented procedure, its policy-effect is more likely.

Comprehensive financial and institutional municipal commitments for participatory decisions-making

Several scholars in the field of participatory democracy procedures argue that comprehensive financial and structural commitments for participatory decision making within the municipality foster the effectiveness of dialog-oriented procedures (see for example Röcke 2014, Geissel 2005). Examining more than 550 participatory procedures developed mostly at the local level in three Spanish and two Italian regions, Alarcón and Font (2014, 10) revealed

that “[p]articipation departments and plans are key factors in [the] process of institutionalization” which then leads to impact on public policies. Similarly, analyzing contextual explanatory factories related to the public authority in the municipality, Font, Smith, Galais and Alarcón (2016) found out that “the existence of corporately agreed participatory plans ... will impact ... the seriousness with which authorities take proposals” (ibid., 8f).

Referring to special staff concerning civic participation, one lesson learned from the CIVITAS ELAN project⁶ (Marega et al. 2012, 5) is: A coordinator for citizen engagement at the local level, e.g. a referent for civic participation in the municipality, organizing and managing information on participation and consultation activities is crucial to ensure that citizen engagement has an influence on political decision making.

Summing up, this literature emphasizes the importance of comprehensive commitment beyond the support for a specific procedure. It stresses that real and long-term efforts of a local government enable policy effects of dialog-oriented procedures. Thus, it does seem reasonable that the existence of a participatory plan and the existence of special staff concerning civic participation in general have an influence on policies. Hence, the following hypotheses are stated:

H₅: When a participatory plan is in place in municipalities, policy-effects of dialog-oriented procedures are more likely.

H₆: When special staff concerning civic participation in general is established in municipalities, policy-effects of dialog-oriented procedures are more likely.

Socio-political and socio-economic factors

In relation to the socio-political and the socio-economic background of the municipality, there are good reasons to expect that explanatory factors such as the former experience with dialog-oriented procedures and the type of government as well as the size of the population and the availability of resources lead to effects of local dialog-oriented procedures on policy-making. Conducting a comparative continent-wide study in participatory democracy, Sintomer, Röcke and Herzberg (2016, 45) emphasize citizens’ former experience with participation as crucial explanation for effective dialog-oriented procedures (Sintomer, Röcke & Herzberg 2016,

⁶ The CIVITAS ELAN project motivates “stakeholders and the interested public ... to become involved and to engage themselves in planning, implementing and monitoring measures in the field of sustainable mobility” (Marega et al. 2012, 5).

176ff). These findings are comparable to the results of Barrett, Wyman and Coelho's study (2012, 189) on public deliberation in Hawai'i. They stress that only a long-term character (15 years) of deliberation has a strong impact on local policies. Thus, it seems reasonable that the former experience with participation in municipalities has an influence on the effectiveness of dialog-oriented procedures. It is therefore hypothesized that:

H₇: When municipalities have former experience with dialog-oriented procedures, policy-effects are more likely.

In Germany, some states can be described as consensus democracies and other states as majoritarian. This might have an influence on policy-effects of dialog-oriented procedures. Generally we can assume that a consensus type of government is more favorable. For example, examining the British parliamentary work, Russel and Benton (2009) found out that impact on policy is more likely within consensus than within confrontation context. The following hypothesis can thus be stated:

H₈: In municipalities in states with consensus type of government, policy-effects of dialog-oriented procedures are more likely.

Scholars argue that participation is more effective in smaller municipalities (see Bryan 2004), and in municipalities with sufficient resources (see Boulding & Wampler 2009). In municipalities with few inhabitants, dialog-oriented procedures seem to be easier to organize and it seems to be "easier for participants to hold the public authority to account for failure to implement proposals" (Font, Smith, Galais and Alarcón 2016, 9). Wampler (2007) found out that in municipalities with low level of resources, dialog-oriented procedures fail to have effects on policy-implementation. This leads to the following hypotheses:

H₉: The smaller municipalities are, the more likely dialog-oriented procedures achieve policy effects.

H₁₀: The wealthier municipalities are, the more likely dialog-oriented procedures achieve policy effects.

Data and methods

Most studies discussing the effects of dialog-oriented procedures on policies are based on observations of one or a small number of cases. Although, this research was necessary to structure the field, we are now entering a new scholarly phase. Systemizing research is needed, which allows for generalization, hypothesis testing⁷ and theory development. We have systemized case studies through a meta-synthesis, namely a statistical meta-synthesis of case study findings.

However, findings of mostly qualitative studies cannot be transformed easily into a meta-synthesis data set. They need special ‘transformation’ and ‘handling’. Elsewhere, the authors showed that every systematic large-n meta-synthesis of case study data needs to meet one major challenge, i.e. the quantification of case study data. The quantification of case study data consisted of three steps: The first step means to transform information within the case study into concrete, explicit indicators. For example ‘policy effect’ would be measured by counting the number of suggestions made by the deliberative group and transformed into policies. Within the second step coders are asked to use author’s impressions: For instance, if data on the quality of deliberation is not available in a case study, the author’s evaluation of group interactions is coded. Finally, the third step standardizes qualitative information by using coders’ assessments: Coders are asked to evaluate case study information by their own impressions.

Selection of cases

In this paper, the authors focus on local dialog-oriented procedures in Germany for several reasons. First, the political system of Germany has rested firmly on the principles of representative democracy since its founding in 1949. However, today the concepts of representative democracy are under stress and participatory concepts are gaining ground. Secondly, since unification, the local level⁸ is becoming a particularly dynamic field for participatory experiments. Indeed, Germany’s local representative democracy is increasingly complemented with participatory approaches: Until 2005 more than 2.600 German

⁷ Within deliberative theory an intensive discussion has started about the question whether it is really possible to develop hypotheses out of deliberation theories and to test them empirically (Rosenberg, 2007). Mutz (2008) asked for example, whether deliberation theories are “falsifiable theories” at all, because they are too vague and too unspecific to break them down into hypotheses.

⁸ In addition to their legally mandated duties (such as street maintenance, transportation, provision of services, sewage and waste disposal), communities in Germany have a certain amount of political flexibility and leeway. The local level is not merely a ‘henchman’ for implementing state and federal laws, but rather has its own room for manoeuvre, processing two-thirds of all public investment.

municipalities have decided to conduct a local agenda 21⁹ procedure (see website agenda21-treffpunkt); until 2016 in more than 130 municipalities participatory budgeting¹⁰ procedures have been conducted (see website buergerhaushalt.org). Thus, the Federal Republic of Germany is an especially interesting case for scrutinizing dialog-oriented procedures, and the local level is particularly suited to catalog and analyze these procedures.

How were these cases selected? We analyzed the entire universe of published case studies on local agenda 21 and participatory budgeting in Germany. Although, this strategy is more accurate than examining merely a sample of the population, investigating the entire ‘population of studies on respective cases’ does not necessarily provide data for all information of interest. Data missing was ‘filled up’ in our research by an additional data collection which covered administrative reports as well as expert interviews, for example studies’ author(s), administrative staff or moderators (see more detailed Hess, Brehme & Geissel 2015). For more details on studies and experts see Appendix B. For this paper, we selected those cases (a total of 71) that provide sufficient data to test the hypotheses mentioned above.¹¹

Operationalization: Dependent variable

The dependent variable has been operationalized as an ordinal five-category variable that accounts for the effectiveness of dialog-oriented procedures. The term effective (or effectiveness) refers to impact on policies: We define a dialog-oriented procedure as effective, if political decisions move toward the proposals made in the dialog-oriented procedure; and a dialog-oriented procedure is ineffective, if no recommendations were accepted by the city council.¹²

⁹ The purpose of Local Agenda 21 (LA 21) procedures is to encourage local authorities promoting more environmentally, socially and economically sustainable communities. A variety of formats can be applied, e.g. agenda forum, agenda groups, agenda projects, district meetings, round tables, consensus conferences and future conferences.

¹⁰ The purpose of participatory budgeting is to enable citizens to participate in the debate about how to allocate parts of municipal budget. A typical participatory budgeting procedure is characterized by three steps: information (1), consultation (2) and accountability (3). Firstly, information on local budgeting is provided; secondly, citizens are invited to make and discuss proposals for budget planning and finally, decision making authorities justify their decisions on local budget with regard to citizens’ proposals and discussions.

¹¹ The selection is slightly dominated by Local Agenda 21 procedures (52.1%). Approximately 30% of the procedures took place in North Rhine-Westphalia (see Appendix A).

¹² Pogrebinschi and Ryan (2014), for example, describe effectiveness as translation of citizens’ preferences into policymaking. In this sense, dialog-oriented procedures are effective if they have an impact on at least one of the stages of the policy cycle: “agenda setting, policy formulation and decision making, implementation, evaluation and termination” (Pogrebinschi & Ryan 2014, 7). Font, Smith, Galais and Alarcón (2016) differ between implemented, rejected and adopted (formal acceptance but no further action) proposals. In this paper, effectiveness is defined as translation of citizens’ proposals into implemented policy decisions.

To quantify the case study and interview data, we coded the impressions of the case study authors and experts about the effectiveness of the dialog-oriented procedure. Value 0 implies that no recommendations were accepted by the city council. Whereas value 1 identifies slight effects on policy decisions, value 2 stands for moderate effects. Value 3 indicates that many proposals were accepted by the city council. Finally, value 4 implies that all recommendations were accepted. The largest group of all procedures included in the analysis, i.e. 24, had slight effects on policy decisions.

Operationalization: Independent variables

Referring to the above mentioned discussion of explaining factors, we focused on three basic types of independent variables: those related to procedure-oriented support, those related to comprehensive financial and institutional municipal commitments for participatory decision making, and those related to socio-economic and socio-political explaining factors of the municipality in which the procedure took place.

To gain information on procedure-oriented support, we coded the authors' or experts' impressions of mayor's and city council member's support. Value 0 indicates that local politicians are not interested in the dialog-oriented procedure. Value 1 implies a slight support and value 2 a moderate support. Value 3 indicates that mayor or city council members support the dialog-oriented procedure strongly. Finally, value 4 implies a very strong support. Most procedures, i.e. 34 and 46, were supported moderately by mayor and city council members. Information on participation of mayor and participation of city council members were coded from the case studies or the interviews. Both variables are dichotomous (scale points are labelled as follows: 0=not existing; 1=existing). Mayors participated in 68% and city council members in 79% of all procedures included in the analysis.

The comprehensive financial and structural commitment for participatory decision making is measured by the existence of a participatory plan and special staff. A participatory plan covers criteria and objectives of municipal participation as well as rights and obligations of all actors (politicians, citizens, administration) involved. Special staff concerning civic participation in general, e.g. a referent civic participation is responsible for the implementation of municipal participation procedures: He/she develops new participative activities and is the contact person for all questions relevant to civic participation in the municipality. Information on participatory plan and special staff was coded from the case studies or the interviews and both variables are dichotomous (scale points are labelled as follows: 0=not existing; 1=existing).

Merely 40% of all municipalities included in the analysis have a participatory plan; and in only 18 municipalities special staff concerning civic participation is available.

Aspects of the socio-economic background are captured by two factors: municipal size and municipal wealth. The size of municipality is measured by the number of inhabitants: a numeric variable ranging from 500 to 3.370.802. The level of municipal wealth is a numeric variable calculated from municipal GDP per capita minus municipal debts per capita. The municipal wealth is ranging from -18.409 to 51.015. The average municipal wealth per capita was 10.967 € (SD = 16.884).

Aspects of the socio-political background are captured by two factors, i.e. former experience with dialog-oriented procedures and type of government. The former experience with dialog-oriented procedures is a dichotomous variable (scale points are labelled as follows: 0=no procedures; 1=procedures). Half of the municipalities included in the analysis have former experience with dialog-oriented procedures. Type of government is a dichotomous variable differentiating between majoritarian democracy and consensus democracy (at the federal level). 33 municipalities are located in states with majoritarian democracy, whereas 38 municipalities are located in states with consensus democracy.

Analyses

In the first step of our analysis, we produced cross tables and calculated effect sizes to investigate which decisive factors lead to effects of dialog-oriented procedures on policies. In this step only categorical factors were included (see table 1).

Table 1: Overview on calculation of effect sizes

Independent variables	Dependent variable	Effect size
Mayor participation	by effects on policies	Rank-biserial correlation
Participation of city council members		Rank-biserial correlation
Mayor support		Spearman correlation and Somers d
City council support		Spearman correlation and Somers d
Participatory concept		Rank-biserial correlation
Special staff in municipality		Rank-biserial correlation
Dialog-oriented experience		Rank-biserial correlation

Type of government

Rank-biserial correlation

Source: provided by the authors

In the second step of our analysis, we decided to estimate the effectiveness of dialog-oriented procedures using the ordinal regression (PLUM) function in SPSS. Constructing ordinal regression models implies, to make several decisions. First, we identified the ordinal dependent variable; then, we decided which predictors to use. Finally, we choose the type of link function does give good fits for our data (see more detailed information later on). Categorical and numerical factors were included in the regression models.

Results: Under which decisive factors can local dialog-oriented procedures have an effect on policies?

We begin with a look at the results of effect size calculation. This is followed by different ordinal regression models. It applies to both steps of analysis that there is no evidence of multicollinearity between the independent variables.

The results of effect size calculation (see table 2) indicates that neither the participation of mayors or city council members nor their support leads to effects of dialog-oriented procedures on policies. The type of government does not influence policy-effects as well. Effects on policies correlate strongly with participatory plan and special staff and weakly with former experience. All effects are statistically significant¹³.

Table 2: Calculation of effect sizes

Rank-biserial correlation coefficients (n=71)

	Rank-biserial correlation
Mayor participation by effects on policies	-,091(ns)
Participation of city council members by effects on policies	-,096(ns)
Participatory plan by effects on policies	,500***

¹³ In the methodological literature, it is widely discussed whether significance tests are applicable in full population surveys. In this article, we follow Broscheid & Gschwend (2003, 2) arguing that “population data are subject to a variety of stochastic processes, or “errors,” that have to be part of the analysis, for example through the investigation of parameter variances, significance tests, or confidence intervals”.

Special staff in municipality by effects on policies	,530***
Type of democracy by effects on policies	-,037(ns)
Dialog-oriented experience by effects on policies	,209*

Spearman correlation coefficients and Somers d (n=71)

	Spearman's correlation	Somers' d		
		Symmetric	DV: effects	DV: support
Mayor support by effects on policies	,088(ns)	,071(ns)	,075(ns)	,068(ns)
City council support by effects on policies	,034(ns)	,032(ns)	,039(ns)	,027(ns)

p<0,01 (***), p<0,05 (**), p<0,10 (*), p>=0,10 (ns)

Source: provided by the authors

The above-mentioned calculation of effect sizes indicates that hypothesis 1, 2, 3 and 4 cannot be accepted. Hypothesis 8 on the socio-political factors “type of government” cannot be accepted as well. There is no difference between municipalities that have majoritarian-democracy traditions and those that have consensus-democracy traditions.

On contrary, hypothesis 5 and 6 can be accepted. These findings are consistent with recent research, advocating the importance of comprehensive financial and structural commitments for participatory decision making within the municipality (Sintomer, Röcke & Herzberg 2016; Font, Smith, Galais & Alarcón 2016; Röcke 2014; Geissel 2005). Hypothesis 7 on former dialog-oriented experience can be accepted as well. The socio-political factor “former experience with participation” has an influence on the effectiveness of dialog-oriented procedures which is consistent with recent research done by Barrett, Wyman and Coelho (2012) as well as Sintomer, Röcke and Herzberg (2016).

Given that some potential factors do not lead to effects on policies, the following variables were excluded from the ordinal regression analysis: mayor participation, mayor support, participation by city council members, support by city council members, and type of democracy. Participatory plan, special staff, and former dialog-oriented experience as well as municipal wealth and municipal size were included. We calculated different regression models using the logit link function which focuses on evenly distributed outcome categories as well as the negative log-log link function which focuses on the lower categories. Within all

models, the logit link function was the better choice because of its satisfying ‘parallel lines’ assumption and larger model fitting statistics (see Appendix). We started with a model including participatory plan and special staff (model 1). With regard to the socio-economic and socio-political background, different models were then specified iteratively with former dialog-oriented experience (model 2), municipal wealth (model 3) and municipal size (model 4). This was done to compare the explanation power of different explaining factors. Table 3 presents the results of all ordinal regression models.

Table 3: Ordinal regression on policy effects of dialog-oriented procedures (n=71)

<i>Threshold</i>	Estimate			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
No policy effects	-1,012***	-,621(ns)	-,634(ns)	-,821*
Slight policy effects	,886***	1,345***	1,333***	1,185***
Moderate policy effects	2,827***	3,346***	3,335***	3,201***
Strong policy effects	4,411***	4,958***	4,953***	4,798***
<i>Independent variables</i>				
Participatory plan	1,457***	1,713***	1,736***	1,624***
Special staff	1,802***	1,506**	1,475**	,502**
Dialog-oriented experience		,819*	,849*	,839*
Municipal wealth			2,313E-6(ns)	2,816E-6(ns)
Municipal size				-5,497E-7(ns)
Cox and Snell Pseudo R ²	,320	,349	,350	,362

p<0,01 (***), p<0,05 (**), p<0,10 (*), p>=0,10 (ns)

Source: provided by the authors

As expected from the effect size calculation, it is more likely that dialog-oriented procedures have effects on policies in municipalities with participatory plan, special staff and former dialog-oriented experiences. In model 3 and 4 municipal wealth has a positive but not significant co-efficiency. However, size of municipality has the opposite effect where it estimates by negative, but the effect is not significant as well: As wealth of municipality increases and municipal size decreases, so does the probability of policy effects.

The strength of the association between the dependent variable and the explaining factors was measured by Cox and Snell pseudo R-square. The value indicates that the calculated ordinal

regression models explain between 32.0% (model 1) and 36.2% (model 4) of the variability of the policy effects.¹⁴

To examine the predictions generated by the models, the cross-tabulating method is used. The following “5 by 5 classification table” categorizes the predicted and the actual outcome categories. Model 2 demonstrates the highest prediction accuracy. It classifies the categories of fairly strong effects (55.56%), moderate effects (42.86%), and slight effects (75.0%). For all five categories combined, the model demonstrates moderate prediction accuracy (45.07%) (see table 4).

Table 4: Accuracy of the classification results for the effectiveness categories

		Predicted outcome category					Total
		0 = no effects	1	2	3	4 = strong effects	
Actual outcome category	0 = no effects	0 0.0%	9 75,0%	3 25,0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	12 100.0%
	1	0 0.0%	18 75,0%	5 20,83%	1 4,17%	0 0.0%	24 100.0%
	2	0 0.0%	10 47,62%	9 42,86%	2 9,52%	0 0.0%	21 100.0%
	3	0 0.0%	3 33,33%	1 11,11%	5 55,56%	0 0.0%	9 100.0%
	4 = strong effects	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	2 40,0%	3 60,0%	0 0.0%	5 100.0%
Total		0	40	20	11	0	71

Source: provided by the authors

The ordinal regression models presented do confirm the fifth, the sixth, and the seventh hypothesis. This means that dialog-oriented procedures are more likely to produce influence on policies when a participatory plan, and when special staff concerning civic participation in general is available in municipalities as well as when municipalities have former experience with dialog-oriented procedures.

¹⁴ Cox and Snell values must be interpreted with caution, because they are not direct equivalents to the R-square statistics obtained in a linear regression model.

Discussion and Conclusion

This paper is contributing to fill the gap explaining the policy-effects of dialog-oriented procedures through a meta-synthesis – exemplarily examined on 71 participatory budgeting and local agenda 21 procedures (in Germany). Case studies have identified three crucial decisive explanations: procedure-oriented support, comprehensive financial and structural municipal commitments as well as socio-economic and socio-political factors (Bingham 1986; Font, Smith, Galais and Alarcón 2016; Geissel 2005; Röcke 2014; Ryan & Smith 2012; Ryan 2014; Sintomer, Röcke & Herzberg 2016; Wampler 2007).

In our data the strongest explanatory power is resting on comprehensive financial and structural municipal commitments for participatory decision making: The availability of special staff concerning civic participation (referent for civic participation), and the existence of a participatory plan are particularly important. In other words: Effectiveness increases, if governments make real efforts. A third variable that shows significance are former experiences with dialog-oriented procedures. Again, this confirms the expectation that dialog-oriented procedures are more likely to have effects on policy decisions if the municipality is strongly committed to participatory decision making. Other socio-economic and socio-political explaining factors such as municipal wealth, municipal size, and type of democracy do not lead to effects of dialog-oriented procedures on public policies.

In our meta-synthesis, policy-oriented support has no impact. These findings are not consistent with recent research advocating the importance of procedure-oriented support, i.e. mayoral support (Ryan 2014; Wampler 2007) and city council staff support (Ryan & Smith 2012; Ryan 2013; Bingham 1986). We assume that first country specific differences and second the small number of cases may explain the discrepancy.

Our findings have important implications for theories and empirical research on dialog-oriented procedures: We suggest to finish the debate on whether dialog-oriented procedures are ‘deepening democracy’ versus merely ‘window dressing’ and to focus on analyzing factors explaining policy-effects. Additional research on further factors explaining policy effects of dialog-oriented procedures is needed. It can, for example, be assumed that external, professional support such as moderators, accountability plans and report on the procedure, media coverage may have some influence.

It takes more than one swallow to make a summer. Our research shows that dialog-oriented procedures can have effects on policy-making: Effectiveness of dialog-oriented procedures requires real, i.e. comprehensive financial and structural commitments by local governments;

symbolic participation by or purely procedure-oriented support of local politicians alone is not sufficient.

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Appendix

Table A: General profile of the procedures involved in the analysis

Type of participatory procedure

	n	%
Participatory budgeting	34	47.9
Local Agenda 21	37	52.1
Total	71	100.0

Name of the federal state in which the procedure (PB or LA 21) took place

	n	%
Baden-Württemberg	10	14.1
Bavaria	8	11.3
Berlin	5	7.0
Brandenburg	5	7.0
Bremen	1	1.4
Hamburg	2	2.8
Hesse	7	9.9
Lower Saxony	3	4.2
North Rhine-Westphalia	23	32.4
Rhineland-Palatinate	3	4.2
Saxony	3	4.2
Saxony-Anhalt	1	1.4
Total	71	100.0

Table B: Overview on studies and experts

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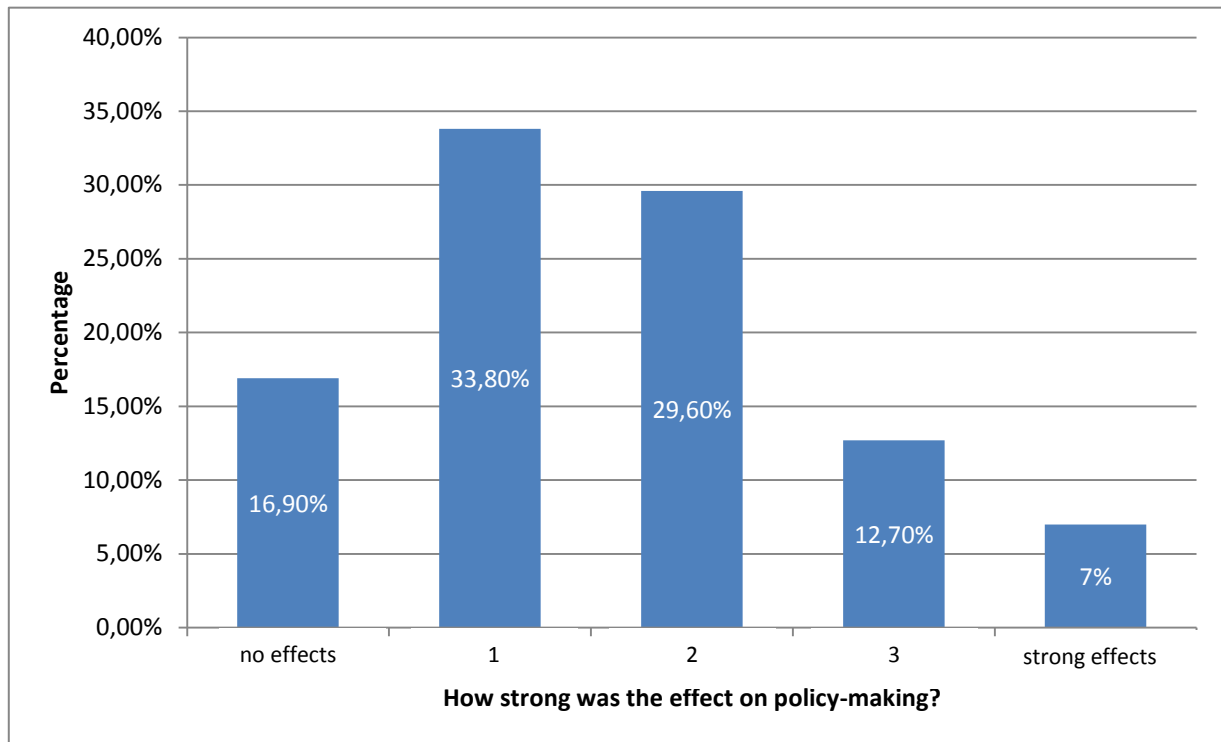
Type of experts in interviews

	n	%
Study's author(s)	9	45.0
Administrative staff	11	55.0
Total of interviews	20	100.0

Source: provided by the authors

Graph A

Distribution of values for the outcome variable



Source: provided by the authors

To choose a link function, it is helpful to examine the distribution of values for the outcome variable. We created a bar chart for the dependent variable to show the distribution of categories of authors' or experts' impression about effective dialog-oriented procedures. The majority of cases are in the lower and middle categories, especially categories 0 (no effects), 1 (slight effects), and 2 (moderate effects). For this reason, we use the logit link function, since that function focuses on evenly distributed outcome categories as well as the negative log-log link function, since that function focuses on the lower categories.

Table C: Overview on regression models statistics

Ordinal regression models using the logit link function

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Model Fitting Information:				
-2 Log Likelihood	43,140***	56,142***	176,867***	175,547***
Chi-Square	27,403***	30,508***	30,538***	31,857***
Goodness of Fit:				
Pearson	16,413*	23,566(ns)	268,520(ns)	262,519(ns)
Deviance	18,409*	23,085(ns)	175,245(ns)	173,925(ns)
Pseudo R ² :				
Cox and Snell	,320	,349	,350	,362
Nagelkerke	,338	,369	,369	,381
McFadden	,131	,146	,146	,152
Test of Parallel Lines				
-2 Log Likelihood	34,099(ns)	44,502(ns)	163,184(ns)	158,234(ns)
Chi-Square	9,041(ns)	11,640(ns)	13,683(ns)	17,313(ns)

Ordinal regression models using the negative log-log ink function

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Model Fitting Information:				
-2 Log Likelihood	49,462***	60,203***	180,252***	207,405***
Chi-Square	21,081***	26,446***	27,153***	179,081***
Goodness of Fit:				
Pearson	23,137**	25,335(ns)	246,153(ns)	242,660(ns)
Deviance	24,730**	27,146(ns)	178,630(ns)	177,459(ns)
Pseudo R ² :				
Cox and Snell	,257	,311	,318	,329
Nagelkerke	,271	,328	,335	,347
McFadden	,101	,126	,130	,135
Test of Parallel Lines				

-2 Log Likelihood	33,195**	43,835*	161,458*	179,081(ns)
Chi-Square	16,267**	16,368*	18,794*	163,111(ns)

Source: provided by the authors