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Living in Sustainability-The Wohnprojekt Wien

A case study on the dimensions of sustainability in the daily life of a cohousing community

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Since the 1980s the term *sustainability* gained popularity and developed into ideas and strategies around the world. These ideas and strategies emerged on international, national and local levels of social structure. They became part of governmental and non-governmental organisations and implemented strategy papers and formed political decision-making as well. On the political level the United Nations established 17 guiding principles which emphasise to ensure sustainable development on earth. In 2016 these 17 *sustainable development goals* contained three pillars: economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection.

Overall, they are not legally binding, the UN member states are obligated to get involved in the development of projects and the creation of national frameworks.

The idea of sustainable development consists of actions and strategies which do not harm or compromise the potential of future generations. Furthermore, the needs of the present generation should be satisfied without harming the circumstances of future generations. (URL UN-Sustainable Development Goals).

The origin and first use of the term *sustainability* was in a book on forestry published by Hans Carl von Carlowitz in 1713. Due to the scarcity of wood and the consequences were resource constraints. In the 18th century former forests transformed into fields for agriculture, which led to this lack of wood. Therefore, Von Carlowitz developed an idea that afforestation of agricultural land and alternating of different types of agriculture should reduce the lack of wood. The available land should be used *sustainably*, so that further generations do not suffer from wood scarcity. (Schmand 2010: 11)

In the 1980s a joint project with the United Nations Environment Program and the World Wildlife Fund developed strategies for conserving biological resources developed strategies which included guidelines for sustainable development. These strategies focused on the preservation of biodiversity, resource usage without destroying its base, which also refers to species and ecosystems.

The central point of this project was the idea of conservation. Through conversation it is possible to preserve the welfare of present and future generations. This idea led to the term *sustainable development*, which only is possible if societies consequently conserving ecological systems through sustainable economic strategies.

Furthermore, “*Our Common Future* set three goals for sustainable development: (1) making growth ecologically responsible, (2) respecting the needs of future generations, and (3) finding a better balance between economic efficiency and social equity” (Schmand 2010:16). The

journal *Our Common Future* argued that this could only be realized through broad policy changes at national and international levels.

The first international step was the Agenda 21 developed through the conference of the United Nations for environment and development in 1992. Since then, the concept of sustainable development became a powerful model for societies: “First, it will link the economic, ecological, and social spheres of human activities and thereby offer societies an integrated way to deal with the complexity of modern life. Second, sustainable development considers long-term impacts and outcomes and thereby goes beyond the immediate future” (Schmand 2010:19).

The concept of cohousing on the example of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*

Following Schmand (2010) the idea of *sustainability* contains long-term decision-making processes in society. Especially political decision-making processes concerning city development and spatial planning are also under the influence of international development strategies.

Austria’s housing provision is influenced by the private sector of the real estate market. Hence, housing is treated as a product, and prices are results of the interplay between supply and demand. This includes private investors who are involved in transactions with an agenda for profit (Van Vliet 1990: 9). “In reality, however, capitalist systems do not have genuinely *free* markets. The interplay of supply and demand is molded by numerous government interventions” (Van Vliet 1990: 9). Consequently, the state is an important actor in the housing provision market. Therefore, not only governments are shaping force within the housing provision market, but also competitors of the free market processes (Van Vliet 1990: 8).

In Vienna not only the free housing market is present, but also the municipality and city supported building developers are involved. The revival of a new private organised housing provision focussing on sustainability was established in Vienna in the last decade. The new form of living called *cohousing* has already been popular in Berlin, it is still a rare phenomenon in Vienna's housing market. One of the first newly- built co-housing projects directly in Vienna is the *Wohnprojekt Wien*.

The living project is based on the association called *Verein für nachhaltiges Leben*. It includes approximately 70 members with the approach to support and establish a sustainable living, housing and working environment.

Already existing collective living projects arose already in the mid-1990s. Projects like the Sargfabrik in the 14th district of Vienna, the community of *Pomali* in Lower Austria or the

association B.R.O.T are applying a similar way of living, but not with the definite focus on implementing ideas of *sustainability* in their living structure. (URL Sargfabrik) (URL Pomali) The *Wohnprojekt Wien* is located at the Nordbahnhofgelände in the 2nd district of Vienna. This area is part of Vienna's city development strategy since 2014 and should be finished around 2025. (URL Nordbahnhofgelände)

One of the most crucial parts of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* is the participation process. The planning process of the building contained the development of the common spaces which include a kitchen, a rooftop garden, a playroom for children, a library, sauna, guest apartments, wash salon, workshop, and functional rooms. Every apartment was designed by its future residents. All rooms are designed under the premise to provide a sustainable living environment. (URL Wohnprojekt)

Crucial for the decision-making process is the applied concept of *sociocracy*. The concept of *sociocracy* allows all residents to participate in any decision-making process and create a way of social organisation in the residential community.

Additionally, the core promotion of the idea of sustainable living structures shows the perception and consciousness of people for new sustainable living alternatives. The infrastructural framework of collective property and shared living space should guarantee sustainability which is based on the three ideas characterising the term *sustainability*-established by the United Nations.

The term *sustainability* is a concept, an idea or an ideology that has developed into a prominent and relevant topic in the last decades. Due to the declaration of sustainable development goals the member states are responsible for providing the basis for the implementation of them in their political decision-making processes and development strategies.

Hence, the term *sustainability* transformed not just in loose ideas, it became part of many facets of daily life. *Sustainability* has become a term used for many things and therefore, it contains, transports and also shapes ideas and agendas. It influences decision making processes on different levels of government, global, national and local.

"Not only do policies codify social norms and values, and articulate fundamental organizing principles of society, they also contain implicit (and sometimes explicit) modes of society" (Shore/Wright 1997: 7). Therefore, the idea or concept of sustainability could be seen as an influencing factor for policymaking and governance processes.

Additionally, the example of cohousing shows a way of living that promotes the idea of sustainability through social inclusion and the sharing of space, time and resources.

With the anthropology of policy approach, it should be possible to understand what kind of impact the term *sustainability* creates towards political policies, its actors. This concerns the functions of policies and how they are shaping society should be analysed and contextualised, as well. (Feldman et.al 2005: 34)

Following the theoretical approach of anthropology of policy, it raises the question, how the term *sustainability* became and is part of the residents in the *Wohnprojekt Wien*?

How do concepts of „sustainability“ become integrated in the cohousing project “Wohnprojekt Wien”?

Additionally, the core target of the research will be to show and understand the mechanisms of *sustainability* as an idea and what meaning is carried for the involved people and groups.

The last point concerns the concept of *sustainability as a policy*. How ideas become formed, interpreted and furthermore applied.

*What kind of mechanisms of self organisation are employed by cohousing ? and
How is sustainability embedded in these mechanisms?*

The cohousing project *Wohnprojekt Wien* was chosen for this case study because it offers the possibility to follow the development steps of ideas regarding *sustainability* and new ways of housing provision. Its implication not only in daily life decisions. How can this new form of dwelling be integrated in existing housing systems? Furthermore, how these ideas have been part of political decision making and been traced back on different levels of networks and its involved actors.

To answer these questions, this thesis will show and analyse the concept of cohousing on the example of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*. It will present its development, its structure and try to frame the understanding of the term *sustainability* and how it is embedded in the residential community.

The thesis is separated in three core elements: the theoretical background of social- and cultural anthropological perspective towards policies, the methodical approach of data generation and the analytic presentation of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*.

The theoretical background will discuss the terms *policy*, *sustainability* and *cohousing*. It will distinguish between anthropological and political science approaches towards policies.

Following these discussions the term *sustainability* will be analysed and how it developed to become a popular topic in the present day. Due to Wohnprojekt *Wien's* chosen residential way of living the concept of *cohousing* will be analysed.

After establishing the theoretical background the focus will be presentation of the methodical approach during and after the research. It contains the applied methods which focussed on interviews and participant observation as well the analytic process during and after the data collection,.

The results of the research will be present in the chapter *Living Sustainability- The Wohnprojekt Wien*. Beginning with the development of the project in 2010 till its realisation in 2015 to the presence of *sustainability* and the social organisation from *sociocracy*.

Chapter 2: From an Idea to a Policy

For any research it is necessary to clarify its theoretical approach and base. It will not only be a guideline for further research steps but also impacts how the research field and its actors have been perceived. The following chapter will focus on theoretical perspectives which have been used to discuss, analyse, and understand the research topic and how it could be set in the social and cultural anthropological bias.

Therefore, the first part of this chapter will focus on the discussion of the social and cultural anthropological approach *anthropology of policy*. It will analyse and examine the subject and concepts of the term *policy* and how it was used as the theoretical basis for the master thesis research.

Although it is formed by social and cultural ideas over time, the topic of sustainability has not really been touched by an anthropological perspective. In this regard the chapters concerning the topic *sustainability* will discuss the origin of the term, its derivatives and its concepts.

The third theoretical pillar in this chapter will be the discussion of the residential form of cohousing. This is crucial because of its present in the empirical research but also its relation between ideas of sustainability and governance structures as well. Consequently, the goal of the following chapters is the analysis of policy approaches accruing to social anthropological contexts and how ideas of sustainability and cohousing can be understood in this way of thinking .

2.1 Anthropology of policy

Regarding the social and cultural anthropological view, this research is based on the identification, description, and analysis of policies. These policies are not just one result of

governance or power relations, they are constructed by and with ideas, concepts and ideologies and manifest themselves on different levels of observation. Core authors who have been involved in establishing a framework for the analysis of policies in social and cultural anthropology, were for example Chris Shore, Susan Wright, Gregory Feldman, John Clarke and Janine R. Wedel. The following part discusses the approaches of anthropology towards policy as a research topic and how these policies can be defined and understood from an anthropological point of view.

First, it is necessary to discuss the characteristics of policies according to the anthropological approach and how this approach distinguishes itself from approaches which are used in political science. In addition, this will lead to the role of the concept of *governance* in the analytic process and the goal and position of analysing policies from an anthropological perspective.

2.2 What is *policy* for social and cultural anthropology?

To answer this question, it is essential to start with the presentation of the discussion lead by Feldman et al. in the article *Toward an anthropology of public policy?* (2009). The authors reason that for anthropological research it is not explicitly necessary to elaborate on what the term *policy* means, more how this term takes an impact on people, societies and furthermore, how it is used. (Feldman et al. 2009, 35) Apart from this argument, it is stated that with the examination of the etymology of the term *policy*, the research can benefit from it and helps to reveal its social function in society. In this regard, several examples have been used. Among others, the term is used for the application of programmes, results of government work or the implementation of government goals. Consequently, the use of the term policy refers to specific areas of activity with a specific implication by the actions taken. (ibid,35)

Following this approach, it is notable that the word *policy* has been used since the sixteenth century and has its roots in middle French, Italian, Latin, and Old Greek. One of the roots describes the same meaning: organising, regulating, and administrating something. Another trace of the origin of the term *policy* is concerning the signing of a contract. (URL Policy Etymology 2020)

Feldman et al. argue that “when these two meanings are put together, they show how statecraft, which is invariably concerned with consolidating social order, inherently privileges some people over others without revealing the fact that it is producing an order of inequality [...]” (Feldman et al. 2009, 36). Furthermore, the term *policy* is still represented in the daily life of the 21st century and has become an organising principle for societies in combination with other concepts concerning community, nation, or livelihood. Consequently, people become governed

through norms and rules established through policies. These policies become a tool to achieve a purpose. (ibid,37)

In 1997 Chris Shore and Susan Wright published the book *Anthropology of policy* and initiated the analytic discussion about policies as a research topic for social and cultural anthropology. They indicated, regarding the relevance for anthropological research, that “policy has become an increasingly central concept and instrument in the organization of contemporary societies” (Shore/Wright 1997, chapter 1, para. 4). Hence, policies impact individuals in a broad spectrum of their lives. They influence the construction and the definition of persons. Furthermore, policies can be understood as a force of creating categories, types, roles, and norms. (ibid, para. 5)

Shore and Wright argue that parts of policies can be found in language, rhetoric, concepts, political speeches, documents of governments, guidelines, programmes and consequently they become embedded in mechanisms of decision-making and bureaucratic processes. Additionally, “a policy may differ enormously in these various manifestations. Much of the work of organizing is to make these fragmented activities appear coherent, so it can be claimed that an intention has been realized and a successful result achieved” (ibid, para. 7).

2.3 Illustrating policy- concepts, characteristics and ideas

For further understanding of how policies can be framed and set in a theoretical context, it is important to discuss the characteristics of policies from a social and cultural anthropological perspective.

Shore and Wright are illustrating policies with an approach that describes them as tools and instruments used by governments, companies, non-governmental organisations, public and private organisations and legal entities. When these policies become tools and instruments they are defined and regulated by the applied space and substance and consequently, rule over them. Policies generate structures in which people interact with policies and become set in relation with them. (Shore/Wright 2011,2)

Another feature of policies is concerning their outcomes and impacts on society and its people. After policies have been created, they transform and transit into new contexts and settings. Any interaction with a policy, the policy and its structure changes. Hence, their original intention consequences and impacts are under a continuous transformation as well. Consequently, it is important to understand and locate policies and their position in social structures.

The position of policies becomes important in the analytic process, which should support its understanding. It reveals the meaning and subjective and enables the understanding of the goal

of their creator. “In other words, an anthropology of policy includes not only those who govern but also conceive an active role for the governed, as well as the technologies that mediate between them” (Shore/Wright 2011,12).

An additional aspect of policy is its existence through time and space. A policy is not stuck when it becomes applied, it moves through different dimensions of the social and cultural life of people and becomes shaped and reimagined. This does not only impact the governed subjects but has consequences for those who govern as well.

The component of time in understanding and analysing policy is crucial, because the way policies become imagined and interpreted are shifting with time and space. Hence, it is possible to study the narratives and who these are defining the present.

Following Clarke et al., who argue that ideas and models of policy are perceived as objects which are transported from one point to another one. In the centre of a research interests do not only lie in the object of policies, but also in the initiating point, the endpoint of its transport and the way of transport. This conceptualising is a rational-linear way of understanding policy making. (Clarke et al. 2015,15)

Another perspective and way of conceptualising policy is, seeing policy not as a fixed and finished object. Instead, perceive policy in an unfinished state, where policies always become formed and recreated. This approach describes the element of movement in policies. They are able to move from place to place. This does not only include movement from a geographical perspective, but also includes the movement on horizontal and vertical levels of organisation. Every movement impacts the policy and consequently it is never finished. Moreover, through the process of movement it is possible that the passed levels and sites become changed and reconnected. Clarke et al. clarify this with the argument that every movement does not necessarily mean that change or reformation is happening, or the outcome is predicted. “[...] policy is always subject to revision and inflection, which opens up a politics of transition in which there are always possibilities at stake” (Clarke et al. 2015, 16).

Regarding this, Clarke et al. refer to perspectives of Nadine Lendvai and Paul Stubbs. They state that policy translation is more than just the prose of transfer. This leads to the assumption that a policy is in the interplay between two different states. Lendvai and Stubbs present a different perspective where policies are continuously embedded in transformation, contestation and negotiation. (Lendvai/Stubbs 2007,180)

In this context, Clark et al. refer to the element of meaning in understanding policies. Meanings of policy, “For us, meanings are more interesting than this, they are a focal point because they point to the constructed, conjunctural and contested character of policy” (Clarke et al. 2015,20).

Furthermore, meanings are connected to power and are used to make and recreate social worlds. Whereby policies are building the structure where meanings become applied, used, installed, normalised and contested. (ibid)

Space and time are discussed as components of policies. These components are creating and constructing the social dimension of policies. While the element of time can be understood as a linear element, space is more complex. This is associated with the processes of globalisation, regionalisation and europeanisation, where spatial and scalar dimensions are changed. The understanding of national space becomes contested and consequently “space and scale cannot be taken for granted as unproblematic, [...]” (ibid, 22).

With this in mind, the travel of policies also includes the change of places, even if it is not always intended. This also relates to the consideration of relationships. Policies are able to impact social connection between places too. Clarke et al. argue that these flows of transnational policies are never linear. They are embedded in networks on various scales, which are responsible for the construction of space where policies move. Additionally, these networks can enable or even reduce the movement of policies.

Another characteristic of policies discussed by Clarke et al. is that they are framing the organisation and structure of time. Policies are being shaped by historical events, stories, created timetables, programmes and models of processes and development. (ibid,29)

Time and space are both components that not only characterise but also shape and policies in their construction, application and reviewing process. Policies are not static. Hence, they are moving from space to space and through time. Through this movement, they become translated and set in different and new contexts. “Policy is never a singular entity, it is put together-or assembled-from a variety of elements that are always in the process of being reassembled in new, often surprising, ways” (Clarke et al. 2015,9).

Therefore, the translation, reassembling and implication of a policy becomes the centre of policy analysis. The components of time and space can be thought of as variables which have an influence on the translation, reassembling and implication process. For a further understanding it is necessary to include these components in the examination of policies.

The term *translation* is used by Clarke et al. as a metaphor and a concept which enables the examination of policy movement. This concept should include the diverse perspectives in policy studies, which have set different focus over time, i.e., interpretive, linguistic and cultural turn. Regarding the linguistic and cultural approaches, the movement of policy is in relation to the change of meaning and dependence on the context. The translation of a policy “is a selective and active process in which meanings are interpreted and reinterpreted to make them fit their

new context” (Clarke et al. 2015,35). Hence, the process of translation is considered to be fluid and dynamic embedded in social worlds.

In relation to policy in translation it is necessary to keep the component of language in mind. A translation of policy can be recognised through the analysis of language and how it is inscribed through it. Consequently, policies cannot exist outside of language and the relationships, networks and associations, where power is constituted and structured. (Clarke et al. 2015,37) With the approach of translation, policy is seen as a process that is not clear and straight forward, but always under the influence of many factors which may change the outcome. When policies are moving, they become transferred, and this process and its outcome is depending on social and cultural contexts. Consequently, through the transfer of policies, they do not stay uniform, there are diverse outcomes of them. (Clarke et al. 2015, 48)

Another concept that should provide the theoretical analytic basis concerning the examination of multiplicity and movement of policy is *assemblage* by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.

The concept of *assemblage* describes the process where parts are fitting together although they are not identical in their original or natural form. *Assemblage* is the activity that connects these parts and creates relations between them. Relation through assemblage can be based on *interiority* or *exteriority*. Interiority based assemblage processes are the relations between parents and their children. Due to their given bond, their relation is established interiorly. An example for an exteriority relation is the connection between two groups that are politically and ideological different.(Delanda 2016,2) Based on Deleuze and Guattari concept of *assemblage* Delanda summarises the concept “[...] that are parts that are fitted together are not uniform either in nature or in origin, and that the assemblage actively links these parts together by establishing relations between them” (ibid,2).

Through this analytic lens it is possible to show the parts which have been brought together, consequently initiating new ways of thinking and acting. Therefore, Clarke et al. reason to look at the way parts have been assembled and how these affected the outcome,

“Assemblage draws attention to the ways in which meanings are materialised in practices, in settings, in the ordering of things and how such conditions shape the possibilities of thinking and acting” (Clarke et al..2015,50).

These approaches lead to the intermediate conclusion that policies contain the following components which define their characteristics, time, space, mobility and meaning. These four components impact the way a policy and policies become present in the social lives of people. The component of mobility describes the non-static characteristic of policies. Policies move not only on geographical levels and scales, but also on social and political levels and dimensions.

The chronological aspect of when policies become implemented and how their meaning can change over time, shows how these components are connected. Policies are exposed and influenced by the time, the space, the meaning and the possibility of movement. Following the concept of *assemblage* policies become assembled in different ways. Depending on when and where they are applied, the meaning of them changes and consequently also their impact on people. Therefore, the change of meaning is based on the possibility to move and to be set in new contexts.

An additional subject in analysing policies, which should not be neglected, is the relevance of languages and discourse. This is especially true regarding the terms *Nachhaltigkeit* and *sustainability*. These terms are not only present in the everyday life of an individual but also represent political intentions, measures, ideas and ideologies.

Following Shore's and Wright's idea that discourses are patterns of ideas and concepts which create the basis of ideologies, Hence, these illustrations of the social and cultural component of language becomes an important aspect. Language is used in policies to transport discourses and the establishment of key words and consequently is responsible for the transport of meaning. (Shore/Wright 1997, chapter 1, para.28) Although these meanings are not fixed, they function as concepts. Furthermore, the meanings of these concepts are deferring on where and when they become in use. (Shore/Wright 1997, chapter 1, para. 29)

In this regard, the focus of Raymond Apthorpe in his article about the power of relations created through policies leans on the analysis of policy and its facet of language. As already discussed, policy can be understood as a frame of practice. Hence, Apthorpe argues that "where policy may fail as practice, it may succeed as composition and code" (Apthorpe 1997 chapter 2, para. 5). The relation between power and policy is based on policy language, where the use and type of words reflect culture values and systems. He also refers to the ways expression policy and power are established through codes, genre and styles in documents, plans, speeches, programmes, and books. Here are policies becoming forms of practice and describe where their focus becomes set. (Apthorpe 1997 chapter 2, para.1) Apthorpe distinguishes carefully between the different terms. While the term *genre* contains facets of function and structures that express policies, the term *style* is focussing on the cornerstone of policies, where main agendas of their content are transported, and symbolic forms are generated. (Apthorpe 1997 chapter 2, para. 1) This indicates that language withholds goals as well. For example, written documents like charters and constitutions consist of ideologies which contain the premise of achieving a certain goal. Concerning writing policies, the term *key words* is used to frame several types of words

which are depending on the context and the style of the text. The power of those key words is generated through the way they are expressed and presented.

Following this approach, the term *sustainability* can be framed as a *key word* which transports implications. It is extended with a wide range of other words for example *sustainable development*, *ecological sustainability*, *economic sustainability*, *environmental awareness*, *resource reduction* and so on, only to name a few of them.

As already discussed, policies can be understood as a frame for practices of power. Hence, the look at the language and how it is used can be a supporting tool to understand power relations and their implementation. This might also reveal where a policy as practice of power fails.

2.4 Understanding the difference- political science and anthropology of policy

Another point concerning the relevance of policy in the social and cultural anthropological approach is the connection between policy and politics. The last one focusses too on the analysis of power relations as well. These power relations are manifesting themselves through visible laws and sanctions.

Chris Shore and Susan Wright (2011) discuss in the book *Policy Worlds -Anthropology and the Analysis of Contemporary Power (2011)* discusses the rising interest of anthropology in the topic of analysing policies. One of the main elements are the forms of governance, governmental powers and social dynamics which reveal themselves through policies. Furthermore, Shore and Wright argue that these elements are embedded and entangled in social and cultural worlds also called “domains of meaning” (Shore/Wright 2011,1). Through their existence they create social and cultural realms and reflect them. These thoughts lead to the argument that policies “[...] are productive, performative and continually contested” (Shore/Wright 2011,1). Through events, policies express themselves and initiating new social spaces, relations, and networks in which these policies become implicated. Additionally, policies function as instruments for actors on different levels of government, companies, non-governmental organisations, and public and private agencies. (Shore/Wright 2011,2)

Shore and Wright claim that through the creation of a policy it is possible that these policies get in motion and start to move on to “new contexts and settings, and acquire a life of their own that has consequences that go beyond the original intentions” (Shore/Wright 2011,3).

Due to the fact that the subject of analysing policy is in the focus of the political science approach Colebatch H.K. (2009) discusses this topic with all its facets in his book *Policy*. First, he refers to the many ways the term policy is used. It shows that there is no single meaning for

the term. Moreover, it displays multiple meanings and the various usage of the term. (Colebatch 2009, 7)

Furthermore, Colebatch argues that this term motive is structure, organisation and systems that contain consistency. These ranges of activity which are bound in policy fields. (ibid, 8) According to Colebatch, the term *policy* implies structures of authorities which legitimise policy, the policy creator and the involved actors. Furthermore, it should be noted the importance of knowledge that is fundamental for policies to exist. This knowledge is not only necessary for governing but is created through it as well. In this regard, the knowledge of policies is connected with certain functions where policies work. For every area where policy functions another knowledge is needed to be applied, e.g., health policy or spatial policy. (ibid, 11)

“We can see here that ‘policy’ can mean not a set of objectives for the activity, or even the guiding principles but simply the standardization and articulation of practice [...]” (ibid,13).

Furthermore, Colebatch suggests, to understand policy not only to look at goals and areas of policies, but also at the structure and the set of architecture policies work. The organisation model, the way of thinking, communication and which choices are made, are not only results of a policy, but influence and shape them as well. (ibid,15)

Following this thought, the term *policy*, even from a political science approach, describes structures of action and its range. Consequently, the term used as a label for actions sets new relations between the governed and the governors. The process of governing shapes in and through policies and their field of application. (ibid, 20) Colebatch reasons that “the concept of policy both explains and validates the action, it explains what people are doing, and it makes it appropriate for them to do it” (ibid, 21).

Another perspective based on political science is offered by Fischer. He shares a new perspective for an old but still current problem. This approach is focussing on policy network theory in political science where the connection between different actors is discussed. Both individuals as well as groups present interest and values that are connected in networks through policies. These networks serve as tools for transport and to maintain values and ideologies. (Fischer 2002,32) The discursive approach in mind, Fischer refers to Michel Foucault’s perspective of the constitution through discussion. This follows that discourse is generally society and contains relationships, values, forms of the self, knowledge and social frameworks. Additionally, discourse creates social structures with its power relations and the constructed policies. (Fischer 2002, 38)

Following this perspective public policy is constructed by social meanings, multiple realities and discursive processes. “Because social meanings change, there can be no fixed or lasting set of meanings associated with the actors and events that constitute social and political life” (Fischer 2002, 49).

Another important fact mentioned is concerning the social meanings related to specific times and places. This includes the aspect that the creation of policies contains the establishing and building of symbols, rituals, designs, programmes and structures. Consequently, following the discursive approach, policies of governments are not constructed on an objective basis, they are created by the discourse between the private and the public realms. (ibid, 60)

The idea of sustainability and its related policies are created through the discourse of public institutions like governments and the private sector, for example NGOs, individuals and stakeholders. Furthermore, Fischer reasons that the focus of analysing and understanding policies is not discussing the controversy but the constructed social meanings they create. (ibid,61)

Fischer refers to the use of empirical data. The generating of policies is not only based on facts but on the intentions of political actors. In the political process facts become inwoven in meanings which determine the set policies. (ibid,62)

Consequently, a political science approach towards analysing policy includes the look at “[...] the subjectively oriented goals, motives and intentions of policy actors” (ibid,68).

2.5 The connection between *governance* and *policy*

The term *governance* is used by Shore and Wright to contextualise the complex processes in which policies become tools, mechanisms, and create structures. The concept of *governance* should also be seen as a guide to understand the way policies become an influencing force that shapes norms and values in a social order. “In this sense, governance is understood as a type of power which both acts *on* and *through* the agency and subjectivity of individuals as ethically free and rational subjects, [...]” (Shore/Wright 1997, chapter 1, para. 8).

The term *governance* is based on Michel Foucault’s concept of *governmentality* and deals with the various forms of action and fields of practice that aim in many ways to guide and direct individuals and collectives. From the perspective of *governmentality*, the social organisation from the *state* is considered as a way of thinking and acting. Hence, the concept of *governmentality* relates to acting through governance. (Lemke 2014, 260ss.)

For anthropological research Foucault’s concept enables the examination of the concrete manifestations of the modern government and how it becomes materialised in practices. Due to

the focus of the human being, the analysis of practices of government is centred around the social and cultural life of humans and the impacts of governance. (Inda 2005,11)

Therefore, policies are a clear and indispensable topic for anthropological analysis to understand social and cultural phenomena. Policies appear in any kind of material that is relevant to the social and cultural anthropological approach. Consequently, Shore and Wright argue that policies “[...] contain implicit (and sometimes explicit) models of society” (Shore/Wright 1997, chapter 1, para. 10).

In addition, they refer to a description of Marcel Mauss’ concept where he argues that policies can be understood as “total social phenomenon” (Shore/Wright 1997, chapter 1, para. 10) because of their impacts on economic, legal, cultural and moral aspects. Consequently, policies are capable of establishing new connections between individual groups and objects. In this sense the analysis of policies can function to reveal the structure of cultural systems. (ibid,)

To conclude, regarding the anthropological approach towards understanding policies, policies can be the tool of government to create and apply political linked concepts. Especially from a political perspective, policies create and use social structures to transport power relations.

The anthropological view towards policies notably discusses power relation, but also tries to gather a holistic view of policies. The focus lies on the understanding, the formation, movement in space and time and therefore, on the social structures of groups and individuals.

2.6 Framing sustainability- A theoretical discussion

The term *sustainability* gained in the last 30 to 40 years on popularity and became a label to describe certain ways of cultural and social phenomenon. The anthropological perspective and theoretical background should help to understand the social and cultural facets and dynamics of the idea of *sustainability*. While the other theoretical approaches concerning more the economic or ecological aspects of sustainability, anthropology of policy can be the theoretical tool to analyse and understand how this term is shaping and transporting ideas and ideologies which manifest themselves in daily life. As discussed in the previous chapters, it is necessary to distinguish the term *policy* in an anthropological way and the way the term is used in political science. Most theoretical approaches examining term, ideas and concept *sustainability* in connection with *policy* in a political science approach.

2.6.1 Explaining sustainability from a cultural science perspective

The term *sustainability* can be interpreted in various ways and opens discussions which can lead in different directions. To understand and analyse the term it is necessary to determine its

origin, its development over the past 300 to 400 years and how interpretations become formed. Therefore, it is essential to begin with the analysis of the origin of the term *sustainability* and use the work of Ulrich Grober and his book *Die Entdeckung der Nachhaltigkeit, Kulturgeschichte eines Begriffs*. (2013) It will not be the only literature focussing on the topic, but this book will help with the understanding of the cultural and social dimensions of the term and its influences for nowadays societies.

First, the etymological approach serves to establish the ground for the origin of the word *sustainability*. It is to note, that not only the English term *sustainability* will be discussed but also the German term *Nachhaltigkeit* will be focussed. This is not only since the term *sustainability* originated and was first mentioned by German forestry programmes in the 18th century, but also it was used as the main language during the research process.

Grober starts with the analysis of the word *construction*. (Grober 2013, chapter 2, para.10) This thought can be considered as an important connection in relation to policy and language. The way the word is constructed and established sets the basis for its meaning in language. Furthermore, the usage of the language and the choice of the used words influence the way policy becomes manifested and implemented.

The term *sustainability* is put together with two main key components *sustain* for *to keep in being* and *ability*, the noun of *being able to do something*. Grober refers to an entry of the *Oxford English Dictionary* published in the 1960s. These two components of *substantiality* are main statements of being able to sustain something or someone or of being able to keep something or someone in being. (Grober 2013, chapter 2, para.11)

The German term for *sustainability*, *Nachhaltigkeit*, is constructed in a similar way. The basic term of *Nachhaltigkeit*, *nachhalten*, contains the component of a time scale that reaches into the future where enough provisions are given. Therefore, Grober argues that from a semantic perspective both terms are close. (Grober 2013, chapter 2, para.13)

Due to the fact there is not a holistic and all-encompassing definition of *sustainability*, Grober illustrates the most known formulas to frame it. This is necessary since both nouns' *sustainability* and *Nachhaltigkeit* are complex, vibrant and very interpretive. (Grober 2013, chapter 2, para.15) The first and most influential formula is based on the United Nations report from 1987; "Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (United Nations 1987, 24). It is the most quoted definition for where the term *sustainability* goes hand in hand with development, but also its core task.

The second formula is the triangular understanding of sustainability. Its construct of thinking

originates from the earth summit conference by the United Nations in Rio de Janeiro 1992. After the conference, the three cornerstones, *ecology, economy and social justice* have been established. These three corner stones are always needed to be thought of as linked together and never as separated parts. (Grober 2013, chapter 2, para.16)

With “Nicht mehr Holz fällen als nachwächst“ (Grober 2013, chapter 2, para.17) Grober concludes this expression from forest management. The principle of cutting only as much wood as it can grow back is the classical interpretation of the term sustainability. This third formula reflects a simple interpretation of the concept which allows further interpretation and extension. A religious approach is contained in the fourth formula. Its focus is on the preservation of creation. Grober argues that this perspective can be found in creation myths in various societies and religions. (Grober 2013, chapter 2, para.18)

These four formulas contain the most common perspectives and interpretations of the term *sustainability*. Apart, this point it is to consider that these formulas and their contents are tending to be simplified, but as Grober argues they have the potential for the use as a guiding system for further understanding. “ [...] als Navigationssystem nutzen, um die Geschichte des Begriffs und damit in seine Tiefenschichten einzudringen“ (Grober 2013, chapter 2, para.19). Three of these formulas will be more in focus of the discussion. In detailing these formulas the creation of the word *Nachhaltigkeit* and its English pendant *sustainability* will be analysed.

The outcome of this discussion should provide a better understanding of how these two words gained their relevance in governmental programmes, projects, strategies and furthermore, aspects of daily life of societies.

The following discussion will focus on the German term *Nachhaltigkeit* and its origin in forest management in the 18th century. 1713 Hans Carl Carlowitz summarised his experiences and theoretical thoughts of his gatherings as a commissioner of a Saxon mining town to solve the provision of wood. On his journeys through Europe, he gathers diverse information and experience of the different ways and principles to manage the resource wood. At this time, wood can be thought of as one of the most crucial resources for the economies and the daily life of this time societies in Europe. (Grober 2013, chapter 7 para. 27)

Following Grober's argument, Carlowitz did combine his experience with the theoretical thoughts and quotes of the time, popular humanistic literature and the thoughts of the bible. The core statement of his finished work the *Sylvicultura oeconomica* is the critic of the short-term thinking in his time. (Grober 2013, chapter 7 para. 28)

Carlowitz developed a package of necessary intervention to establish a thoughtful use of the resource wood. The first intervention focuses on the saving of firewood by using efficient

fireplaces and adding isolations on houses to reduce energy usage. The second intervention concerns the finding of substitution of wood for example peat as burning material. Grober argues that Carlowitz's most crucial intervention was the concept of thoughtful and long term planned reforestation. (ibid, para. 29)

Therefore, Carlowitz used the German word *pfleglich* to describe the importance of the careful usage of the resource wood. Grober shows how Carlowitz worked himself forward to find the perfect word to describe the careful and continual way of forestry and finally choose the word *nachhalten* to summarise these interventions.

Nowadays, the concept is known as *the triangle of sustainability* with its three pillars- ecology, economy and social equality- have already been present in the thoughts of Hans Carlowitz's work. Grober argues that Carlowitz's approach towards nature and ecology is characterised by the baroque philosophical thinking which values nature, also in a sacral way. (ibid, para. 35)

The ecological way of thinking towards nature is based on the bible and its chapter *Genesis*. It describes how mankind should follow the premise to build on earth but sustain it as well. This thinking leads to the economic action which values nature and its resources. Only so many resources should be used that nature can provide these resources without any sacrifice. (ibid, para. 36)

Following Grober's analysis, this approach relates to social ethical thinking. It includes that not only the treasure chambers of royalties have to be filled but all people and their descendants in the realm should have food and loans provided. These three approaches can also show early tendencies towards the meaning of sustainable development. Grober states that it is crucial to keep in mind that such thinking is not an invention of Carlowitz, it is more a summary and further interpretation of the economic and social thinking at this time. (ibid, para. 38)

Grober acknowledges that such thinking has not only occurred in Europe in the early 18th century. An early version of today's understanding of sustainability has been found in the second half of the 17th century in Japan as well. (ibid, para. 42)

Carlowitz's book *Sylvicultura oeconomica* became an important and obligated literature for the following generation in the field of forestry. The term *Nachhaltigkeit* has not been in such a focus till the 1990s at the UN conference in Rio de Janeiro. Hence, Grober argues that these discussions of nature and ecologies appeared in the work of poets, writers and philosophers and built the basis for the science of ecology. (ibid, para. 51)

2.6.2 The roots of sustainable thinking

After the etymological discussion of the two terms *Nachhaltigkeit* and *sustainability* it is important to deal with the conception and approaches of the topic. Kent E. Portney discusses the most common concepts that are discussed by economic, political and social sciences and tries to give an overview of the different approaches towards the understanding of sustainability. It is to note that Portney's classification should not be seen as fixed, but rather a guideline for better understanding the different aspects, visions, ideas and concepts that developed around the word *sustainability*.

To begin with, Portney summarises the central characteristics of the sustainability concepts. The ideas of sustainability are all constructed by three pillars, the three Es, ecology, economy, and equity. These three pillar ledges are crucial components to achieve sustainability. It is not possible to neglect one or only focus on one of the three pillars to gain a sustainable state or development. Hence, these three components need to go hand in hand and to work together. (Portney 2015,6) Consequently, it would not be realizable to focus on one of the components to fulfil the idea of sustainability. Portney refers in his analysis to Brown et al. who compared in 1987 in their article *Global Sustainability, Toward Definition* different meanings and the different intellectual roots of the most common concepts of sustainability. They identified several fields of application in which the different ideas of sustainability appear. The first is the sustainable use of biological resources. Biological resources renew themselves naturally and therefore the use of these resources should only so much as these resources have enough resources themselves to renew them. In forestry and fisheries are concepts known to only harvest so much in a year to sustain the biological resources to renew themselves.

In relation to this component is the idea of sustainability in the application of sustainable agriculture. This field is referring to the agriculture to shift from short- term perspectives to long-term perspectives in the production. This point is in relation to the carrying capacity, which describes the maximum population size that an environment can manage. Although this concept originates from population biology, Brown et al. argue that it can be transferred to human systems through analogy.

Therefore, in this context the carrying capacity is relating to the amount of people a land and its resources can support. This carrying capacity is dependent on local, regional, and international available resources as well. (Brown et al. 1987, 714)

Portney argues that the carrying capacity in an analogism to human resource is influenced by human behaviour and culture. Most ideas include the thought that humans do not use the resources as the carrying capacity would need it. Hence, "sustainability, then, is often associated

with maintaining Earth's carrying capacity, usually through alteration of individual and collective human behavior or through the application of new and developing technologies to minimize the effects of those behaviors“(Portney 2015, 12). Therefore, the same idea shifted through its connected policies.

Furthermore, to keep Earth's carrying capacity is mostly in the responsibility of social and political structures, which in turn define the behaviour of people.

In this regard, the concept of *sustainable energy* is referring to a change of focus on fossil resource produced energy towards renewable resource produced energy. Brown et al. expressed in their article that the use of fossil resources like oil, natural gas, and coal are counting on depleting resources. (Brown et al. 1987, 715) Like Portney discussed, it is the idea and the concept of sustainable energy not on the depleting of the resource but the consequences of using fossil energy due to the fact of the release of carbon dioxide, followed by the increased greenhouse effect and global warming. Hence, this concept changed its focus to energy that does only produce none or little carbon dioxide i.e. solar, wind, hydro, geothermal and sporadically nuclear power. (Portney 2015,15)

Due to the fact that most of the ideas to achieve sustainability are related to social and economic dynamics Brown et al. described the concepts of *sustainable society* and *sustainable economy* to focus on the human societies and its economics. This includes maintaining social conditions and economics for human well-being. Brown et al. argue that the common economic theorists see population growth in relation with economic growth and vice versa. This approach is related to equity and justice. These two components are seen as important indicators and goals for ideas of sustainable development and growth. (Brown et al. 1987, 715)

In this regard the concept *sustainable development* is distinguished separately from the concepts *sustainable society* and *sustainable economy*. This concept contains the idea that the current decisions should not harm the following or impact the environment and its resources. Furthermore, the decisions should improve the future living circumstances of any species. (Brown et al. 1987, 716)

Brown et al. refer to social facets concerning sustainability that include “the continued satisfaction of basic human needs [...] as well as higher-level social and cultural necessities such as security, freedom, education, employment, and recreation” (Brown et al. 1987, 716). Therefore, these perspectives often focus on the individual rather than communities, groups, or nations.

What all these perspectives and ideas of sustainability share is long-term thinking, planning and or developing. Additionally, these thoughts should sustain human life on Earth. Only under the

premise to rethink economic growth, maintaining the biological resources and consequently the quality of environments and their eco-systems as well. (Brown et al. 1987,717)

The way of definition of perspectives impacts how ideas of sustainability are applied. These definitions are also under the influence of cultural and social definition and constitution concerning human life and its environment. (ibid, 718)

Portney states that the linkage between the ideas of economic and ecological sustainability was established in the 1970s, when many international organisations, i.e. the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund used their financial capacities for economic development programs but impacted environmental and ecological systems for this cause. (Portney 2015,22) In the 1980s the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development published the report *Our Common Future* and prepared the ground for international agendas to protect the global environment. This also includes the sustain and maintenance of environmental resources on Earth. Through this report the first foundations of cross-generational concerns appeared and the idea that economic development should be thought of in long-term perspectives. (Portney 2015, 23)

Another approach that characterises ideas of sustainability is the relation between sustainability and growth. Although most conceptualisations of sustainability contain an anti-growth notion of economics and development processes, most approaches target the peaceful coexistence between economic growth and the environment. It does not necessarily mean that concepts including sustainable measures initiate reduced economic growth. Especially in small-scale areas like cities, where programmes with concepts of sustainability have been adopted in their development strategies, showed a higher growth in economic areas. These applied programmes concerning concepts that focus on the climate change mitigations, climate adoption and resilience. Since through climate change temperature will rise, strategies that involve the adaptation to this change i.e. water level rises, extreme weather phenomenon will occur more often or resources like water become rare. Hence, cities need to adapt and build up resilience mechanisms. (Portney 2015,27s)

Due to the fact that the United Nations are promoting the idea of sustainability as a result of the Earth Summit in 1992. The associated resolution that efforts of development should become more sustainable on the national level and the country is the scale of application. (ibid, 2015, 32)

The concept of global sustainability, where every country is participating, would require cooperation and coordination on an international level. Portney argues that this led to the fact that countries started to compete with each other in their application of programmes which are

focussing on sustainable ideas. Many concepts which contain alterations of ideas of sustainability leaving unanswered questions involving possible consequences on spaces and human action. Consequently, one main idea was formed but still contained many variations of thoughts, vision and ideas.

Portney classifies these concepts and ideas of sustainability by their application on different scalars of governance, the national level, regional level or local level.

Brown et al. already mentioned in 1987 early concepts regarding the ideas of sustainable energy in connection to the averting from fossil fuels towards renewable resources. Another factor that shaped the concept of sustainable energy is the amount of energy production and the use of it. This includes the focus regarding the economy that companies not only use energy produced by renewable resources but also on how much energy is used during production processes. (Portney 2015,37) Furthermore, through the concept of sustainable business the focus on economic aspects regarding sustainable thought in companies developed. In 1992 the *World Industry Council for the Environment* and the *Business Council for Sustainable Development* emerged with their agenda to raise the interest in corporations to rethink and sensitise them for their impacts on environmental issues. Additionally, to the environmental aspect the topic of equity should be reflected as well and initiated to rethink companies' payment and finance models. The component *equity* of the idea *sustainability* is portrayed as one of the most difficult aspects to apply.

The basis of this idea is that unequal structures and organisations are unsustainable. Portney argues that this perception has many roots and definitions relating to fairness, concerns about wealth and poverty. It is important that the idea of what might be sustainable is an assumption and there is not an inherent connection with economy and ecology. (Portney 2015,39)

Through the concept of *sustainable communities*, the social component is connected with ideas of equity in a society. It contains the goal of building communities where the collective is supporting people to discuss topics and develop strategies concerning environmental issues. This thought created the basis for the more precise concept of *sustainable cities* as a type of sustainable living community. (Portney 2015,41)

Concerning this matter, the concept of *sustainable cities* are the outcome of the promotion of sustainability on a national level. Since on smaller scales the strategies that contain ideas of sustainability share more promising results the United Nations used this concept to increase the importance of cities and their governments. It is stated strategies including sustainable development of cities contain approaches that handle the phenomenon of urbanisation as well. (Portney 2015,43)

When thinking of the concept of *sustainable consumption* especially the ecological component regarding the awareness of the scarcity of resources. Furthermore, this approach also contains the implication that economic growth needs to be correlated with the sensitive use of resources. This idea does mainly focus on the individual. The consumers' behaviours are tried to be altered through setting structures by governments and public policies. In addition, these public policies should initiate the development of own goals by individuals and initiate ideas of sustainability in their lives. Like Brown et al. already discussed, the relation to the use of resources includes also sometimes that less consumption is more sustainable. (Portney 2015,45)

Another concept that has developed over the years, is the relation between the non-profit sector and ideas of sustainability. Groups of the non-profit sector are advocating for a certain group of interests and building on the local level the bridge towards the governmental institutions. This is also the case regarding supporting ideas of sustainability and transferring them to the public policy makers. The importance of non-profit organisations is not only limited to local efforts to represent interests of groups, but also on the national and international level they gain significance in the policy-making process. (Portney 2015,48)

With *the tragedy of the commons*- concept Portney summarises the approaches concerning the problems of using resources. Since many resources have natural origin, questions and debates of ownership rise. So called "common-pool resources" (Portney 2015, 49) are available to everyone and cannot be owned by an individual or a private organisation. The initiation of gathering resources by certain actors starts in most cases competition between them and leads to that too many resources being extracted. (ibid, 2015, 49) To avoid the extraction of an unsustainable number of resources, a set of regulations by policies should be applied. These policies restrict individual actors in exploiting resources.

It is to note, that the concepts described by Kent E. Portney in 2015 share many similarities with the approaches reviewed by Brown et al. in 1987 even though the ideas of sustainability were quite young on the national and international level of governmental institutions. Additionally, it is to conclude that the meanings of these concepts are depending on the context from where they originated and consequently, how they perceived and furthermore applied. Even if there are guidelines set by governmental and non-governmental institutions, the outcomes and the implementations of the ideas concerning sustainability are different. This fact also refers to the determined focus of the three pillars, economy, ecology, and equity. While most concepts focus on the economic and ecological components, the component equity is not that clearly recognizable.

Another approach towards policies and how ideas of sustainability can manifest themselves in societies is discussed by an economic and political perspective with the focus on the change of individual behaviour. Chad M. Baum and Christian Gross discuss in their article *Sustainable policy as if people mattered, developing a framework for environmental significant behavioural change (2016)* that it differs on which layer of governance policies containing ideas of sustainability are set and how these impacts the change of the individual behaviour.

They argue that governments create policies that are transporting ideas of sustainable development, but these policies need to be set in different social and cultural contexts and fitted to the planned application. (Baum/Gross 2016,61) Baum and Gross created four levels that show the contexts where planned policies act when implemented. The first level contains internal factors which reflect the inner wish of an individual to change the number of resources and the use of the environment. This basis is seen as a crucial factor to set policies because it is where the transformation of behavioural change by policies can find a fruitful ground. Furthermore, the second level relates to the individual contexts and how policies and their ideas of sustainability can be applied. This means the impact on behavioural change depends on the provision of technological and infrastructural settings available for individuals. These settings lead to the third layer of how influential policies under the premise of sustainable development can be. Baum and Gross mention that socio-cultural contexts are a core element when new policies are planned to become implemented. These contexts have a general big influence on the individual behaviour and therefore, influence how policies- containing ideas of sustainability- are received.

The fourth level concerns techno-economic factors which are building the framework for individual behaviour. On this level, the individual is not directly an impacting factor, but more passively under the influence of how applied policies can manifest themselves on infrastructure and consequently on the available technology.

Although Baum/Gross are discussing this topic through the lens of political science, the core element is that all four layers become shaped by different ideas of the term *sustainability*. Following this thought even the decision-making process is influenced and regulates how ideas of sustainability can be implemented in society. (Baum/Gross 2016,22)

To conclude the term *sustainability* and its German pendant *Nachhaltigkeit* implement ideas which shape power relations and open space for interpretation. Consequently, *sustainability* can contain different fractures of ideas, which have individually impacts on policies.

This leads to the conclusion that sustainability is not only one idea, but a collection of ideas or a policy that moves on different layers like it was discussed by Clarke et al. (2015).

On these different levels of governance different contexts impact the understanding, implementation and execution of the by policies transported ideas. Furthermore, it is to note that Baum and Gross do not integrate the concept of assemblage in their discussion, but their concept shows tendencies in analysing the impact of policies on behavioural change.

2.7 The residential way of collective living – cohousing and its structures

The following chapter will discuss the concept of Cohousing and its characteristic way of living. The first step will be to look at the development of cohousing and its place between the private and public housing sector

Through city development and spatial planning, new housing areas can be provided. The way and under which circumstances new housing is built is influenced by spatial policies and political decisions. Austria's housing provision is influenced by the 'free' real estate market. Housing is treated as a commodity and prices are results of the interplay between supply and demand. This includes private investors who are involved in transactions with an agenda for profit (Van Vliet 1990, 9).

But Van Vliet already recognises that there is more than just the dynamics of the free market, "In reality, however, capitalist systems do not have genuinely "free" markets. The interplay of supply and demand is molded by numerous government interventions" (Van Vliet 1990, 9). Therefore, the state becomes an important player in the housing provision market. So, governments are a shaping force within the housing provision market and competitors of the free market processes (Van Vliet 1990, 8).

In the last 10 to 20 years an old, but newly discovered form of living occurred on the housing market. Cohousing and its most characteristic of sharing space and resources with other residents became an addition to the public and private housing provision system. This form of residence seems to fill the gap between the private housing market and public housing provision systems. In many cases cohousing projects are organised with the involvement of both systems, which fulfil an important part for the realisations of the projects. This part of the chapter will discuss the residence type of cohousing and its integration in the housing provision and policy discussion. Furthermore, the theoretical approach of the analysis is focussed on how ideas and concepts of sustainability are related with principles of cohousing. This will not only help to understand how these two concepts are intertwined but also how a social and cultural anthropological approach of policy can be a supportive tool.

Another important approach that appeared during the research is the distinction between cohousing communities and gated communities. On the first look many people would see

similarities, but Francesco Chiodelli displays in his article *What is really different between cohousing and gated communities?* (2015) through the perspective of the researcher the discussion about these two dwelling types.

The relation between cohousing, sharing and the idea of sustainable living is illustrated by Anitra Nelson in her book *Small is necessary* (2018). Through her approach of small and sustainable living she discusses ideas how this can impact the ecological, economic, and social ways of life. Nelson is devoting a whole chapter of her book to the aspect of sharing a house and its importance for sustainable living. She does not only discuss the ecological benefits but also the resulting social and economic factors.

Beginning with the ideas and approaches of urban compact housing and the challenge of the demographic shifts and affordability. In the example of Australian statistics concerning household numbers the size of the average household decreased from 4,5 members in 1911 to 2,5 members in 2001. Forecasts indicate that this size will continue to decrease until 2026 and the number of individual households will increase. This also affects the residential square meters, which increased not only for single-family houses but also for apartments. Another factor is the increased mobility, which made it possible to establish further different types of households, such as second homes or shared households. (Nelson 2018,34)

This also includes the change of the size of living space which impacts the demand and the supply of affordable housing in the housing provision system. “Residential buildings and householders contribute in active and passive ways to over-consumption of resources and energy” (Nelson 2018,39). The active ways of contributions regarding the environmental cost that construction of residential space and the daily life in fracture are causing. Although, in the twenty-first century the promotion and the encouragement of energy-saving buildings has been increased and policies on nearly every governance level have been set, there is still the passive over-consumption of resources present. This passive way refers to the already existing large houses in less dense areas, which also require more infrastructures to maintain. (Nelson 2018,40)

Nelson argues that these considerations indicate that living in urban dwellings is consequently more sustainable and resource efficient. However, the development of industrialisation and urbanisation has resulted in two opposite sizes of apartment. The penthouse in wealthy areas and the one-room apartment in poorer residential areas. Nelson states that small apartments have been in most western societies in conflict with the association that they are only for poor communities in very dense areas. Consequently, the size of a home determines whether it is considered sustainable. (Nelson 2018,44)

Small apartments in urban areas are commonplace, but the measures and infrastructure differ in terms of sustainability ideas. However, many of the measures that make housing more sustainable through design and infrastructure are only on a small scale, as certain standards are set. Furthermore, the idea of ecological sustainability and how this can change the energy consumption of buildings is applied through design and architectural concepts, where the tendency to small apartments is increasing (Nelson 2018,58)

One residential opportunity that should provide and initiate ways of sustainable living are the sharing of living space like eco-communities, collaborative housing arrangements and cohousing specialising in eco-living.

The discussed aspect of the change now. Collective living models have gained importance for local planning strategies, following ideas and visions of social inclusion, and the three core pillars of sustainability, economic, ecology, and social equity. One of the best examples is the *Wohnprojekt Wien* and its development process, which shows the change of legal basis in planning and development of collective living projects.

2.7.1 The origin of cohousing and its place in Austria

This way of living includes multiple households which are connected through a neighbourhood or residential building. Although every household has its private dwelling, the sharing of common spaces, like kitchens, workshops or gardens is typical. These cohousing settlements have their community governance arrangements to provide organisation and structure for the collective living. Cohousing was developed in the 1960s in Scandinavia i.e. in Denmark *bofoellskab* or Sweden *kollektivhaus*. In 1964 the Danish architect Jan Godmond Hoyer developed early concepts for shared living spaces and residences which were similar to the cohousing project known nowadays. (Delendi 2017,774) Inspired by the Scandinavian projects this idea spread to the Netherlands and later to Germany. In the 1980s this concept became present in North America and Australia. Only a few years later cohousing emerged in the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Japan and occasionally also in other European countries. (Nelson 2018,109) The establishment of the housing form of cohousing in different countries and regions has also led to the establishment of different models. While in North America the cohousing form is based on private homeownership, in Europe forms developed based on non-profit organisations or social housing. How this is done is also determined by whether it is more of a question of single-family houses in a neighbourhood or in urban areas, where housing projects have been implemented in residential buildings. (Nelson 2018,115) Especially in Europe, where the different housing supply systems, demographic change and the availability

of building land vary, Anitra Nelson points out the different forms of cohousing projects and the possibilities of implementation. She compares Vienna and Berlin. While in Berlin the advantages of available land and the establishment of self-organisation for housing projects are present, in Vienna there is little building land available and a very present public housing provision system. (Nelson 2018,118)

In Austria, various types of collective living can be found. They are mostly summarised under the term *Wohnprojekte* and represent ways of collective living structures. These living projects are distinguished by being perceived as a new planning structure that should not only use space thoughtfully but represent the bottom-up approach of planning as well. Due to the premise of collective living, the social dimension of these projects is an important factor and mostly recognised as an initiation motive. (ARGE Brugger Matosic 2010, 57)

Apart from self-organisation structures and creations of social networks, studies showed that participation during the planning process can reach over the borders of the residential structures. In 1920s Austria early roots of collective living and self-organisation can be found where the *Wiener Siedlerbewegung* (Eng. *Settling movement*) and the founding of the *Österreichischer Wohnbund* (Eng. *Austrian living foundation*) as the association for collective living. (ibid, 61)

Until the 1970s and 1980s, such movements and projects remained static. While in Austria in the 1990s such projects started to decline in other European countries, collective living projects became more populated again. In Germany, the creation of *Baugruppen* or *Wohngruppen* was positively received and supported by local political and planning institutions. At this time in Austria, such local planning strategies and support were exceptions and only gained importance in the early 2000ies. Then more and more living projects with early collective and participative tendencies in nearly every federal state of Austria were noted (ibid, 62). In 2010 political and spatial planning tools were nearly missing, which would have been a valuable instrument to support the creation of cohousing projects. (ibid, 63)

The discussed aspect of the change in the mid 2010s. Collective living models have gained importance for local planning strategies, following ideas and visions of social inclusion, and the three core pillars of sustainability, economic, ecology, and social equity. One of the best examples is the *Wohnprojekt Wien* and its development process, which shows the change of legal basis in planning and development of collective living projects.

2.7.2 What characterises cohousing?

A basic feature is the design and layout of the buildings of cohousing projects. Even if it is not intended that environmentally friendly and resource-saving measures are taken, these projects generate environmentally friendly factors. This is mainly done by sharing living space and living space and thus making the individual living space compact. “Cohousing dwellings are generally compact because price and housing design take account of common areas to which all households have access” (Nelson 2018,116).

Consequently, there are also price reductions in infrastructure charges and maintenance costs. This also applies to the aspect of mobility. Public transport, the use of bicycles and/or car-sharing pools are preferred to the motorised individual transport.

Regarding the affordability of housing projects concerning Cohousing, Anitra Nelson refers to a study by Meltzer Graham, who compared housing projects and placed affordability in relation to other forms of housing. The study looked at housing projects from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s. It was found that many projects cost more because they have very complex and time-consuming organizations but bring more benefits. These costs are mainly due to the often special and therefore expensive expenditures and purchases, such as certain ecological measures during construction. Recent results show, however, that the costs for environmentally friendly construction measures in cohousing projects are higher than in comparable construction projects. (Nelson 2018,116s)

As already discussed, certain social components are defining the concept of cohousing. Maria Laura Ruiu illustrates these components in her article “The social capital of cohousing communities” (2016). She is mainly targeting the concept of social capital as a part of living in a cohousing community. Following concepts by William (2005) the social capital in cohousing communities is based on the social structure of the mutual support system and the collaborative way of living together. One important indicator for the social relationship between the residents is the establishment of a certain level of bonding between them. This bonding enables the creation of formal and informal support in networks in the community. Ruiu identified two main factors that import the creation of bonding in a cohousing community, the physical design process of the residential building and the decision-making process in the community. (Ruiu 2016,404)

The physical design process concerns the definition and creation of the layout of the building. These layouts are designed to construct living environments that support collective living. Although the layout of the buildings is not only designed to create shared space, but also the process of designing itself. The participation of the future resident in the designing process takes a crucial part in the development of a collective group of residents. During the

participation process, the future residents are kind of forced to work together where consequence early social networks and relationships are created. (Ruiu 2016,405) “They feel part of a community due to the active participation, not only in designing the community, but also in common activities and work” (ibid, 405).

This decision-making process is not finished after the design and building process, later on, it becomes embedded in the daily life structure of the residents. The decision-making process in the daily routine is mostly characterised by discussions regarding a current topic. The structure of these discussions varies from the application of the democratic decision-making process to handle occurring topics or for the allocation of tasks in groups, which additionally discuss and work on their tasks in smaller groups. (Ruiu 2016,406) The basis of the decision-making process is the self-management system of the residents of cohousing projects. Ruiu argues that this self-management process creates a support system through social relationships. “Formal and informal helps appear more parallel than complementary in that both provide help for virtually the same kinds of problems” (ibid, 407).

The amount and the expense of work in the community vary from group to group. This depends mostly on the structure of how tasks are done in the groups and with each one’s involvement in the community. Some communities provide guidelines for new residents to give them an orientation of how much time they should spend with community activities. (ibid, 409) Following Ruiu’s argument, which refers to the concept of social capital used by R.D. Putnam (1995). He describes the concept of social capital as product networks. These networks generate the basis for rules and mutual trust, with the main core element that all participating members share common goals. (Putnam 1995, 67) The bonding between the residents starts to develop in the early phases of the project. The residents do not only create relationships in their group with external institutions and actors as well. These connections might be of help for the group in the realisation of their project. Another aspect Ruiu refers to, is the correlation of social capital and economic capital in the cohousing community, where members of cohousing projects support the financial costs. One consequence is that the residents need to have a certain amount of financial security and this applies mostly only to a particular group of people. “The social capital of cohousing groups promotes a sense of community and belonging, mutual support networks, inside and outside the communities, a sense of safety exercised by a social control [...] and a higher civic engagement” (Ruiu 2016,410).

Furthermore, Ruiu reasons that it does not mean that if the cohesion of a cohousing group is high that the relationship to their neighbour is low. These communities always try to create open relationships with external actors, partners and institutions like the neighbourhood.

Additionally, Helen Jarvis discusses in her article *Sharing space, sharing time, integrated infrastructures of daily life in cohousing (2011)* the coordination and social build of space and time in cohousing groups. She describes certain infrastructures of daily life found in her research of cohousing communities in the USA. One main result was the occurrence of mutual support through sharing, cooperation, exchange of goods, and reciprocal and collective childcare. Especially the sharing of goods that are not necessarily needed for daily use like books, child toys or special kitchen tools. These communities created infrastructures that enabled the sharing and exchange process of goods like online lists, centralised storages or email communications. Additionally, these infrastructures are the emotional and social relations between the residents. Jarvis argues that infrastructures or social networks alone would be insufficient. (Jarvis 2011, 568)

The result of the combined networks and infrastructures are three types of temporalities which are decisive in the cohousing group.

The first one is the *temporal scales of everyday life* This describes the temporal phases of phenomenon set in time particular setting spending time with other residents during activities which are embedded in the daily life routines. The results are showing that social codes of trust and respect are established. (ibid, 569). The term *the temporal scale of group history* contains the collective experience of the project from the beginning of the development to the daily decision making, which also defies the shared time in the group. (ibid,571)

One characteristic described by Jarvis is that cohousing communities start typically with a core group that initiate and develop the first base cornerstones of the project. When essential basics like finances, organising structures and land acquisition are set, additional members are accepted. Since their goal is to build and finish the residence it is important to realise this. The group creates and gathers collective memories and relations through participation and the decision-making process. (Jarvis 2011, 572)

The third temporality is related to ecological aspects and the course of life. It defines the attachment through time and to a place. This attachment is created through collective memorizing. The memories are experienced individually or collectively. Through the community and the active participation of its members a certain depth of belonging and becoming related to the place of dwelling and the community who shaped it. (ibid,573)

2.7.3 Defining community in cohousing living structures

Regarding the phenomenon of cohousing, the term *community* is very important to describe the collectiveness of these residents. Therefore, the argumentation of Helen Jarvis will be of use

for further understanding. She refers to Lucy Sargisson's approach in the book *Utopian Bodies and the Politics of Transgression* (2000) where communities are set in a more elaborated definition. *Intentional communities* are characterized by the fact that a group of people choose to live and or work together. Additionally, the reason for their choice is more than due to the cause of traditions or personal relationships. These groups create communities that concern collective activities and shared physical space. (Sargisson 2000,1)

"The visions and aims of intentional communities are often ambitious and might be described as utopian in this negative sense, but often they are realised, nonetheless. Members of these communities have commitment and energy and are active political agents" (Sargisson 2000, 29).

Therefore the created communities are characterised by a common idea, but still contain individuals with their own agenda.

Jarvis argues that three types of collaborative housing define the way of living. The type of *co-presence* is describing the sharing of physical space by using common buildings. On the one hand, the sharing of goods and knowledge is the necessity to create social relations. On the other hand, social relations are important for a fluid sharing and supporting process. The second type of sharing is regarding *affiliation*. It illustrates how each group has created a set of values or goals that reflects and represents their way of collective living. With the type of *endeavour*, Jarvis explains how *co-presence* and *affiliation* are expressed and perceived. She remarks that all three types are intertwined and are embedded in processes of development and evolution of social mechanisms and relations. (Jarvis 2015, 98)

These cohousing communities are characterized by a mechanism that sticks their members together. A common goal, intention or view are the "glue" (Jarvis 2015,99) that builds up a cohesive structure in their social life. "[...] all flow from a core sense of purpose and meaning that is contingent upon habituated practice" (Jarvis 2015,99).

Furthermore, well-organized communities developed a meaning for their shared living which is the basis for visions and values that influence their living organisation. This does not only affect the community as a whole structure but individuals experiences and values as well. They can take advantage of the shared values for their personal life. Jarvis expels the difference of interpretation per individual on a private level which might lead to differing values and goals. (Jarvis 2015,99)

Another characteristic point is the interpersonal relationship through support. This is based on a system that includes caregiving and receiving. A significant aspect is the way of integration of all views, ideas and voices in the discussion process. This requires creative ways of dialogue

and conversation structures and is linked to the collective governance occurring in cohousing communities as well. Essentially, this social architecture relies on ‘highly evolved’ people skills that are taught and valued but not always fully developed in the co-housing communities observed” (Jarvis 2015, 100).

Additionally, the integration of knowledge of experts to help to establish the community structure of governance can be seen in many cohousing communities. This professional help assists as a perspective from the outside. It should enable the possibility to improve the quality of the social relations in the community. (Jarvis 2015,100)

Going hand in hand with the sharing of economies is solidarity. It can be provided through monetary structures like income pools or self-provision by food production or common ways of organising food provision. Consequently, the share of goods is creating solitary ways of living and strengthens the social structures in the communities. (ibid,101)

To clarify and define the phenomenon of cohousing, similarities towards gated communities need to be distinguished and analysed. Therefore, referring to Maria Laura Ruiu (2014) analysis and comparisons of research concerning both, cohousing and gated communities, will reveal the decisive characteristics of cohousing communities. She refers to the research of Francesco Chiodelli and his conclusion that gated communities and cohousing communities can not be distinguished due to two common aspects. This regards especially to the residential structures and the way of an agreement in the communities. Ruiu (2014) complains about the lack of research and analysis of goals, intentions and the development process in both these variants of the communities. Nevertheless, both ways of the residential organisation share common aspects.

First, for a better understanding, it is important to establish the core elements of both communities (ibid, 324). Based on sociological literature Ruiu summarises most definitions to one main statement that “[...], gated communities are exclusive enclosed developments with fancy homes, security guardhouses, (electronic gates and private facilities inaccessible to outsiders” (ibid,318). Additionally, the residents of gated communities are organising and managing through the internal contract the shared facilities by themselves. This includes the aspect of self-initiated segregation from other groups. (ibid, 318)

Especially, the focus on the creation of a homogenous group of residents supports the feeling of safety and builds the basis for the creation of the concept of *the gated community*. Furthermore, the focus on the content of the homogenous group lies mainly on middle and mill-upper class residents. (Ruiu 2014,319) Although living in these communities does not only provide safety but also a certain amount of prestige.

Cohousing communities are described as a combination of rented or privately owned residences. The living and owing to circumstances are set by a contract that includes monthly work effort raised by the residents. Furthermore, the main focus is on the sharing of infrastructure services and activities, which can be embedded in rituals. The most characteristic facet of cohousing is the long development of these projects. The cohesion of the community must be built up through collective goals. These goals need to be set and support the construction process, including land acquisition, planning of and building on the lot. (ibid, 321) The group is evolved in the development process and after the finished construction work, the management of the facilities is in their hands as well. Therefore, self-management is conducted by decision-making processes where every resident becomes part of it. (ibid, 322)

One important note to take from this is, that these two concepts of residence are on the first sight quite similar but distinguish themselves in their intentions. One main common characteristic is the creation of safety. While gated communities want to create safety by defending their space, cohousing communities establish it through social aspects. The residential area of gated communities is guarded with personal and structural mechanisms, while cohousing communities are intending on purpose to not use such mechanisms. They promote their safety by openness and neighbourhood awareness, not by restriction. (Ruiu, 324) The second common point is the relevance of social dynamics, the exclusion of certain groups of people, especially of the poorest ones. While this mechanism is intended through the concept of gated communities, such a trend can be observed as a side effect in cohousing communities. This is explained because of the high costs of accessing this community. Particularly, since private investments must be made to initiate projects. Aside from economic backgrounds also homogeneity in cohousing groups is generated by the set visions and living intentions. Uniformity in income, education or religion is a result of the set values in these communities and excludes directly or indirectly other groups of people. (ibid, 327)

The third common attribute is the internal contract of the residents who are defining the rules for shared spaces, public life and presentation. This only works if the established values are shared by all residents. In cohousing communities, the social contract is prominent in infrastructures that concern daily life, like childcare, maintenance work and collective activities (ibid, 328)

This aspect leads to the one main difference of these two living concepts claimed by Ruiu, the motivation. The motivation for creating such a place of dwelling is very different. Maria Laura Ruiu summarises that the similarities in cohousing communities and gated communities are

mostly unintended side effects generated by market mechanism and or project characteristics. (Ruiu 2014,330)

This can be concluded in comparison to other literature describing cohousing as well. The social structures discussed by Helen Jarvis, Laura Sargisson and Maria Laura Ruiu show that the set of values of living together determines which groups of people become included due to the focus of interest.

Following this perspective the aspect of sustainability must not be coherent with cohousing projects.

Another connection of sustainability and cohousing on the level of city development is presented by the study of David Scheller and Håkan Thörn in 2018. The study shows how the city government is actively involved in the enabling of cohousing groups to fulfil urban development programmes. These programmes contain the premises to apply tasks, projects and activities that support the idea of sustainable urban development. The focus of their research was cohousing projects in Hamburg, Germany and Gothenburg, Denmark. Through their study, it becomes clear that cities are interested in projects of cohousing as part of fulfilling their goals for urban sustainable development. This is not only based on political ideologies by the Green party and their focus on ecology in both cities but economic and social sustainability targets as well. (Scheller/Thörn 2018, 919)

The cities support self-build and cohousing groups through governance by the local government sets intermediaries and projects. In both cities, Hamburg and Gothenburg, the local governments have institutions where self-build and cohousing groups can turn towards them. These institutions provide competitive group selection, help with the acquisition of land and can also offer financial support and control.

Scheller and Thörn summarise intermediaries are organisations or persons which could have the function of counselling, planning and involvement of the building process. These intermediaries can have a non-profit independent background or are architectural companies, municipal housing companies or private housing firms. The function of intermediaries as experts help to establish the connection to local government institutions and guide self-build groups. Additionally, the third level is projects themselves. The governance of the project manifests in the daily life of development and after the finishing of the building process. The first steps of governance in the projects starts with the creation of groups in early phases. In the beginning, one founding group establishes the first social infrastructures and the early steps of project development. Furthermore, these future residents form the main ideas, norms, values and the target they will work on. Afterwards, the acquisition of additional residents is initiated.

The groups in both studied cities used democratic self-government so can be made by consensus. (ibid, 926) Based on this decision-making process the work becomes divided into working groups that focus on different aspects of the development process. Another result of the research showed that the amount of time spent on the project related to “social and cultural capital” (Scheller/Thörn 2018,927) has been created through working in groups.

In Schellers’s and Thörn’s study, it is presented that the focus on the application of urban sustainability goals through the support of cohousing projects is very prominent. Therefore, the idea of sustainability “functions as the contemporary empty master signifier of urban planner” (Scheller/Thörn 2018,929). While meanings of ecological sustainability are concluded in certain aspects like building conditions with low climate impact and thoughtful use of resources. The aspect of social sustainability contains a broad variety. Scheller and Thörn concluded in their studies four main points found in both cities. The first point concerns cohesion where self-built groups create integration with the neighbourhood and the surrounding city areas. A key role is the self-government of the group. This second point represents an aspect of social sustainability. (Scheller/Thörn 2018,929)

Points three and four go hand in hand. The social mix and the affordability of living costs can still create restrictions on becoming a member of a self-build group. This is especially due to the fact a certain group of people is attracted. These assumptions of sustainable urban development are relevant if the self-build group gets in contact with the neighbourhood. (Scheller/Thörn 2018,930)

Scheller and Thörn conclude that self-build groups and their cohousing projects are only playing a small part in sustainable development. Although the three prominent pillars of sustainability, ecology, economy and society are present and become implemented in urban planning programmes. The impact on the wider city is smaller and only offers an alternative form of dwelling. (Scheller/Thörn 2018,931)

To conclude, in the beginning of the theoretical approach discussed from a social anthropological point of view the term *policy* is a set of ideas. These ideas are created, formed, influenced and applied depending on their goal. Policies and their goals are influenced by time and space parameters. They can be constructed, applied and deconstructed. In this sense the term *sustainability* could be seen as policy. It contains various sets of ideas which are shaped by time, space, involved actors and power relations.

Sustainability faced as a policy is shaped by various levels of interpretation, symbols, and agendas. These newly created meanings become on different levels of government different

instruments. Hence, this divergent practice of sustainability as the tool for governance on global and local levels is consequently also used in various ways and shaped in corresponding meanings.

Chapter 3: Methodical Approach

This chapter will elaborate on the applied methods during the research and the discussion of the methodological background and its impacts on research steps.

It will contain the process of how the research field was entered and how the first contact with the residents of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* was established.. This is followed by presenting the applied methods and their theoretical background of usage. The last part is concerning the analytic process of the research and how methods of coding were conducted.

3.1 The community of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*- Entering the field

All adult residents of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* are members of the association *Verein für nachhaltiges Leben* and have been one of the main sources for the research.

Feldman et al. refers to Laura Nader and her concept of studying up and through. It includes following the sources of policies including, its perceptions, programs, strategies, ideologies, and anything that is affected by the policies. (Feldman et al. 2005 40)

In this regard, it was necessary to get in touch with actors, experts, organisations and institutions who are familiar with the *Wohnprojekt Wien* as well. Hence, they should have been able to and can provide a different view about the project.

Consequently, the research field is not only fixed on the residents of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*, but also extends towards different levels of governance and its likely involved actors.

The first contact with the field was conducted in mid-December 2018. The homepage of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* does not only offer information about itself and the association *Verein für nachhaltiges Leben*, but also allows you to get in contact with it.

Through a first e-mail attempt, I got in touch with Stefanie Reinberg. She was voluntarily responsible for any request concerning research activities regarding the *Wohnprojekt Wien*. After an appointment with her for further information and detailing the implications and topic of the research, it was cleared out that something like the planned research hasn't been conducted at the *Wohnprojekt Wien* before.

After the conversation I got a quick tour through the building, where I was able to take a first look inside of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*. Then it was arranged that she would inform the residents about the research project and ask who would like to participate. This happened through an

email to all residents. The contact process could be described as Stefanie Reinberg's position as the *gatekeeper* to the research field. Before I got in touch with other residents, the communication and information were established only with her help. (Merkens 2015: 288)

Another approach towards information about the *Wohnprojekt Wien* was achieved through the registration for their newsletter. This way it will be possible to get information about the next events of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*. These events were planned to be used to get in contact with the people and potential interview partners and places for participant observation. Unfortunately, it was not possible for me to attend hardly any public event during that time period. In this circumstance I was able to stay on track with the provided and promoted activities in and around the *Wohnprojekt Wien*.

In the early state of the research, it was planned to get in contact with about 10 to 15 residents for an interview. The first contact attempts through the email newsletter have not been as successful as expected- only two residents replied immediately, and it was possible to get in touch with those two and conduct the first interviews in February 2019.

Through the interviews with these two residents, I was able to gather vital information about opportunities to get in further contact with other residents.

After the first participant observation in March 2019 more residents became interested in the research and wanted to participate. Most interview contacts have been established through the so-called *snowball effect*, where already interviewed residents recommended other people, which might be interested in participating. (Flick 2016: 92) Eventually the minimum target of interviewing 10 residents has been accomplished. This process was not only concerning the establishment of contacts, but also getting invited to group meetings and other events organised by the *Wohnprojekt Wien*.

As already mentioned, the conduction of the research started in February 2019 when the first interviews were carried out and ended with the last interview in June 2019. During this four to five-month period early data analysis and interview transcription started and had been finished at the end of February 2020.

3.2 The researcher's role in the field

To keep the study as objective as possible, it is crucial for an anthropologist to reflect its own position in the research field. How the existence of the research influences the actions of the involved people and their activities, and how the involvement of the researcher influences the perception and aggregation of data during the research process.

The role of the researcher in the field can be easily described as an outsider, who was interested in the way of living and thinking of the people in the *Wohnprojekt Wien*. From this perspective on going, it was possible to get in contact with the residents and be a participant at a few events concerning the community of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*. As Giampietro Gobo argues “The researcher can only partially influence the role and identity attributed to him or her because the participants creatively modify the information that they receive” (Gobo 2007: 122). This aspect also includes that these roles and identities are constantly constructed during the research process and shifting from activity to activity. For example, during the participation observations, I became integrated in the whole process. While during the interviews this role shifted, and information has been selected carefully for disclosure.

Due to the circumstances that I was not able to live for a period of time at the *Wohnprojekt Wien* might have also caused that the outsider role was more present than otherwise.

3.3 Applied Methods

The following part of this chapter will present the applied methods during the research and description of the data analysis.

To answer the research questions and gain a broad perspective of the topic the implementation of a mixed method approach provided a variety of data and perspectives. This refers not directly in the way of combining quantitative and qualitative research but with implementing the idea of using different methods that should help to understand social phenomena through different methodological perspectives. Therefore, I tried to follow Gregory Feldman’s idea, that for multiscale policy analysis, like the idea of sustainability seems to generate, only doing participant observation is not enough (Feldman 2011: 378f.).

In this regard, the data collecting process was not only focussed on observations, but especially in interviewing the residents of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*, experts on the topic of cohousing, architecture and sociocracy. An additional task to gather more information on certain topics, was the analysis of planning programmes, documents, legal texts and legal guidelines- only to name a few.

Consequently, the applied methods became interwoven to each other and complemented themselves during the research process.

3.4 Confidentiality agreement

Concerning the data security and anonymity, before the interview started it was clarified that the interviewed person can stay anonymous or if they like, to be named. In this regard, it was

also clarified, if the participants are agreeing that their contribution was recorded and published through the master theses. In a written permission, which was signed by the participants and me as the interviewer, they agreed to the mentioned terms and had the right for revocation till the master theses has been finished. This right was kind of used already during or sometimes after the interviews. A few interview partners contacted me after or noted during the interview that a certain part of the conversation should not be transcribed in the analysing process, because they have been concerned of possible consequences. Consequently, the mentioned parts have not been transcribed.

This confidentiality agreement has only been in written form for the planned interviews. During observations or informal interviews and conversations people told me when certain discussed subjects should not be published.

3.5 Interviews

As already mentioned, most of the information concerning the *Wohnprojekt Wien* for example its residents, development, social organisation, architecture and the role of sustainability have been acquired through the conduction of interviews. Talking to the persons who are involved in the cohousing project *Wohnprojekt Wien* was essential to comprehend their perspective on the research topic and helped to get a better insight in the project. To understand the complexity of the idea of sustainability manifesting in housing and urban space, it was necessary to get in contact with persons, who are involved on a district level. Therefore, interviews have been conducted with a representative of *GB*Stadtteilmanagement Nordbahnhofviertel* and the *Wohnbauforschung Wien*.

Since the research was conducted in Vienna, most of the residents are German-speaking and consequently all interviews, conversations and talks have all been conducted in German.

Altogether fourteen interviews have been conducted and all of them have been audio recorded. Ten of these interviews have been explicit with the residents of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*. The selection of these interview partners was based on the interest of the residents in my research. As already described, the recruiting of participants happened through the so-called *snowball effect*, and it was a coincidence that the ten participating residents were quite diverse in aspects like gender, age, family status, educational background, tasks obligation in the community and so on.

The other four interviews can be considered as expert interviews regarding their content topics. The following parts of this chapter will discuss these points in detail.

3.5.1 Planned and guided semi-structured interviews with the residents

The implementation of the interviews has been part of arranged appointments where there should have been enough time to talk about aspects of the topic. The estimated time of the interviews was about one hour, although nearly all the conversations lasted longer. Most of the interviews have been framed in non-recorded conversation before and after the so-called official interview. The interviews have been prepared and conducted in a semi-structured guided manner. This aspect enabled not only the inclusion of topics for the answering of the research question but also left space open for additional individual topics which may want to be discussed. (Schlehe 2003:79)

For this type of interview style questions have been prepared concerning the main topics and cornerstones of the research question. The first part of the interview contained questions of the history of the residents and how they became involved in the *Wohnprojekt Wien*. Through these questions it was possible to gain information about their personal background, their former living habits, their interests in cohousing or collaborative housing projects and their part of the planning process. The second element was more focused on the sustainability aspect of their living. Thus, the questions were targeting personal thoughts and opinions on sustainability. For example, how the residents implement the ideas of sustainability in their personal daily life and the community and how they are experiencing sustainable living regarding to them based on their perspective and on the one of the communities. These questions initiated most of the time the third and last content part of the interview. This was focussed on their social organisation, the structure of the community, their own tasks in the community, the use of the community rooms, their relationships within the *Wohnprojekt Wien*, their perception of the neighbourhood and the *Wohnprojekt Wien's* place in it.

The location of the interviews with the residents was always based on suggestions they made during the setting of the appointment. Most of the interviews take place in the *Salon*, the little café and grocer on the ground floor of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*. Other places have also been shared rooms shared by the community, like the library and the little community kitchen on the sixth floor or the big community kitchen on the ground floor. This point showed how available these rooms are for the residents and how the handling of their use is coordinated.

At the end it was possible to conduct these kinds of interviews with eleven residents. Not all of them liked to be mentioned.

3.5.2 Planned and guided semi-structured expert interviews

Apart from interviews with the inhabitants of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* the conduction of interviews with certain experts regarding the topics cohousing, architecture and sociocracy have been a necessary part to get a broad perspective. The expert interviews have also been guided semi-structured interviews, only that their content was oriented on the personal field of expertise. Following Judith Schlehe's thought, an expert is defined as a person who is quite capable concerning a certain topic, organisation, institution or a process. (Schlehe 2008: 128) To comprehend and analyse the position of cohousing projects in Vienna's housing policies the *Wohnbauforschung* of Vienna was a competent contact point to answer these questions. Their opinion about the development of sustainable housing and their experience with cohousing was a helpful contribution to the research. As planned, this interview was taken in the middle of the research period in May 2019. Based on previous interviews with the residents of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*, these have opened perspectives that have additionally been discussed with the *Wohnbauforschung*. One of the main content points were for example referring to the role of cohousing projects in the housing provision system in Vienna, legal elements to initiated cohousing projects, founding possibilities, influences on the urban housing market and so on, only to name a few of them.

An interview with the *GB* Stadtteilsmanagement Nordbahnhofviertel* was done in June 2019, after a few tries to get in contact with one of the representatives. The *GB* Stadtteilsmanagement Nordbahnhofviertel* was chosen because of its competence as a networking instance in the neighbourhood. They were not only chosen for this reason, but also because a working group of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* was also in contact and participated in activities of them.

Consequently, the interest of the interview lies in content concerning their experience with the *Wohnprojekt Wien* and possible collaborations and the position of the community in the *Nordbahnhofviertel*. There also have been aspects discussed regarding cohousing projects and the neighbourhood in general, the options and influences on the neighbourhood and how this is anchored in urban development strategies. These have been interesting points regarding the fact that the *Nordbahnhofviertel* is only about a decade old and is also still partly in a building phase. To gain insight in the planning process and the development of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*, the architectural office *Einszueins Architektur* was the central contact. It is the company which was responsible for the design and planning of the residential building of *Wohnprojekt Wien*, and its office is also located in the building on the ground floor. One of the main arguments of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* is not only its sustainability through social inclusion, but also through certain economic and ecological measures. Therefore, the architectural company was creating the

design and structure of the building to fulfil these requirements. Another important point is that many of the residents were included in the planning process. This planning approach of participant planning becomes more and more important in urban and housing planning strategies. (Atkinson 2010: 397)

For the broader insight it was necessary to understand their conception of sustainability and how it did influence the design of living space. Another important fact is, that the head of the architectural firm is also part of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* and still lives there. Hence, it was essential for the research to gain information about the planning process, especially about the participation of the residents, the role of sustainability for architectural choices and the origin of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*.

After the first few interviews it became clear that the social organisation model of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* is sociocracy and not as predicted basic democracy. Consequently, it was necessary to focus the research on sociocracy and get in touch with the *Soziokratieinstitut Wien*. Eventually it was possible to arrange an interview with Barbara Strauch, who was not only involved in the implementation of sociocracy in the *Wohnprojekt Wien* but also in Austria. The content of the meeting was discussing general information about sociocracy in Austria, its development from an organisation method for companies to as a social organisation for living structures and its application opportunities. Another important subject was discussed regarding the position of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* in bringing sociocracy to Austria and even initiating the creation of an institute for sociocracy in Vienna.

3.5.3 Informal interviews

Informal Interviews have only been relevant during the participation of events, meetings of the working groups with the residents or before and after planned interviews. They have been quite important, because they were relating to the moment of the situation, or they have been initiated by it. As Russel H. Bernard states, these informal interviews are basically conversations during the fieldwork and might open new topics of interest, hence, it was necessary to write notes as often as possible to save the heard for further research. (Bernard 2011;156s.)

3.5.4 Recorded Data

One of the essential parts to preserve the data of the fieldwork is the keeping of a field journal or also called a "research diary" (Silverman 2005:249). This was not only used for important notes, but also for quick jottings from observations during the day. The research journal also

served as a medium to make notes about potential contacts, additional thoughts during and after interviews and after observations about the research.

This kind of method recording data helped to keep the conduction of methods transparent but "it also implies an open-minded and critical approach to your research" (Silverman 2005:249) and enables one to keep a reflexive distance towards the research field.

Another data preserving method was the creation of protocols after interviews, observations, and conversations. This was a very necessary task and built the basis for data analyses of these data resources. (Schlehe 2003:135)

3.6 Observation and participant observation

The participation observation was the typical anthropological method and was planned to be applied through participating during events organized by the *Wohnprojekt Wien*.

As already mentioned in the chapter regarding the researchers position in the field, it was not possible to stay for a longer time period as a resident as the *Wohnprojekt Wien*. This made Russel H. Bernard's strict definition of participant observation quite difficult to accomplish: "Participant observation involves going out and staying out, learning a new language [...], and experiencing the lives of the people you are studying as much as you can" (Bernard 2011: 258). On the other hand, I was able to get access to the community, participated at a half-day long cleaning event called *Minga*, and I was a part of one of their working group meetings and visited a literary reading event which was hosted in one of the so-called *Flexräume* (Eng. *flex rooms*). This fact correlates more with Roland Girtler, who defines the term *participation* as more flexible and already includes the process of getting access to the social group. „The participation is already existing, even if the researcher becomes introduced by a member of the community. Through this it is possible to observe the acting of the group and start to talk to them" (Girtler 2001: 63).

As stated previously, it was difficult to conduct participant observation in the sense Bernard (2011) defines it, but the attempt to become a part of the social group of the cohousing community and get access and invitations to several events, was successful, although it was not possible to attend all of them.

Though the number of participant observations were not as high as I expected, still I was able to get enough perspective from the inside of the communities to support the answering of the research question.

3.7 Literature research, Document and secondary data analysis

Before and during the research, it was clear that the term sustainability is used in many ways. In this case it was vital for the research to understand the implication of the idea of sustainability in housing provision concepts, policies, city development strategies, and planning processes. Hence, it was important to gather insight into the existing studies concerning cohousing, housing provision, and sustainability. Broad literature research relating to the subjects was the essential basis for further steps in the study. Stephan Wolff argues that the documents are regulated artefact, which contain traces, especially for example documents like contracts, files, statistics, letters or reports. These kinds of documents leave institutional traces, which can be analysed and assigned to organisations, institutions or actors. Consequently, these organisations, institutions or actors leave ideas, ideologies and implications in these documents. (Wolff 2015: 503)

This point becomes quite important regarding gaining a wide perspective of the topic and how the idea of sustainability is implemented in regional and urban policies will be enabled in analysing city development strategies, building regulations and studies focussing on cohousing in Austria.

Here a few examples of documents, which have been considered as complementary for the research:

The *STEP 2025 – Stadtentwicklungsplan 2025* of the city of Vienna is one of the central guidelines for the city of Vienna and also includes the idea of a sustainable city development which also influences the city development strategies regarding housing provision, housing policies, and building regulations.

Rechtsvorschrift für Bauordnung für Wien, is the legal regulation for building regulations in Vienna and features content that is especially important to comprehend the legal structures of initiation cohousing projects.

In 2010 the *Wohnbauforschung Niederösterreich* (Eng. *Housing Research of Lower Austria*) published a report regarding to cohousing projects in Lower Austria called *Wohnbauforschungserfassung 2010: Evaluierung der Wohnform „Cohousing“ am Beispiel bestehender Projekte in Niederösterreich*. This case study discusses the development of cohousing projects in Lower Austria and how they are implemented in the housing provision sector.

3.8 Data Analyses

The analysis of the data was focussed on to two main approaches during the research, tendencies of the so-called *grounded theory* in the early stages of the research and later on after finishing the data collection parts of the *qualitative content analysis*. The main resource of the data pool included the interviews and their transcripts as well the observation protocols, documents and collected information material like flyers, booklets and newspaper articles.

The key element of the *grounded theory* is collecting data and analyse it simultaneously. Through this process, a theoretical framework is created that can be shaped and modified with additional data. (Mayring 2002:104). This aspect was very important for the research, because many aspects that haven't been thought of, have revealed themselves during the research process and were implemented in a bigger theoretical framework.

The other approach is the *qualitative content analysis*, which was applied during the analyses of planning documents but also already transcribed interviews at the end of the research. The qualitative content analysis is based on working with an already manifested theory to analyse a phenomenon. With this theory systematically, it is worked through the data material, building categories and creating connections. (Mayring 2002: 114)

The coding process of the data was mainly guided by what Johnny Saldana in his book *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (2009) states as *open coding*. This process is separated in two cycles, which can be applied in the approach of the *grounded theory*, but also in the *qualitative content analysis*. The first cycle contains coding methods like *attribute coding*, *structural coding*, *descriptive coding*, *In Vivo coding*, *initial coding* and *Values Coding*. (Saldana 2009: 48)

Based on the different data resources for the data analysis in the first cycle of coding, a combination of *structural*, *descriptive* and *initial coding* was applied. The *structural coding* procedure enables the possibility to create “content-based or conceptual phrases representing a topic of inquiry to a segment of data that relates to a specific research question used to frame the interview” (Saldana 2009: 66). Saldana refers in this case to semi-structured interviews and their transcripts because through this coding process not only codes are created but also early categories. (ibid., 67)

Along with *structural coding* during the analytic process also *descriptive coding* was used, since this way of coding allowed to summarise the topics of the data and review it for further coding. (ibid., 70)

The third step of the first cycle coding was *initial coding*. It “is breaking down qualitative data into discrete parts, closely examining them, and comparing them for similarities and

differences” (Saldana 2009: 81). Therefore, it enables the possibility for the researcher to reflect on the contents of the data.

The second cycle of coding concerned *pattern coding* or *focussed coding* to categorise the coded data. (Saldana 2009: 48)

For the data analysis *focussed coding* was used to build up categories and set the created codes of the first coding cycle in an analytic relation. To the process of *focussed coding* the *grounded theory* based *axial coding* is counted, where the already coded data becomes sorted and re-label into conceptual categories. (ibid. 159s)

Though most of the coding process was conducted without any software tool, for the further and clearer structuring of the codes the software tool *ATLAS.ti* was used.

To conclude, the coding process was characterised by the aspects of the *grounded theory* during the research to set off a greater field of perception and rethink the theoretical framework were applied. After most of the data collecting has been finished and new or additional theories have been integrated, documents (including protocols, transcripts, planning documents) have been additionally analysed with the coding process rudiments of the *qualitative content analysis*.

Chapter 4: Living sustainability- the *Wohnprojekt Wien*

The term *sustainability* in its complexity and viability has already been discussed in the first part of this thesis. The association *Verein für nachhaltiges Leben* is without doubt one of many factors which establish ideas and concepts of *sustainability* in the *Wohnprojekt Wien*. Consequently, these ideas and concepts are setting the base for the provided structures employed in daily life of the residents.

The following parts of this chapter will focus on the origin of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*, how *sustainability* became implemented and how this idea impacts their daily life decision-making process. Furthermore, it will discuss how social structure, norms and values of the dwelling community formed their social organisation structure.

4.1 The origin story of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*

This chapter will concentrate on the chronology of the development of *the Wohnprojekt Wien*. Most of the presented material is based on conversations with the initiator Heinz Feldmann and the responsible architect Markus Zilker as well as on interviews with residents, who have been part of the so-called *founding group*. Hence, it was possible to gather not only the perspective of the architect but also of the participating residents.

The first ideas of housing forms like the *Wohnprojekt Wien* corresponded with the wish of Heinz Feldmann to live in a community with an ecologically conscious lifestyle. The considerations regarding the implementation and the location of the future project were based on some research work. Especially the weighing of advantages and disadvantages, whether the project should be fulfilled in rural or urban areas, occupied Heinz Feldmann not only during the development phase but also later in the selection of the plot of land.

His idea was shared early in autumn 2009 with a few friends of his and later with Markus Zilker, whom he met at an event about collective housing. A document with a first brief description of the idea regarding the planning of a communal living project was sent out via newsletters to friends. After several friends were informed and showed interest, the first meeting for the presentation of ideas was organized. Everyone who was interested was invited. During the first meetings first specific points and initial steps were discussed, which should later be implemented in the *Wohnprojekt Wien*. These points included the approximate number of residents, the availability of areas such as a common kitchen, a common roof terrace, if possible, a sauna, a common workshop, and a library, thereby reducing the individual square meters of the apartments.

Markus Zilker was fascinated about how much from the early ideas, which were presented on a flipchart during the very first meetings, were realized in the end: “The fascinating thing was, that the Wohnprojekt has realised everything, which was written on the first flipchart.” (Markus Zilker 2019).

The location of the planned project was one of the points which have been discussed more intensively. The advantages of the rural areas around Vienna versus the advantages of the urban area of Vienna made it difficult for the group to find an agreement. Two so-called project groups were formed, which should work separately on the development of ideas and the planning. Heinz Feldmann was the moderator of the group for the urban area, and he had the feeling/impression after three or four meetings, that a perfect amount of interested people was formed. From this point on the group decided to form an association. A first contribution of €2,500 should be paid into the association's account. This should show the real interest in the project. This payment initiated the starting signal for the implementation of the project. At the beginning, about 13 to 15 people were registered in the association, who also formed the core group. According to Markus Zilker, a lot of information was obtained in a very short time about the possibilities of acquiring a building plot and the financial and legal possibilities available. A meeting with the organisation of the Viennese housing fund drew the group's attention to the property development competition.

In January 2010, about six building plots were put out to tender for property development competitions, including a plot on the site of the former *Nordbahnhof* area. To gain access to a building plot for the project, the most realistic opportunity was to apply within the framework of the funded housing construction. At the beginning of 2010, there were no specific tenders for assemblies and thus the cooperation with the non-profit developer *Schwarzatal* was established. Markus Zilker explained during the interview, that the cooperation between a property developer and a cohousing group- a so-called *Baugruppe* in German - was back in 2010 not common in Austria. Most cohousing groups have developed their projects with private resources and full risks or in cooperation with other institutions like the catholic church. Since one of these were possible options for the aims of the project, they decided to try the cooperation with the non-profit property developer.

In cooperation with *Schwarzatal* it was possible to develop a concept where one half of the land was designed by the architects of *Schwarzatal* and the other half by *einszueins architektur*. After the completion of both buildings, the group of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* bought the part designed by *einszueins architektur*.

In early February 2010, after participating at a *Dragon Dreaming* workshop, where the group learnt how to develop concepts and visions, the group created through participation the project in six weeks. This included not only the architecture, economic structure, and social organisation, but also documents like the *Energieausweis*. At this stage, the organisation from sociocracy was not yet in such a way implemented, as it was in the further planning process and eventually as it is in daily life(-structures). Through the development process the early group of residents got in contact with Barbara Strauch, who told them about sociocracy as a form for organisation and decision making.

The submission deadline for the finished concept was at the end of March in 2010, where the group of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* applied with one property developer, but two different architectural concepts, two different living concepts and topics. Markus Zilker pointed out that the architectural focus of *Schwarzatal* was on integration, and their own architectural focus with the architectural bureau *einszueins architektur* was on communication.

In late spring 2010 the group of the association *Verein für nachhaltiges Leben* won the development competition. This initiated the concrete planning process and, eventually, the realisation of the project.

The development of the project took about one year with additional three to four years of construction time. In 2015 the building of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* was ready to move into/ready for occupancy.

4.1.1 The process of participative planning

After the winning of the competition the team of *einszueins architektur* started to develop, and design processes of participation in planning processes. They wanted to learn from other projects like the *Sargfabrik*, *B.R.O.T.* or *ROSE Donaustadt*, learn about mistakes and mishaps of other projects to avoid making new ones. Furthermore, *einszueins architektur* established workshops and seminars and tried new processes of participant planning. Regarding his role as an architect and future resident, Markus Zilker talked in the interview about the challenge of creating a duality. He needs to be part of the decision-making processes, but also be part of the leading role, concerning his architectural expertise.

One example to visualise the structure and the architecture of the rooms, especially the apartments, were models in the size of big shoe cartons. Several interviewed residents talked about this method and about how helpful it was to imagine their own future flat and what kind of layout options they had. These shoe cartons were integrated in a big model with about two metre length, three metre width and one and a half metre height. The future residents were able

to place the shoe carton, where their future apartment would be and, in this way, were able to visualise a more detailed layout after their wishes. Some residents also tried with fabric and colour to illustrate the apartments in more detail.

Another method the architects applied were surveys. Through the evaluation of such surveys the wishes of the residents were recorded. The results were three major layouts of the apartments. These surveys contained questions, among others, on the preferred floor height, compass direction and desired square metres. Every household had to decide for one of the three created options. During the *Wohnungsvergabeworkshop* (Eng. *Workshop for the allocation of the apartments*) the residents discussed already with the sociocracy method, which one of the three apartments was their favoured one. When this decision was made, the residents had the opportunity to decide on the placement of doors or on the wall length.

Most of the interviewed residents who have been part of the planning process expressed how satisfied they were with the end-results. One of the residents, whose household moved in after the apartment's planning had been finished, reasoned that about three groups of people designed not only their apartments but also the other later occupied apartments as well.

Among mostly positive feedback, some residents pointed out some drawbacks of the planning processes. One interviewed resident felt that these individual layouts of some apartments were very difficult to handle for following tenants because of fixed elements like air conditioning, floor heating and special apartment ground plan. Furthermore, he suggested that it would have been better for the value and usage of the building, if the architect would have not left so much freedom during the planning process as well. A further point of criticism raised by a resident was the decision for wall-high windows which took away a lot of wall space but were considered important for the architecture.

Apart from their own apartments the residents also planned the future shared community-rooms. For each room, a work group was responsible. Although the layout has already been given, the residents decided on the interior. This included, for example, the wall paint, curtains, floors, furniture, equipment, and lamps. The responsible work groups met every two months, where every participating person undertook a task.

A slightly different view was considered by other interviewed residents. They experienced the architects as guides and experts when they designed their flats or the community rooms. Therefore, certain wishes and preferences had to be reduced to realisable solutions.

During the planning and development process the concept of sociocracy becomes effective. Markus Zilker pointed out that there are three levels of planning participation through sociocracy. The large group is mainly responsible for the flow and transmission of information.

The work groups are discussing most of the topics and the subgroups of work groups conduct tasks where details are discussed. During the phase where the work groups are discussing and preparing information nearly 80 percent of the participation is happening. (Markus Zilker 2019) Through the conversations with the residents also thoughts on the decision-making processes came up. One of the participants stated that she and others benefited from the freedom of design. He also expressed that his group sometimes felt exhausted and overwhelmed during the development phase due to the many decisions they had to make. If it was not possible for someone to make a decision, other participants would do it for them.

4.1.2 Development of the building

In the conversation with Markus Zilker, he mentioned that all issues were managed in a participatory way in the project. This even applied to the design of the building. The group decided to get inspiration from other architectural designs. One of the residents brought a picture of a residential building in Denmark, which all found very interesting and hence, saw this as a possible template for further design development. Another important factor stated by one resident was the finances. As the building was constructed within the context of the subsidised housing scheme, there were consequently financial limits which could not be exceeded. Therefore, through the conversations with the residents and observations during events and meetings it became clear, that already from the planning phase of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* onwards, the term *sustainability* was an important part. Some residents even argued that the idea of living a sustainable life was the most attractive factor of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*. Apart from the cohousing structure, sustainability should be one of the main aspects of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*. The architecture of the building stands out in comparison to the surrounding neighbourhood. Although there is almost no difference in terms of height or the main form to the other residential buildings, the *Wohnprojekt Wien*'s front is mainly wood.

The façade of the residential building is the result of a compromise. Markus Zilker explained that originally the whole building was planned to be made of wood. Though due to the strict fire protection requirements when building a timber construction, neither the height nor the number of floors planned for the building would have been realizable.

Another compromise had to be made in regard to the structure of the building.

During the development process the material to be initially used was so-called eco-concrete, an ecological sustainable material. The eco-concrete material contains less CO₂, because of its origin as a waste product. The use of this kind of concrete would not only have been more

expensive but also would have influenced the construction work time plan greatly, argued Markus Zilker, which is why it had to be substituted for the standard concrete in the end.

Sustainability also becomes important in the architectural layout of the building. The basic structure of the house is designed so that the outer walls and the staircases are load bearing. All walls in between can be arranged almost without restrictions. Markus Zilker explained this by saying that they built two large L-shaped halls, so it is theoretically possible to convert the layout of the floors from the ground plan in ten to fifteen years. (Markus Zilker 2019)

Another very characteristic feature of the building are the balconies. Every apartment has a balcony attached. They differ only in their size due to a specified restriction that not more than 60% of the outer wall may be equipped with balconies. This fact was mentioned by one resident regarding the topic that the balconies are not included in the apartment overall square metres and the accompanying costs.

Heinz Feldmann also referred to the fact that most of the ecological sustainable parts implemented in the association's vision should be realised through the building structure. The importance of the use of materials which are known as sustainable was expressed by nearly all interviewed residents during the conversations.

As a result of the participatory planning process, ideas from residents were also an influential factor during the developing phase of the ecologically sustainable parts of the building. Among other things, a composting toilet was mentioned, which should drastically reduce water consumption. According to Markus Zilker, however, this would not have been feasible from an architectural point of view. Another example for the involvement of future residents in the decision-making process was the treatment of so-called grey water, i.e., wastewater and rainwater. Although the initial idea was not implemented either, an attractive alternative, namely the use of well water from a former construction well for toilet flushing and garden water pipes, was found.

Hence, the building can be considered to be of a low energy usage standard. Some examples for this are the mineral insulation for the insulation of the outer walls, the ventilation of living spaces and the double glazing. In order to save drinking water, one of the wells required for the construction site was retained - its water is now used to flush the toilets. Some of the eco-friendly solutions also had negative effects: During a conversation with a resident, it was pointed out that the well water is very calcareous, which has caused calcification of the toilet flushes in recent years. As a consequence, some had to be repaired or even replaced.

Another important factor related was the reduction of the individual square metres used for living. The apartments should be smaller than they are now. The result would have been the

reduction of energy costs. The reduction of private living-space is compensated by the available community-shared rooms in the building. Rooms for guests can be rented on the roof top, the place for a washing machine can be spared for a smaller bathroom, because there is a washroom with machines in the basement or long rows of book shelves in hallways are not necessarily due to the fact that there is a free library for everyone to use.

A closer look at the planning process shows how each evolved person tried to implement their ideas of sustainability in the development process.

4.1.3 Baurägerwettbewerbe

Another very important factor in order to understand the complexity and the involvement of the term *sustainability* in the development of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* are the property development competitions (*Baurägerwettbewerbe*) of the city of Vienna.

Heinz Feldmann described during the interview that a relatively new criteria system for the property developers was established by the city of Vienna. In 2009 an additional pillar was added to the already existing three assessment pillars of the competition.

The institution responsible for the competition is *Wohnfonds_Wien*. In their assessment paper the main targets and goals of the *4-Säulen Modell* (Eng. *4-pillars model*) are illustrated. This *4-pillars model* should enable public subsidized housing projects to be a part in the development of a social and fair society within a city) and is also responsible for the building culture and appearance of the city. Every residential building is obligated to fulfil all parts of the 4-pillars model equally. The model should not be understood as an instruction, but more as a guideline on how to fulfil the set qualities of the subsidized housing in Vienna.

The four pillars that are to be considered are *economy, ecology, social sustainability* and *architecture* and . The pillar of the economy is to ensure the affordability of housing. The aim is to use public funding in the most sustainable way possible. Consequently, the financial concept must consider land costs, total construction costs, user costs and contractual conditions. (URL 4-Säulen Modell 2019:1)

The third pillar concerns the *architecture* of the project. The design of the building should not only fulfil the needs of the residents, but also should also ensure that the quality of the residential building is in a relation with the city scape and the surrounding neighbourhood.

The *4-pillars model* is completed with the pillar *ecology*. This pillar focuses on the energetic building standards, the use of renewable energy, and the reduction of emissions. Green areas should be implemented to increase the quality of open spaces, but also make these spaces

accessible for diverse user groups. The residential building should also initiate environmentally conscious lifestyles. (URL 4-Säulen Modell 2019: 2)

Within the framework of the pillar of *social sustainability*, different ways of utilization, forms of housing and user groups should be made possible, thereby promoting social mixing, participation, organisation, and networking of social contacts. (URL 4-Säulen Modell 2019: 1)

The pillar of *social sustainability* was only added in 2009 before the next property development competitions in 2010 started. With this pillar the community building aspect of residential buildings should be supported. (Reven-Holzmann 2019: 11)

The study *10 Jahre "Soziale Nachhaltigkeit"* by Andrea Reven-Holzmann discusses the establishment of the concept of *social sustainability* in competitions and how its position in the evaluation process changed. During the evaluation of the first competition, *social sustainability* was analysed and assessed at first, since it was considered as a basic requirement in order to successfully fulfil the other criteria points. This changed in 2011, when the focus shifted to the economy and thus to the affordability of the apartments. However, as affordability is linked to social sustainability as well, it was agreed that all other three pillars, ecology, architecture, and economy, also extend into the area of social sustainability. (Reven-Holzmann 2019: 70)

In the interview with Heinz Feldmann, he stated that this was the winning argument for the cooperation with the property developer company Schwarzathal. Unfortunately, it was not possible to find an assessment sheet from 2010 during the research. The oldest retrievable assessment sheet is from 2017, in which the following criteria are listed: Appropriateness for daily use, cost reduction through planning, living in community and living for changing needs. It can be assumed that these criteria have hardly changed in the last ten years. Some additions have been made, as the study by Reven-Holzmann shows. Among other things, assemblies that fall into the category of *living in community* are added and building sites are allocated, as well as the way community spaces are offered and used in housing estates. (ibid. 2019: 73)

This part is particularly important as it shows how essential this change of the criteria was for the development of the project in 2009. The conception of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* was generally based on the community aspect and the formation of a community through shared living-spaces. Heinz Feldmann explained the effort required for living together in such a way that about twelve thousand hours were invested in building the software, i.e. the social fabric, and about twelve thousand hours in building the hardware, meaning planning, financing, architecture, and contracts.

This brief presentation of the four pillars does not only show with what kind of criteria *Wohnprojekt Wien* was confronted in its early development phase, but also how the city of

Vienna is using the term *sustainability* to generate structures. Furthermore, this also shows which understanding of sustainability is transported by these criteria and, consequently, influences the way it is implemented in the development of projects.

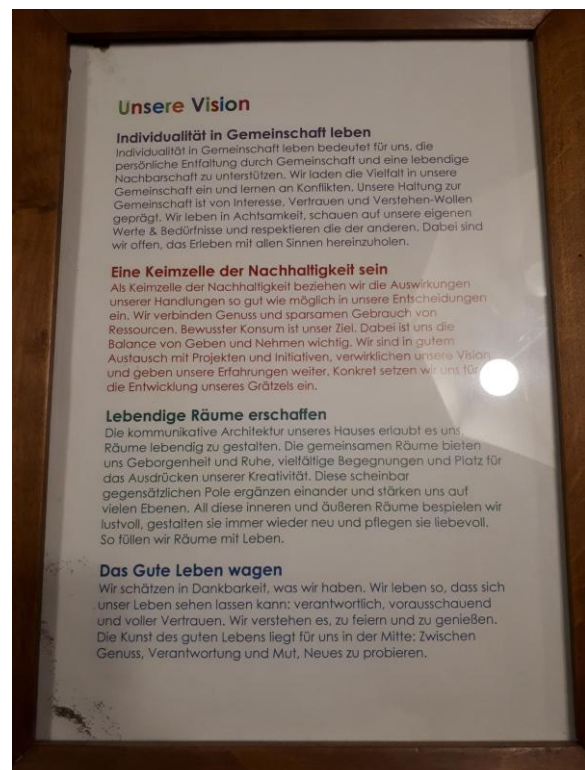
4.1.4 The association *Verein für nachhaltiges Leben*

The *Wohnprojekt Wien* would not exist without the *Verein für nachhaltiges Leben*. The association serves as the holding organisation for the project and the residents. Consequently, all adult residents are members of the association. Through this position the association acts for the residents as legal adviser for example regarding the energy provider, building taxes and so on. This point also made it possible that the *Wohnprojekt Wien* is not registered as a residential building, but as a *Heim* (Eng. Hostel). Considering that the *Wohnprojekt Wien* is a hostel and represented by the association *Verein für nachhaltiges Leben*, certain legal restrictions but also possibilities are the consequence.

The association does also function as the legal landlord of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*. Legally, the association *Verein für nachhaltiges Leben* is the patron of the hostel, which undertakes the organizational responsibilities. (URL Vienna Hostel Law) However the members of the association are not only the owners of the residential building, but every single household is the tenant of it as well.

Apart from a legal perspective, the association contains certain principles concerning the topic of sustainable living. These principles function as guidelines for the daily life-structures, the architecture and infrastructure of the building, as well as the organisation of the residential community. Activities and events organised by the community should also represent the principles of sustainable living. Residents who have already been part of the project from an early stage on, stressed that the basic principles for sustainable living have been decided already during the first meetings.

The pamphlet “*Unsere Vision*” (Eng. “Our vision”) includes ideas as living in a community, which is understood as the nucleus of sustainability, as a living space and good life.



Source: Wohnprojekt Wien, photographer: Müllebner Caroline (2019)

Everyone who became a resident after the construction of the building was finished, also became through a one-year process part of the association.

In the first half year of being a member of the association the main goal is to get familiar with it and the other residents. The earliest time to become a full member is after half a year, where it is possible to decide to become a full member of the association. If the decision has not been made after one year, you are obligated to become a full member and consequently the full membership fee and all other fees for the community rooms, a fee of acknowledgement for the grounding groups apply.

4.2 Becoming a part of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*

The following section will focus on the different ways of how the residents become aware and interested in the living in cohousing structures like the *Wohnprojekt Wien*. Additionally, the application process will be illustrated, living in the *Wohnprojekt Wien* and being part of the association *Verein für nachhaltiges Leben* and how these aspects are related to each other.

It can be stated that nearly all the interviewed residents have heard about the concept of living communities like the *Wohnprojekt Wien*. Due to personal or professional interests they gathered information about existing cohousing projects. Some residents mentioned examples like *Pomali*, *Ökodorf Keimblatt*, the *Sargfabrik* or the organisation *B.R.O.T.*. These projects have been established before or during the development of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* and share with it some similarities.

After winning the property developer competition in May 2010 the founding group of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* turned to the public to look for other interested future residents. Contacts with residents of the founding group also initiated interest for some residents to apply for the *Wohnprojekt Wien*.

After completion of the construction work, only about three quarters of the available apartments were occupied. Most of the first residents were part of the planning process and of the founding group. They created reserve apartments, so to speak, which could be used for household break-ups. If someone was interested in one of the apartments, he or she could apply for it and was then put on a waiting list then..

Another interviewed resident spoke about her first contact with the *Wohnprojekt Wien* which was at a very early stage of the project, in about 2011. She got in contact with residents of the founding group of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* during a Dragon Dreaming workshop, where the *Wohnprojekt Wien* was mentioned as an example for participatory planning. At that time, she was already interested in the project. Due to personal changes in her daily life, it was not

possible for her to get involved at first. In 2014 she got the information that one of the residents was looking for a roommate and she explained that the wish for her to live in a community remained.

4.2.1 Motivation to apply or and participate in the cohousing project

Some of the interviewed residents stated that they have gathered experiences in living in shared spaces during their time at university or grew up in little villages or in large families. They also mentioned that one of their motivations to move into the *Wohnprojekt Wien* was their aversion to anonymity as in common residential buildings. They expressed the wish for interaction with other residents of a building, which would be very difficult in most residential buildings. Another example mentioned by a resident concerned the interest in the creative aspects of shared living. The experience of getting in touch with a project concerning art and culture where artists live for a certain extent and organise events, the wish to live in community grew and the advantages of living in community appeared.

Other residents talked about the political statement of living in such a community. They wanted a political discourse integrated into their daily life. Another point stated by residents was that they would not have to live alone at an old age. Furthermore, the certainty that they and their family members are integrated into a community.

An additional argument was the positive living environment for their children. Their former apartments were either in a too urban setting with no parks and/ or no contact with other children. Another argument in favour of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* was that the location of the former apartment was too far away from the city centre of Vienna and cars or long ways with the public transport had been the consequence. Hence the location of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* was a determining aspect for the residents to apply for it.

Additionally, residents mentioned factors like the planned construction method of the building and the use of ecological building materials and the general inclusion of low-energy building standards. The participation of the future residents in the planning and development process was stated as a decisive factor for them as well.

4.2.2 The application process- Becoming part of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*

The way the residents got the apartment they wished is determined by the time they become part of the association. The founding group planned the location and the position of the apartment during the development process. As already described, in the beginning only about

80% of the designed apartments were occupied. The apartments were allocated within two stages.

The first application strategy was characterised by the fact that the group wanted to keep the barrier for entry high and the exit barrier low. After the formal application with a completed form and motivational letters the households were interviewed by two of the 13 members of the founding group. Heinz Feldmann stated that about 100 interested people were interviewed. The interviewers were always one man and one woman. The interviewers were making notes and recommendations based on the traffic light system. Red meant that the applicants did not fit at all. Orange represented that it had not been decided yet and that they needed to look at them again. If an applying household was considered as fitting into the concept, the recommendation was green. Heinz Feldmann argued that they had the problem of having too many applications marked as green. Additionally, the second stage was that the criterion of age diversity needed to be applied and at the end about 80% of the apartments were assigned.

Interviewed residents who became part of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* through the application process mentioned that they promoted themselves with their background stories, which they felt were fitting for the *Wohnprojekt Wien's* vision. For example, one resident explained that she put in the motivation form all the background about her ecological and environmental focus education.

Consequently, when the residential building was completed and a few apartments were already occupied by the households of the founding group, the selection processes followed the sociocratic method. During this process, households in the second round of applications had to choose one apartment out of several. The residents assign resistance points, which reflect the most unwanted apartment. Zero resisting points were representing the apartment of their dreams, while ten points were representative for the apartments with the most aversion. At the end, every participating household should have gotten the apartment they wanted.

One resident reflected that the intention was to build a diverse community structure. Preferably, there should be a balance between men and women, and between single, couple and family households. Furthermore, families with children also should be balanced by the average age of their own children. This is intended to avoid that all children grow up at the same time, and the age structure of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* becomes very homogeneous. Additionally, not only the age structure should be heterogeneous, but also the social structure. A few of the interviewed residents admitted that this objective has not been accomplished as satisfactorily as others. They argued that this is on the one hand due to the considerable share of costs which must be provided when moving in. On the other hand, only a certain social group of people seemed to be

interested in this living-concept. Therefore, the social mix has not been as successful as it was initially wished for during the project development.

During the time of the research there was still a long waiting list of applicants also because of the stable constellation of the group. An empty flat will be assigned mainly to already existing residents when households are getting split up.

This point has also been discussed in the interview with the contact persons of the MA 50. She mentioned that these cohousing projects nearly always target specific groups of people. Hence, only certain target groups, depending on the focus of cohousing, will be attracted by this form of dwelling. Therefore, cohousing projects should only be seen as an additional option on the housing market.

Coincidentally it was possible through several conversations to interview a resident who lives in one of the flat-sharing communities. For these residents one of them has provided their own fund percentage. This structure is the simplest and cheapest way to maintain the apartment. One resident argued that it would be very complicated and complex if every resident of a flat-sharing community would have to provide a part of their own fund percentage. Since these shared flats have a high fluctuation of residents, who are most of the time not able to afford an apartment on their own, this is the easiest and most economical solution. Persons who are interested to live in one of the flat-sharing communities have to go through a different acquisition process. Residents mentioned that the main tenant decides who stays in their apartment and they have the application conversation with them. After one year at the latest, they can also become a full member of the association.

4.3 The Structure of cohousing

This chapter discusses the daily life structures in the cohousing community and how the social organisation in the *Wohnprojekt Wien* is applied. The following illustrations are based on the interviews, conversations and observations undertaken during the collection of data. This presentation should give an overview of how about 70 adults and 40 children and adolescents are organising their lives under the premises of sociocracy and sustainable living.

4.3.1 Financing of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*

The financing of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* is based on the monthly rents of the residentials and the association fee. The rent for a household is calculated by the apartment's square metre amount.

For every apartment, every household must provide a so-called *Eigenmittelanteil* (Eng. *share of own funds*) before moving in. This share of own funds is also calculated by the square metres of the apartment. It can be considered as a deposit which has to be provided like it is common for rental contracts. One resident explained that his funds share was about 560€ per square metre for his future apartment. Due to this fact the single person apartments were kept relatively small in order to stay affordable. Using the example of a 70m² apartment for two people, an approximate own funds contribution of 39.200€ has been required.

The residents do not pay a so-called usual *rent*, but they pay a *Wohnbeitrag* (Eng. *Housing contribution*) since the building is legally a hostel. Furthermore, an essential detail concerning the legal state of being a hostel is that the residents are not entitled to housing benefit (Ger. *Wohnbeihilfe*). (URL Housing benefit regulations) If a resident is unable to pay his/her housing contribution, it is possible to apply for the *Solifond*.

This paid fee is split in several parts for certain funds and expenses. A very small amount of it is used for the repair of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*. This is used for the repairs organised by the work group building, which has to make sure that the available money is spent mindfully.

A part of the rent is also used to pay credits of the construction of the building.

Another part is the *Mietausfallfond* (Eng. *loss of rent fond*). It should provide financial security if the case occurs that a few apartments are not rented.

Operation costs for example water, power and sewage fees are calculated for each household by the square metres of their apartment. The costs of the community shared rooms are equally divided between each household and added to the apartment fee.

The association fee is used to pay for activities like the basic costs of the organised community weekend, to financially support other residents and to create the budgets for every community room's expenses.

An additional and on a voluntary basis created fund is the so-called *Solifond* (Eng. *solidary fund*). This solidary fund is used if a resident is not able to pay the rent and fees for a certain time or needs to be subsidized with this money.

The insurance for the building itself was arranged by the property developer. It is recommended to take out household insurance for the individual apartments in the housing contract. However, this is not obligatory.

4.3.2 The community shared rooms

The community shared rooms are one characteristic part of cohousing projects and have the purpose of compensating for services that normally would have been part of individual

apartments. Each room is in the responsibility of subgroups of work groups, which are maintaining the rooms or organising reservations for the rooms which can be booked even by non-residents.

Certain rules for each room have been stated by the responsible group, which have been accepted also by the other residents.

One of the biggest shared rooms is the community kitchen at the ground floor of the building. It is one of the places everyone can use at any time. It is not possible to have it exclusively for yourself. For little events like birthday parties or personal festivities it is possible to book the kitchen for a certain amount of time. A list with a calendar is placed on the outside of the kitchen door outside, which faces the entrance hall. Although the kitchen is booked, it is still possible that other residents can use the infrastructure of the kitchen, like the stoves, kitchen equipment or to borrow some tableware. Next to the kitchen is the playroom for the children, separated by a glass wall from the kitchen.

The community shared rooms on the top floor are a sauna, a relax room, the library, the guest apartments, and a roof terrace with a roof garden. The guest apartments are only available through pre-reservation. Every resident has a certain quota per year to book the rooms for free. It is also possible to rent the guest apartments by non-residents, but they must pay for it. The guest apartments also have a small kitchen attached, which can be used by the residents anytime as well.

The use of the sauna is regulated with a list, on which everyone can make a reservation for a timeslot. The relax room is next to it and can be used by any resident anytime. Some residents told that the relax room is also used for yoga classes by a friend of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*. This could also be taken from the newsletter. The offered yoga classes were a little cheaper for the residents than for people from outside. Furthermore, it was told that also in the warmer seasons the roof with the roof terrace is used as a place for the classes.

On the roof there is not only a terrace, but also small beds, which are planted by the residents. In a conversation with a resident who is part of the work group on ecological sustainability, it was mentioned that there are plans to place beehives on the roof.

On the same floor the library is located too, which can be entered at any time. It is possible to use it for studying, working quietly, or borrowing books. Also, the library cannot be used exclusively; it must always be accessible for all residents. There is the option to book the library for a certain time, but like it is the case with the kitchen, other residents should still be able to bring and take books from it. The books in the library are shared by the residents and any resident can borrow the books for free and at any time they like.

The event rooms are located in the basement. These are called *Flexräume* (Eng. *Flex rooms*). Based on their name, these rooms can be used very flexible and are not only accessible by the residents. They can be booked by any other person for an event. The members of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* get coupons to use the rooms for a whole day once a year or for two half days twice a year. For the cleaning an extra fee has to be paid.

On the same floor a workshop has been installed. For its use there have not been any specific rules defined. Everyone can enter it and use the equipment there.

Other shared rooms are the bike garage, the washroom with washing machines, and a kind of pantry in the basement.

The bike garage is on the ground floor and has been promoted by several residents as one of the best rooms because it is easily accessible. This was argued because of its location on the ground floor and right next to the street. It has enough space for all the bicycles of the residents and even includes a little workshop for repairs.

One resident mentioned that the use of the community rooms is so embedded in their daily lives that they cannot imagine anything different anymore, since it is natural for them to use them as part of their living space. Other residents stated that the sharing of rooms is one of the ways in which they apply ecological or economic sustainability.

4.3.3 The *Minga* – maintaining with and for the community

The following example intends to show how the cohousing community of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* is working together based on the organisation model of *sociocracy*. Two to four times a year the *Minga* event is organised by one of the work groups, which concerns the overall cleaning and maintenance of the building. Nearly every adult resident and a few young adults and children are part of this event. Heinz Feldman told me after our interview that the *Minga* event is based on a South American tradition of community work, where everyone in the community participates. The end of the event is usually characterised by a little party with drinks and food. Originally, the word *minga* is in relation with the word *minka*. “*Minka-minga* is a form of reciprocal exchange that comes into force at sowing and harvesting. Everyone comes together voluntarily to participate in the work that cannot be done by a single family. This family provides food for the workers in return” (Oehlerich 2014: 118).

In this case the *Minga event* at the *Wohnprojekt Wien* is quite similar to the ones practiced in South Amerika, with the only difference that the whole residential community is working for their building and a separate group of residents is preparing the food for later.

It is necessary to add, that during this event it was possible for me as researcher to participate. Hence, in the following section, the description will sometimes switch to describe situation from my perspective. Accordingly, the first person form will be readable.

The following presentation of the event should not only show how sociocracy is applied on a daily basis, but also how the concept of sustainability is applied and reflected in many activities. The visited *Minga*-event started on a Saturday in mid-March at about 9 and 10am in the community kitchen of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*. At this time, a little breakfast was provided and already most of the residents gathered around the big table in the middle of the room. They consumed coffee, tea and bread with jam or brought their own breakfast. The work group responsible for the organisation prepared several to-do lists in A2 format and fixed them on portable walls. These to-do lists presented the necessary cleaning activities and repairs and already included additional information about the persons required, depending on the urgency, the duration of the activity and its location. On an extra flipchart a little guessing game concerning characteristics of the building in numbers was prepared, where every participant of the *Minga* should suggest the correct results.

When the organizing group saw that almost all the residents were present, the preparation meeting was started. As there were lively discussions in the communal kitchen, silence and the attention of everyone had to be regained by a hand signal. To establish silence, one person began to raise his hand and the others followed his gesture until the whole room was silent.

During the preliminary meeting, the quiz was presented and an overview of the activities to be done was given. For the participating adults, who were parents of young children, childcare was offered. As soon as the most necessary framework conditions were clarified, all participants got up and went to the pinboard where the to-do lists were hanging. Even before many decided on an activity, many participants discussed in groups of two or three whether they wanted to take on this or that activity together.

When everyone had themselves registered in a group, most of them immediately left the kitchen and went to the cleaning utensils set up in the entrance or to the workshop in the basement. One of the first things I noticed was that there were no non-ecologically degradable chemicals among the cleaning materials. For example, vinegar cleaner was used for cleaning glass surfaces. The wash cloths that were used were washable several times and appeared to have been used very often. As I was busy for about one or two hours cleaning the banisters all over the house, I could only peripherally observe the activities of the others. But during this time, I was able to recognize that some people joined the *Minga* in the morning. Likewise, many children were also involved in the cleaning activities and only a few have been in childcare. As

a result, the children became part of the cleaning process at a very early stage and happily participated in the activities.

As not all necessary cleaning activities lasted the whole morning, it was possible to look for another activity on the to-do list or to ask in another group, if they needed help. By looking for other groups that might need my help, it was possible for me to have another look at other cleaning activities. Each participant was very busy and diligently involved in his activities. There was also a lot of activity in the kitchen, as one group had been responsible for the collective lunch since the preliminary meeting with the preparations. It seemed that all dishes that were prepared were vegetarian or vegan and most ingredients also came from organic farming.

After I started cleaning the kitchen windows in consultation with the responsible organizer of the *Minga*, another person asked for my help. Meanwhile I could follow the events in the kitchen, the big table was divided into three small tables standing parallel to each other and more chairs were organized.

At noon, the children came from the childcare or other cleaning activities and ate lunch at the already prepared table for them. Meanwhile, one participant and I were busy cleaning the wall-high windows of the kitchen. Since we knew that lunch for the adult participants was planned at about one pm, we worked under time pressure. We worked together until about 12:45pm, but then she had to take care of her toddler. Until the planned lunch I managed the remaining windows alone, but I was also able to observe the other activities that were coming to an end. Everybody seemed to be working towards this time and in the kitchen, it became more and more crowded. The people who were responsible for lunch were not in a hurry, but more and more people turned to the people responsible for the organization or discussed issues with other groups. All those who were already finished sat down at the tables and chatted or discussed their guesses for the quiz. At exactly one pm one person loudly asked the kitchen team if the meal was ready. When their answer was yes, the first ones started to gather around the kitchen islands, where there were several dishes to choose from. My previous assumption was confirmed that all dishes were vegan. They even prepared extra gluten-free pasta and thus took care of possible food intolerances. After most of them had finished lunch, a debriefing of the *Minga* was started. The debriefing included above all a thank you from the responsible organizers for the participation and that so many activities were undertaken and successfully carried out. Furthermore, each activity was discussed and with the persons responsible for it, what problems might have occurred and whether the set time limit was accurate. Afterwards every participant got applause in sign language. Since the discussion of each task took up quite

a while, the result of the quiz could only be discussed after some time. The winner received theatre tickets and wine and was announced immediately. Due to the fact that more than one person got the answers right, the prizes were divided. With this the *Minga* was officially finished. In a conversation with one of the organizers of the *Minga* I learned that the quiz was a little surprise or an additional goody to the event. He also told me that last time he surprised the participants with pictures taken during the *Minga*, which was so well received that he decided to continue with these little extras.

After the debriefing, some people finished repair or cleaning work which they could not finish before lunch. However, most of the people were finished and let the event end in conversation at the lunch tables or went back to their apartments. During conversations at the *Minga* I learned that two or three more were planned for the year. Another big one was organised in autumn and one or two smaller ones in late spring or early winter. One example for a smaller *Minga* that was planned this year, was the preparation for a re-layering of the hallway floor with a protective wax during the night, for which the hallway gets cleared of all plants, cupboards, carpets and decorative things and cleaned so that the layer can be applied. In this case no one should step out in the hallway for seven to eight hours. I was told that only one third of the residents are participating in this activity, since it does not take so many people to carry out this task.

This event has not only shown how the whole community is integrated in one activity, without any resistance and without any obvious disengagement or jealousy concerning the division of labour. Another point that was recognised through this process was how social relations in the community are present and structured. In the mentioned example, already existing social relations simplified the creation of work groups and the selection of the partner for the task. The importance of social relations in cohousing communities as it is discussed by Maria Laura Ruiu in connection with the concept of social capital. (Ruiu 2016:406)

The residents know with whom they could successfully work together. Hence, the group building process was quicker between residents who knew each other well, but also showed how important social ties between the residents are.

4.3.4 Differentiated perceptions in the use of the community rooms

Since many people live in the building and use the common rooms, there are naturally also different understandings regarding cleanliness, handling objects and adherence to rules of use. It was mentioned by several interviewed residents that if something gets broken or equipment or tools go missing that there are also different perceptions on how to solve and communicate

such issues. This concerns the topic of honesty in conflicts and the sometimes occurring lack of admitting responsibility for mishaps.

If problems are reported to the corresponding group, the members will discuss the matter and if there cannot be a solution found, it will be transferred to the *Leitungskreis* (Eng. *Management circle*). On this level it will be taken in the discussion round, whenever large group meetings take place. Some residents said that the group responsible for the affected room is the most competent element in handling problems, discussions, or conflicts.

4.3.5 The structure of social relationships in cohousing

During the conversations with the residents the subject of social relationships in the cohousing community became relevant. According to Putnam (1995) social networks are established through living in a cohousing community. The bases for rules and mutual trust are generated and become the main core element for the group members sharing common goals. (Putnam 1995: 67)

Most of the created relations are divided in different fields of social interactions. One resident mentioned working relations, friendships or they do not engage in any social interactions with certain residents. He spoke of the potential of getting to know other people more closely in the *Wohnprojekt Wien* through working with them in different work groups or project groups. This perception was also affirmed by another resident, who said that the various work groups at the *Wohnprojekt Wien* made it very easy for her to not only become a part of the community, but also to get in touch with the other residents. Apparently, social connections and relations develop faster. These relations contain mutual appreciation of the effort being taken in tasks.

Through the size of the residential community, it is also possible to avoid closer contact with people if wished. It seems that almost all interviewed residents do not share a close relationship with all the other residents. The residents argued, however, that not everyone could be close friends in such a big and diverse group of about 70 adults. This had no negative effect on the overall atmosphere in the *Wohnprojekt* and everyone was generally getting along fine.

The organisation of the *Wohnprojekt* enables people to get in touch with each other, whenever it is needed, but also leaves the space for a certain distance between residents who might not get along with each other. If there has not been any contact through work groups, these relations have been described to be similar to the relationship between normal neighbours, where they greet each other and share a few words.

The integration of new residents in the cohousing communities happens through their participation in work groups. They can choose them based on their interests. Through the social interaction of the decision-making process, it is necessary to get in contact with other people.

For example, the parents in the *Wohnprojekt Wien* are connected via an email mailing list as well. It was argued that this is very useful to borrow toys, child furniture or special clothes. One resident spoke of the fact that the use of email distribution lists is used very often and can sometimes become overwhelming due to the number of incoming emails. Apart from that, such lists are a very good way to quickly organise things and inform the other residents.

Nevertheless, residents stated that it is also possible to become lonely, because no one is obligated to interact with other residents. Consequently, this freedom and respect is accompanied by the danger that people become more and more isolated. One resident said that this might be the cause of the respect and caution of asking a resident about their serious or worried look. Additionally, everyone reacts differently and expresses their need for help differently, which makes such situations more difficult to handle.

A concern that was mentioned by one resident was the worry that the community in the *Wohnprojekt Wien* might change in a way like it is the case in other residential buildings. Over time there will be no work group meetings anymore and the community will be dissolved. Naturally, it is not the wish of the residents for this to happen and the whole community will have to work together to avoid such a scenario.

During the conversations, the residents stated that the solving and handling of conflicts shows the diversity of the group. One resident explained that one way of overcoming potential points of friction is that they- the community- have established a certain culture of conflict or arguing culture, in which it is possible to discuss such things.

Apart from minor conflicts related to the use of the community shared rooms, a few interviewed residents mentioned that discussions about ideological perspectives are the only occasions where more intense conflicts between residents arise. This is also part of the mentioned worries that the objective exchange of opinions and the acceptance of different ideologies might vanish at some point. Hence, the tolerance of different ideas might change. Another resident argued that this development is not only present in the community of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* but in today's society in general as well. "But this is...we are an image of our society, that is not particular for our house"(Clara 2019).

It was mentioned that topics that seemed to be neglected are faith and religion. One resident stated that faith and religion were never the subject of any conversation. At the same time, possible different confessions and faiths of co-residents did not seem to be of any importance

for the community. Only one time the relevance of esoteric practices like meditations and the use of a dowsing rod were discussed during the project development.

4.4 The idea of sustainability: common and individual perspectives

Through the association *Verein für nachhaltiges Leben* the community of the residents is representing a certain way of sustainable life. Not only does the building provide the necessary infrastructure to support this, but also individual ideas and thoughts are shaping the realisation of sustainable daily life.

Most residents argue that sustainable living is characterised by using only as much resources as necessary so that subsequent generations will be able to use them. During the conversation they indicated that this is crucial because they are aware of the fact that many resources are limited and or take a lot of time for regrowth. Due to these aspects the following sections will illustrate the expressed associations, thoughts, ideas, and the ways of applications in daily life as described during the interviews with the residents.

4.4.1 The individuality of sustainability

Earlier in this thesis, in the chapter concerning the development of the idea of sustainability, it became clear that the homogeny of the western society in terms of sustainability differs mainly in three aspects: ecology, economy and society. Although it seems that there is a clear separation between the meaning and perception of these three aspects, it became clear during my research that every person in the *Wohnprojekt Wien* has slightly different concepts of sustainability. This part will examine the varieties and similarities of sustainability models of *Wohnprojekt Wien* residents and how these become implanted in their daily lives. First, the residents' associations with the term *sustainability* will be discussed. Afterwards, more detailed explanations and the applications of sustainability in daily life-structures are presented.

One resident talked about the versatility of the term sustainability and called it „Aller Welts Begriff“(Thomas 2019). This description illustrates very well that sustainability is a very elastic and diverse term and has many aspects. Another term that occurred during the interview is “Ausgewogenheit” (Luise 2019). This term can be translated as ‘balance of taking and giving’, which in turn creates equality. Additionally, it means to live in a system, which is not exploited, where everyone who lives within, takes only as much as necessary and gives back at least the same. This mechanism relates not only to the use of plants, to animals and humans as well. The concept of sustainability can also be applied to every domain of existence.

The key word “long term” was also named by several interviewed residents, namely that sustainability is closely related to long-lasting actions and structures.

One resident explained his thoughts on the term *sustainability* from a philosophical perspective. In his understanding, every thought and action have consequences. This would contain the acting and thinking of consequences: “Everything I think and do, has consequences” (Rene 2019). This is not only in connection with ecological topics, where the consequences of waste recycling and regional food are widely known, but also the reflection of our own actions. Therefore, the reduction of producing waste and saving energy is perceived as a logical consequence. It was also stated that this way of acting and thinking is part of your own identity. The reduction of the ecological footprint¹ was stated in relation to the term *sustainability* as well. *Sustainability* is perceived as a comprehensive term which not only contains ecological facets, but also a way of life that concerns future generations. The argumentation follows that living with minor adjustments like avoiding waste production is not enough.

Ecological sustainability is not only achieved by a change in concepts of mobility and consumption but also by shared goods. In this regard, it was stated that the apartments of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* are not individual property. It is not possible to pass it on to the following generation since the association is the owner of the apartment. The association *Verein für nachhaltiges Leben* decides who gets the apartment and hence the apartment is taken from the private housing market.

Building materials and the architecture of the residential building have been described by the residents as an important way to live and apply sustainability. Concerning the building materials, the aspect of quality was very important. The use of high-quality materials which should not only be robust and long-lasting, but also should be recyclable, in case there is no purpose for the building anymore.

¹ The *ecological footprint* is a measurement tool that relates the use of resources and land to those available on planet Earth. Bio productive land is required for resources that are globally limited, resulting in the unit of measurement *gha* (*global hectare*). For the calculation and better understanding of one's own footprint, the factors that add up to the footprint are divided into the areas of housing, nutrition, mobility, consumption, and the so-called grey footprint. The grey footprint comprises the social framework of a country. In 2010, 11.9 million hectares of bio productive land were available on earth. For the then approximately 7 billion people, this would mean 1.8 gha per person. This area would have to be used to satisfy the needs of flora and fauna. The average ecological footprint of an Austrian is 5.3 gha, which would be at least the bio productive land of three Earth planets if every person on earth would have the same share of land. Consequently, more than half of the world's population gets along with a smaller share. (URL Ecological Footprint)

4.4.2 Consumption, sharing, reducing- perceptions of ecological and economic sustainability

The subject of consumption has been another very prominent subject during the interviews with the residents. In this context, topics as for instance food, clothing, air travels, vacation, and the sharing of items were addressed. Nearly all interviewed residents argued that through consumption the three most known aspects of sustainability- ecology, economy and social equality- could be applied in their daily life.

One way to purchase food aside from buying it in supermarkets is by registering in an organisation like *foodcoop*² or *CSA*³-*community supported agriculture*. Most of the food is ‘purchased’ in exchange for being part of a project, through which a harvest share can be picked up by regional farmers. The *Salon* offers another purchase opportunity for products such as milk, eggs, or butter. However, not purchasing in supermarkets is still seen as a privilege.

An important criterion is that the food products need to be locally produced, seasonal, organic and should be packed as little as possible to avoid packaging waste. The local origin of food and its organic farming circumstances are crucial to nearly all interviewed residents. There have been critical opinions stated against the organically produced food in supermarkets which some perceive to be neither fairly produced nor traded. Organisations as described above allow the residents to be in contact with local farms and producers. As the local origin of products is very essential, the selection of fresh vegetables and fruit naturally decreases in the winter months.

Concerning organic food, some interviewed residents argued that they prefer only organic food grown in Austria and avoid buying organic products from other countries like Spain or Italy.

This thought promotes the aspect of conscious handling of food and the avoidance of throwing it away. Furthermore, this is in line with saving resources as a prominent component in the understanding of sustainable living. This fact goes even hand in hand with the preservation of resources which are now available for the following generations.

Additionally, the subject of consuming is also related to topics like online retail, especially clothes and technical devices. Purchasing things through online retail platforms is seen as very critical by some interviewed residents. These thoughts have also been expressed towards other residents who are using online retailers regularly. Their argument refers to avoiding online

² *Foodcoop* is an association of people and households that jointly and self-organised organise organic products directly from regional and local farmers and food producers. The name *Foodcoop* comes from *Food Cooperative* and is the successor of the consumer cooperatives established in the 19th century. (URL Foodcoop)

³ CSA is the abbreviation for Community Supported Agriculture and is an agriculture based on solidarity. Due to the special business relationship between producer and consumer, both take responsibility for the costs and the harvest. This also includes the risk of crop failures. As a result, the farmer makes the products of his agriculture available all year round and the community of consumers guarantees the purchase of the harvest and the consumer pre-finances the associated costs. Since there is no middleman, the money remains directly with the producer and most farmers produce organically. (URL CSA)

retailers' reach from the unnecessary amount of packaging, transport cost, the transport's impact on the CO₂ pollution and the effects on the local retail sector.

One resident argued that no form of consumption is sustainable because many things do not need to be bought due to the fact, they can be borrowed or reused. An exception are things that can only be purchased in supermarkets for example like certain biscuits or toilette paper. A result of consuming less is less packaging and hence less waste production. In this matter a resident explained that the *Salon* offers the opportunity of a refill station for cleaning fluids like soap, dishwash liquid or all-purpose cleaner.

Clothing should be characterised by fair producing circumstances for the workers.

The act of sharing things, helping and supporting each other were very prominent topics during the conversation, too. Objects for daily life, which are not needed every day, are shared among the residents. Whenever an item is needed, a circular email is sent to all residents and they will contact you if they can help.

Concerning the subject of mobility, *sustainability* is applied by using the public transport system, or the bike for short-haul routes and, if it is necessary to go by car, by making use of car-pool services. Many residents deliberately abstain from having a car, as the short distance to the public transport system makes it obsolete to own one. During the research, a group of residents was trying to establish a car-pool for the *Wohnprojekt Wien*. In general, the residents try to avoid flying and prefer the train for their long-distance travels. A few residents mentioned the problem of avoiding job relevant flights due to the fact that travel by train is more time-consuming and consequently sometimes not possible. The issue of long-haul flights and long-haul destinations was mentioned above all in connection with the ecological footprint, sometimes also called CO₂ footprint. Some critical opinions included the diversity of interpretations of sustainability. This criticism targets in particular residents who, due to their housing situation in the *Wohnprojekt Wien*, live overall sustainably but still spend holidays in far-flung countries. This was criticised as a kind of hypocrisy.

The application and the interpretation of the idea of a sustainable lifestyle varies from person to person too. It was described during the interviews that this variety ranges from very strict actions like no plastic in daily life at all, to the focus on a certain aspect i.e. mobility, consuming organic food or avoiding waste.

Another topic related to sustainability is the working climate, namely the sustainability with oneself and the own resources. This concerns not only observing their own working stamina, and taking enough breaks, but also the time investment. During my research it became apparent that residents reflected not only on their time investment in activities at the *Wohnprojekt Wien*

but also how this time investment influenced themselves. In this regard. It is explained that it is important to acknowledge the value of the founding group and the developing work they have done. Especially concerning the time investment in the process.

The time investment of every resident in the *Wohnprojekt Wien* needs to be kept in balance and personal resources used for the organisation of *Wohnprojekt Wien* require to be managed. This thought also refers to the application of sociocracy and the work groups. One resident stated that it is necessary to reflect on the own effort and think about the own working limits

4.4.3 Social components of sustainability

The social components of the term *sustainability* are argued by the fact that the residents live in a community. Especially for the children living in a community that is characterised by different models of families, partnerships, and households is perceived as a positive and supporting environment. Furthermore, the children learn from an early stage on democratic values by observing the adults in decision-making processes. “Ideally, these are nuclei for re-democratisation processes” (Heinz Feldmann 2019).

Additionally, residents argued that social sustainability is achieved by helping people in need. One example that was told was the case of a refugee family which has been taken care of and uses one of the guest apartments as accommodation.

It is relevant to stress that social sustainability is not only related to community and sharing but through consumption as well. One interviewed resident stated that buying clothes and furniture which are produced under fair paid circumstances, are socially sustainable towards the producers. In comparison to buying these products in regular furniture stores, where it cannot be traced where and how the products were manufactured, and no ecological or social criteria can be assured. This fact was also relevant in the development process of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*. Throughout the decision-making process, concerning the choice of the bank which should provide the credit for the construction project, one demand was that this bank should be an ethical bank and regionally involved.

Another topic that has been mentioned by some residents in regard to the connection between sustainability and sociocracy was the process in which the children and young adults become involved in the sociocracy structures. They start to become involved step by step- if they are interested, they can participate in the large group meetings. It is possible for the smaller children to observe large group meetings on the glass walls towards the *flex rooms* downstairs, where most meetings are taking place. It is fair to say that they grow into this structure. This practice also encourages the inclusion of opinions of the younger generations in the *Wohnprojekt*, since

they are a part of the discussion process and subjects related to them were discussed. As a consequence, teenagers even got their own room for discussions.

This not only affected the teenagers but also the adult residents because they had to think about how they integrate the youth in the sociocratic process and that they learn that every opinion is equal.

Residents who are parents mentioned that they are talking with their children about sustainability, since it is an ever-present part of their life. Sometimes the children participate in the meetings or they become aware of events like the school strikes concerning climate change. During the conversations residents reflected on their residential community and argued that their perception of ecological sustainability concerning online retailers, flying and meat consumption is very diverse. Nearly everyone sets a different focus.

One heavily discussed topic was the measurement of the power consumption. The European Union initiated that households should voluntarily exchange their old power measure instrument with a new one, called *Smart Meter*. This so-called *Smart Meter* would allow a differentiated observation of the power consumption. To install this *Smart Meter* the old one needs to be replaced. While some residents argue that the new meters would help to reduce power consumption, others point out that the old meters last for several decades and the installation of the new ones would cause a lot of waste. This subject has been alluded to from time to time during the interviews and showed how different the views are in the *Wohnprojekt Wien*. Through the conversations also certain difficulties and complications in applying sustainable behaviour were discussed.

One critical argument of a resident reflected on the fact that some might go overboard on living sustainably and everyone who is not strictly following is denounced.

By reflecting on their own behaviour concerning their own idea of sustainability, a few residents argued that they differentiate their focus concerning the origin of food, clothes, furniture, or mobility. This includes the effort to deal with those subjects that are not so familiar to them. Hence, the understanding of sustainability and the application of sustainable principles differ between the residents. One of them stated that it is easy for her to apply ecological sustainable actions in her everyday-life, while concepts of social sustainability are more difficult for her to implement.

In various conversations the issue of the increased costs for living a sustainable life was addressed. However, it is argued that the knowledge that clothes are produced under specific circumstances, vegetables and fruits grow without the addition of pesticides or that cleaning products are biodegradable is worth the extra money.

4.4.4 The Neighbourhood and external representation of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*

When asking the residents about the position of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* in the neighbourhood and how they think the *Wohnprojekt Wien* is perceived by the district, most of them responded that the perceptions of neighbourhood residents and visitors are very different.

The different architecture of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* alone, with its wooden façade, makes it stand out from other buildings. Terms like *Saunahaus* or *Bobo-Haus* have been mentioned in connection with the building of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*. Aside from this point, the *Wohnprojekt Wien* is not surrounded by fences. It is possible to walk around at any time or cross the little lawn area with a playground. In the conversation with the residents, they mentioned that the building was deliberately designed in a way that it would not be separated from the neighbourhood. Because of this, the area behind the *Wohnprojekt Wien* is a fluid transition between them and the neighbouring property. Consequently, it is possible for children of the neighbouring areas to use the playground or play on the lawn as well. Some residents mentioned that this sometimes causes problems with noise echoing in the area between the residential buildings.

The relationship to the directly adjacent residential building, which is on the same building lot, was described as not that close. The *Wohnprojekt Wien* shares the garage, the garden, the playground and the free space between the two buildings. Apparently, there have been attempts to establish closer contact with the other building, but this was not successful. The contacts with the other residential buildings around the area only exist through individual persons who are in contact with some residents of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*.

During one interview a resident argued that in the beginning the *Wohnprojekt Wien* was perceived by the neighbourhood with some caution. This might have been changed especially by the presence of the attached grocery store and café *Salon*. Another connection point to the neighbourhood are the *flex rooms*. These are used for events and can be booked by everyone. Due to the lack of event rooms in the neighbourhood, the *Wohnprojekt Wien* has gained more popularity in the area as well. The event *Soliflohmarkt* (short form of Eng. *solidary flea market*) is organised once a year. In this flea market not only the residents of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* participate, but also residents of the neighbourhood can sell things. The income is donated to a charity initiative.

Additionally, the residents are aware that they are perceived as a group of people who want to live differently, although they do not want to be closed for external people. Hence, it was

declared that if the residents of *Wohnprojekt Wien* would enclose themselves it would be against their vision and their perception of sustainability.

The interviewed residents also spoke of the many pre- and misconceptions of people who do not know the *Wohnprojekt Wien* more closely and that they are often perceived as exotics. A few examples are that the residents are all vegan or that the residents live in an ecological bubble. Some residents have the impression people are recognising the *Wohnprojekt Wien* as something different. There are positive and negative comments. One resident also mentioned that they are sometimes seen as being something better by their neighbourhood. It was argued that such comments are stated most of the time by persons who do not know the *Wohnprojekt Wien* and its residents. Hence, nearly all interviewed residents claimed that they do not really take such comments seriously.

They have also noticed that external persons, like mail delivery services or maintenance technicians, expressed that this residential building seems to be different from other residential buildings they normally enter. “They register that there is a different atmosphere in the building than in other houses“ (Luise, 2019).

Some residents expressed their discontent during the interviews of being too open in the beginning phase of the *Wohnprojekt*. They explained that in the early days there have been a lot of visitors and the residents felt like exhibits or like they are a zoo: “ Sometimes, especially, in the beginning, when we had not organised public visits, it was like we were in a zoo” (Rene 2019). Now this is organised and people who want to get to know the *Wohnprojekt Wien* need to register first by getting in touch via email. A resident described that now they found a balance between the state of not being too closed and not too open.

The political representation of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* has been another discussed topic. One interviewed resident talked about an action as a reaction to an election poster. In 2016 when the election of the Austrian federal president was conducted, a large group of the residents supported the candidate Alexander Van der Bellen. The group put up a poster on the balconies on the park site of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* with the sentence that clearly expressed the support of this presidential candidate. With this action everyone thought that the whole residential building and consequently all its residents shared this opinion. Residents who did not like to express their political opinion were not very pleased about this. By this action a discussion about the political representation of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* was initiated and has not been solved during the period of research. Concerning this subject, a resident stated that this event shows how diverse the residents of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* in fact are.

An own group is responsible for the establishment of closer relations between the Wohnprojekt and the neighbourhood, the subgroup *UG Grätzeln*. During the time of the research this group was working on two main topics, namely the coordination of political topics and the subject of connection building with other organisations in the *Nordbahnhofviertel*. The work group for communication is in contact through a *Facebook* group related to the area. In addition, online-connections are established with the *Grätzeln-Newsletter* and the newsletter of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*. The newsletter of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* provides information about events related to the *Wohnprojekt Wien* every month.

Some residents mentioned that other housing projects like the *Wohnprojekt Wien* are establishing in the neighbourhood of the *Nordbahnhofviertel*. One example that was talked about was the association *Anders Wohnen*. It was in the building process during the time of the research, and it also was promoting a way of cohousing-structured living.

4.4.5 The meaning and importance of the *Salon*

There has not been any interviewed resident who would not have mentioned the *Salon*, the café and little grocery store on the ground floor of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*. All of them share the same opinion that the *Salon* contributes to the positive perception of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* in the area.

As one resident stated during an interview: „Without the *Salon*, it would be very different. The people would see us as an island. But now they have the possibility to come in and ask questions“ (Jan 2019).

The *Salon* is not directly part of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*. It is a project initiated by a group of residents of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*. They rent the space on the ground floor and established a combination of grocery store and café. It is described as a gate between the inside and the outside of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*. Due to the lack of a reception desk at the entrance of the residential building the *Salon* is used as a kind of information point. In the *Salon* people who also live in the *Wohnprojekt Wien* are working. It is possible for residents to deposit keys or have the mail and packages delivered. “Also, the *Salon* offers different services for the *Wohnprojekt*” (Rene 2019).

Another resident argued that the *Salon* is an important meeting point for the residents too. Due to the fact that nearly every resident visits it and small talk is easily initiated.

The *Salon* as a grocery store sells only basic foods like dairy products, eggs, bread and juice. Additionally, the assortment of the *Salon* includes for example cleaning products, certain books, baking goods, coffee, tea, chocolate, and sweets. All these products are declared to be

organically produced and/or fair- trade. The persons who are responsible for the *Salon* are discussing from time to time their offered assortment. Since the offered products have a higher price level than in the supermarkets, the provision of food from the *Salon* can be more expensive than from other markets and stores. The point is not only registered by the residents, but also by people in the area.

A graffiti was sprayed on the wall next to the door of the *Salon* with the writing saying, “Bobo⁴ Shit”. It was mentioned during the interviews that the residents and the owners perceive this as criticism of their offered products. They even reflected on the prices of the products and are aware that a family with several members will not be able to afford to purchase food there. One of the owners mentioned that and stated that such a purchase is not the purpose of the *Salon* even if there are residents who buy many of their products.

The writing deliberately has not been removed because they stand by their decision that the *Salon* sells products with a certain quality and fair-trading prices for the producers. This topic has even been discussed on the social media platform *Facebook*, where the *Salon* was defended by third parties. One resident explained that these people know the attitude and agenda of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* and that they are not so-called *Bobos*. The residents are aware of the meaning and attitude that is presented by the sold products, but they do not think that they are superior because they are able to afford such products. The writing was kind of creatively changed by adding *www.* and *.at.* next to the writing and even the respected website was made. The *Salon* can be booked for little events too. If beverages are consumed, people are making notes in a dedicated notebook, in which every household in the *Wohnprojekt Wien* has a page. Another opportunity to purchase goods when the *Salon* is closed, is to get the key of one of the residents who are responsible for the *Salon*. The residents charge a certain amount of money on an account and can use this money for paying at the *Salon*.

One resident stated that in the early development stage of the area the *Salon* was very important because there had not been something like it in the area. Although this might have changed now, the *Salon* is still well-known and favoured.

Although the *Salon* is not directly part of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* the residents perceive the *Salon* as a meeting point, grocery, and café at the same time and see it as a connecting element

⁴ The term Bobo is an abbreviation from the words *bourgeois* and *bohémien*. People who are part of the bourgeoisie are considered to be adapted, conservative and bourgeois, while the word Bohemian pursues an easy going and unconventional way of life. The American journalist David Brooks coined the word and used it in his book to describe the American upper class in the 1990s. Consequently, the term describes a social group that is prosperous and successful on the one hand and unconventional and rebellious on the other hand. (URL Bobo meaning)

between the *Wohnprojekt* and the surrounding area and as an important part of the neighbourhood.

“I believe the *Wohnprojekt* would be missing something without the *Salon*. We would be inclosed and more centered towards us. This way it opens itself“(Conni 2019).

4.5 The practice of sociocracy

The following chapter will discuss the social organisation form of the *Wohnprojekt Wien: sociocracy*. Originally developed for the organisation of companies in the Netherlands, it gained a presence in the German speaking area in the last decade. That is not only an alternative organisation form for corporate structures, but also for, is shown by the increase in community housing projects organised according to the model/principles of sociocracy. The first section of this chapter will describe the origin of sociocracy, followed by an explanation of its characteristics and principles and how these are put into practise. The third section will discuss how sociocracy became established in Austria and consequently been applied as the organising method of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* residents. The end of the chapter will focus on the perspectives, and perceptions of the residents on sociocracy and how it relates to their idea of sustainability are discussed.

4.5.1 The origin of sociocracy:

Sociocracy is an organisational model developed by the Dutch engineer Gerard Endenburg. Endenburg developed the model in the 1960s for his own company. This form of organisation should make it possible to let supervisors and employees work together effectively and equally. (Rüther 2010:8)

The term sociocracy gained importance through Endenburg not only as a model for organisational structures in companies but in communities with collective living structures as well. Originally the term was used much earlier by the co-founders of sociology Auguste Comte and Lester Frank Ward. Comte named the science of society as sociology and the system in which the members of a society participate in sociocracy. Like science, Comte saw the system as being based on reason and analysis and thus also as a guide to the ruling class for solving social problems. (Rüther 2010: 10). Lester Frank Ward saw sociocracy as a democratic form of governance of the state to promote social equality of opportunity. Ward's focus was not on structure, but on the individual as an essential part of the community that contributes to the distribution of social opportunities.

Gerard Endenburg's model differs fundamentally in the form of governance. It does not need a democratic or autocratic system for an equal and common form of decision making.

The decision-making structure in Endenburg's model is characterized by the additional circle structure to linear structure in the decision-making process (Rüther 2010: 11).

Endenburg found the basis for his model in the writings of the Dutch social reformer Kees Boeke. Boeke grew up in the religious community of the Quakers, which solved decision-making according to the consensus principle. As a result, decisions are only taken by agreement and there is no compromise as with democratic majority voting. If there is no consent, the decision is postponed. The idea of consent is rooted in Gerard Endenburg's ideas, which are based on cybernetic approaches. (Rüther 2010:18)

Via the study of electrical engineering, Endenburg's interest for the cybernetic and the thinking in systems and organisms grew. During his work in his company, he tried to organise the working structure of his employees to improve efficiency. Through his work he recognised the similarities between technical terms of cybernetics and corporal organisation structures. (Strauch/Reijmer 2018: 7s)

At the end of the 1960s Endenburg implemented the first *sociocratic circle organization-method* in his company based on these decision structures. This made it possible to create participatory power structures and to generate equality through self-organisation. (c.f.Strauch/Reijmer 2018: 4)

4.5.2 Sociocracy- The application of an organisational structure

Barbara Strauch and Annewiek Reijmer summarized some characteristics of sociocracy, which also can be found in the social organisation structure of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*. The group that implemented sociocracy in their work, has a collective vision and target. During the decision-making process, every member is equal, and every stated argument is to be perceived with equal seriousness. The formulation of targets, the development of skills and projects are all happening in a collective manner. This includes the expression of open, sensitive, and productive feedback to evaluate the decision-making process. (Strauch/Reijmer 2018: 9)

Christian Rüther in his script *Soziokratie. Ein Organisationsmodell. Grundlagen, Methoden und Praxis*. (2010) and Barbara Strauch and Annewiek Reijmer in their book *Soziokratie. Kreisstrukturen als Organisationprinzip zur Stärkung der Mitverantwortung des Einzelnen* (2018) explain the four basic principles of sociocracy, which are decisive for Gerard Endenburg's model.

The first basic principle involves decision-making by consent. In contrast to the term *consensus*, the term *consent* does not mean agreement on a topic, but that there is no serious counterargument for it. In general, you have to give reasons for your agreement or disagreement with a decision: “[...] es geht in der Soziokratie um Argumente, nicht um Stimmen“ (Rüther 2010:21). Hence, sociocracy is based on the argumentation of a perspective and not how many votes are cast. The presented arguments or information of the no-vote will be discussed together with all participants of the circle discussion. A circle is a group of people who deal with a certain topic, task, or problem.

As already mentioned, the form of the discussion plays an important role. The fact that the opinions of the participants are captured in a rotating manner in the circle makes it possible to treat all arguments equally by the principle of consent. Due to the fact that Endenburg added a circle structure (discussion in a group) to the linear decision structure (delegation of decision-making), and a supervisor is present, the decisions of the supervisor are controlled by the participants of the circle. Although the supervisor becomes the executive organ of the circle, his or her role is to moderate and lead the discussion. Consequently, the first basic principle of sociocracy implies that the participants in the circle determine the decision by applying the consensus. The second basic principle deals with the aspect that the entire organization is built in circles and that decisions are made in these circles. The third basic principle is based on the fact that the circles are linked together on a vertical level. The term *double coupling* is part of the third basic principle, which involves two selected persons. One person takes over leading tasks, the second person is a delegated one. The person elected as a delegate is sent to the superior circle. Thus, the interests of the subordinate circle can also be integrated into the decision-making process in the superior circle. Consequently, information from the higher circles can be passed on to the lower ones and vice versa. This also ensures the flow of information in both directions. The election is also conducted by consent. In this decision-making procedure arguments are decisive, and a person is elected if no serious counterargument has been presented. (Strauch/Reijmer 2018:18s)

In the area of corporate structure, both the executives and the elected delegates participate in all meetings of the circles. Here it is also important that all decisions are made by consent after an open expression of opinions. (Rüther 2010:21)

From a technical perspective, all elements in the system work in such a way that there is no serious objection. However, if a certain event occurs in the system so that it can no longer function, counts as a serious no. If there is no serious no, all processes run in accordance with the consensus principle.

During the discussions with the residents the basic form of the applied sociocracy could be determined. All four basic principles exist and are consequently being implemented: The so-called circles, are work groups in the *Wohnprojekt Wien*, which contain either one or more work groups, sub-groups and/or project groups. Each group has a delegated person as a representative of interests in the superordinate groups and a leading person in the groups themselves. The person with the leadership function, in turn, passes on information to the leadership circle. The decision is made according to the consensus principle, in a circle discussion. Decisions are made in such a way that no serious objection is raised by any of the participating group members. The linear structure of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* includes the plenum at the top, i.e. the large group. The large group is again divided into the individual work groups with their specializations. Depending on the subject area and the problem to be solved, the work groups are also divided into small subgroups or project groups. Consequently, each work group has a common project, a goal, or a problem to be worked on. The fourth basic principle, open election, is applied in the groups when electing the group leaders and delegates.

Consequently, consent in a discussion process means that there is no argument against a proposed decision. Each participant of the circle is asked whether this decision can be carried out, if there is a no, then it is asked whether this is a serious no and why. (Rüther 2010:21)

Rüther argues that sociocracy promotes the opinion of each participant in the circle and each participant is asked for his or her opinion. If a member of a circle is not present, then the decision is delegated to the other members. The goal of consensus is not to generate the perfect solution, but one that is most feasible and can be achieved by the group together. (ibid.2010:27)

4.5.3 Sociocracy in Austria

In an interview with Barbara Strauch, the history of the origins of sociocracy in Austria were discussed. It began with the idea of building an ecovillage, the so-called *Keimblatt Ökodorf* by Ronny Wytek in Burgenland. During the revival of communal forms of living at the beginning of the 2000s, also the question of a suitable method of organisation was raised. Eventually, a colleague and herself became aware of the concept of sociocracy and contacted Christian Rüther. At that time, he was engaged in research on non-violent communication and the implementation of sociocracy in communities. Through the search for a suitable form of organization, seminars, and workshops on *Dragon Dreaming*⁵ and systemic consensus, as an

⁵ The term Dragon Dreaming refers to a method for participation. It provides the tools for groups to develop projects, vision, or ideas and to realize them. The method was developed by John Croft and is based on system theory approaches and the wisdom of the Australian indigenous group Aborigines. This collective process of working and developing together creates a better understanding of each other. The Dragon Dreaming method can

alternative to sociocracy, were attended. However, the decision was made in favour of sociocracy, which turned out to be a facilitation of the organisational structure for the Wohnprojekt Wien. Barbara Strauch mentioned that at the initial stages of the Wohnprojekt, they were six people and therefore could not yet build a large sociocratic structure. However, it was possible to create a circle to distribute first tasks and to give the group the opportunity to grow. Many people interested in the methods and the *Keimblatt Ökodorf* also came to the workshops.

The connection to the *Wohnprojekt Wien* arose because Heinz Feldmann was interested in the organisation of the community and visited the *Keimblatt Ökodorf* for a week. There he experienced the ways in which a community can organize itself with sociocracy. Another factor that led to *Wohnprojekt Wien's* decision to focus on sociocracy was the fact that one of the first five or six people to do so were already involved in the topic of community organisation and sociocracy. Barbara Strauch explained that she was mainly responsible for moderating the first discussion rounds. She herself did not have any training yet but brought in her own experiences of her project *Keimblatt Ökodorf*. Due to the lively interest and the fact that there were already organisational developers and project supervisors in the founding group of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*, principles of sociocracy could be integrated quickly. “Without sociocracy it would not have worked out for the Wohnprojekt Wien, especially in the short time“ (Barbara Strauch 2019).

Barbara Strauch also sees sociocracy as an essential component of the fact that the *Wohnprojekt Wien* came about at all. Furthermore, the City of Vienna has included the fourth pillar of social sustainability as an evaluation criterion for property development competitions, which increased the chances that a project like the *Wohnprojekt Wien* would succeed.

After accompanying several housing projects, beginning in 2009, the idea of creating an umbrella organisation for the projects like the *Wohnprojekt Wien*, was established. The idea to establish a sociocracy centre arose from the implementation of sociocracy principles in several cohousing projects. The introduction to the *Wohnprojekt Wien*, the following cohousing projects implemented sociocracy as well. Such projects are in Lilienfeld and the *Wohnprojekt Mauerseglerei* in which the Sociocracy Centre has been located since 2013. The *Wohnprojekt*

be conducted with a maximum of 100 persons and is especially suitable for groups which have a common goal, target, or task they want to take care of. The vision finding is generated by asking every participant what their dreams for their project or goal are. After the dreams are recorded they become transformed in a vision by filtering, refining, and phrasing. Afterwards, a plan for the wished result is created with interim targets, and the necessary tasks. Then the roles and part of every participant must be assigned. Another point that has to be formulated is the budget. This does not only concern monetary budgets but also how much time can be spent by the people and when the first targets can be reached. (cf. URL-Dragon Dreaming)

Wien included a temporary office of the Sociocracy Centre for a while. Through Peter van der Geer contacts to the Dutch sociocracy centre were established. In November 2009, the founder Gerard Endenburg and the speakers Annewiek Reijmer and Peter van der Geer were also invited to the opening ceremony of the Austrian Sociocracy Centre.

In the Netherlands, a Sociocracy Centre was already founded in 1978, where development work was done and implementation strategies were further developed. The Sociocracy Centre in Austria also has a franchise agreement with the centre in the Netherlands. This allows them to use methods and terms for their seminars and workshops here in Austria. (Barbara Strauch 2019)

The tasks of the Sociocracy Centre in Austria mainly include the training of consultants who disseminate and implement sociocracy in organisations, associations, or groups. The trained consultants become independent and the Sociocracy Centre is available for quality assurance and further development of the method. Barbara Strauch mentioned in the interview that there are also connections to the Sociocracy Centres in Germany and Switzerland regarding the training of the consultants.

4.5.4 Sociocracy's scope of application

In conversation with Barbara Strauch, it became clear that sociocracy can not only be applied to communal living, but also to other life processes. One example that was mentioned is the class representative election in educational contexts, for example in schools. Here the teacher is the moderator, and the election of the class representative no longer takes place secretly and covertly, but openly. The class discusses why someone is elected and what they think of his or her role. Another important element is that the children learn that their opinion is as important as that of others.

At the time of the research, there was a game in development at the Sociocracy Centre to teach children about sociocracy. Within the framework of the game, children who can already read can play through various scenarios and children must solve problems with the rules of sociocracy.

According to Barbara Strauch's experience, sociocracy can be best applied in a group of at least five people. As soon as the group has more than 20 participants, sub-groups must be formed, as it is difficult to accommodate all opinions equally in a circle with more than 20 participants. The implementation of sociocracy as a method in companies can fail if supervisors do not change their behaviour and do not acknowledge that employees can have equivalent competences. Barbara Strauch pointed out that besides being familiar with the theory of

sociocracy, it is essential for the success of sociocratic methods in a company that a trained person is also available as a consultant and moderator.

The application of consultants or moderators are intended not only for the implementation of the method in companies, but also in communities. Once or twice a year, an expert on sociocracy should meet with the group responsible for sociocracy in the community and jointly evaluate and give feedback.

Barbara Strauch explained that the main reason why the method does not work, is that some work groups, groups, or individuals do not work in a sociocratic way. If this is the case, the circle or group must be guided by an expert, who helps to implement the method in a better way.

Sociocracy also has its limits, especially regarding the number of the participants. Barbara Strauch brought the example of politics, where it would not be possible that every citizen can participate in the decision-making process. However, it would be possible that after systemic consensus, the political representatives of parties could be elected with methods of sociocracy. This would also change the culture of the community and thus better integrate the issue of sustainability. Barbara Strauch believed that sociocracy would make it easier to solve sustainability issues in the world, since the interests of individuals could be considered. The method helps to generate empathy and to consider each other.

Reflecting on the method, Barbara Strauch also mentioned that with sociocracy there is also the danger of people burdening themselves with too many tasks and activities in their group. This issue was also raised by some residents who expressed their concern about this.

Regarding social cohesion between different individuals, structure was mentioned as the most important factor. “Structure creates behavior. [...] change the structure, you change the behavior“ (Barbara Strauch 2019). In terms of the sociocratic method, certain behaviours are generated for successful cooperation, such as empathy, respect, and mutual perception.

4.6. The perception of sociocracy in the *Wohnprojekt Wien*

In the first part of this section the organisation method *sociocracy* was introduced and discussed based on literature research and the conversation with Barbara Strauch, who is one of the Austrian representatives of sociocracy. The following part will now focus more on the opinions, experiences, and perceptions of sociocracy by the residents in the *Wohnprojekt Wien*. Through the expression “Fan of sociocracy” (Thomas 2019) one resident expressed his positive attitude towards sociocracy and how it enables a lot of freedom in the decision-making process but also in the expression of opinions and attitudes. Another advantage of sociocracy that was mentioned

is the fast decision making. This is especially the case if the group consists of not too many people. This advantage of sociocracy was a prominent topic among residents. The mechanics of sociocracy allows that many decisions can and have to be made. In the circles in which the groups are working many opinions and perspectives come together and are discussed by them. It is seen as much more sustainable to develop solutions for problems or procedures with the inclusion of broader and divers' perspectives.

“It is sustainable, because of the meeting of different perspectives. Then a solution will be more specific, if only one person is thinking about a problem.” (Luise 2019).

Nearly all interviewed residents expressed their relief that the decision making is done with the sociocratic method rather than with the basic democratic one. In contrast to the basic democratic method, sociocracy enables a fast decision-making process, but also includes the possibility to discuss arguments and perspectives of every group member, which were raised during the discussion.

Concerning the structure of the discussion rounds, the aspect of time was important. The time span of the decision making can vary between a few minutes during a round in smaller groups up to several hours in large group meetings. However, the analysis and discussion of the topics is important for the building or the community. Regarding this aspect, one essential tool for the communication during the discussion rounds was mentioned: the speech stick. It is an instrument to guarantee a respectful way of communication. This stick shows who is allowed to talk and in discussion rounds it moves to every participating person whose turn it is to speak. The others in the round should listen. Hence the diversity of the opinions in a group has a real chance to be displayed. Some residents noted that these rounds are a process where the own opinion is converging with the opinion of the group.

One resident spoke of the wisdom of a group. This was mentioned regarding the division of tasks between the work groups and the trust towards their work. The work groups provide the topic of discussion and inform the other residents in the large group meetings. Through the opinion rounds it is possible to express the attitude, thoughts, and objections towards a topic, which might influence the discussion result. This occurs especially when a serious objection is stated. These serious objections, as mentioned in earlier parts of the chapter, are concerning possibilities that might harm the *Wohnprojekt Wien* as a community, an organisation or the building.

Although residents argued that they do not practice a very strict form of sociocracy, it is perceived as an important factor for their community and their shared living space. The groups and their task sharing-practice are essential for their cohabitation.

Another important tool that has been mentioned by several interview partners was that every group meeting was recorded in written form. Every work group elects a person who writes the protocols. While some residents stated it has been an unpopular task, which every group does in a different way, others argued that it is a very helpful tool to stay transparent. The finished protocols are uploaded in the intranet of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*. One resident stated that it sometimes became difficult to find certain resolutions defined years ago and that there is the need to organise and structure the protocols. This would also help the decision making because sometimes there was sometimes an uncertainty if certain topics had already been discussed/agreed upon or not.

During the interviews, every resident expressed very positive thoughts about sociocracy and its decision-making process. Some of them stated some concerns about the way sociocracy is utilized in the *Wohnprojekt Wien*. Their criticism was directed, for instance, on a too strict and rigid way of application, where it might become too difficult to make any decision through its process. Hence, the tool of sociocracy needs to be adapted for the executing group.

Another point of criticism concerns the discussion of political topics. A resident argued in an interview that the more polarized a topic is, the more difficult the decision-making process becomes, or the discussion has to be ended or postponed. These polarised views cannot lead to consent. Nevertheless, would it be possible to get into deeper conversation to continue the conversations, the recognition of other opinions would be easier to achieve. The same resident also stated that the opinion and decision rounds are generally too short and superficial. This could lead to the situation that complex, but necessary topics are no longer handled/discussed/are excluded from the discussion round. Although there is apparently not enough time to discuss more serious topics, it is pointed out that they respect other opinions even if they are completely different from their own. Another thought mentioned by one resident is that sociocracy might not be the perfect tool to discuss questions of faith and ethics, as different ideologies do not enable the finding of a consent.

Another critical perspective toward sociocracy was mentioned by the residents concerning the participation at opinion rounds, especially the sometimes-occurring decrease of participants and the exclusion of certain topics.

Concerning the decision-making process, an additional point of criticism towards sociocracy was mentioned: the lack of sanctions and to place valid criticism towards somebody. Although there is the opportunity to express appreciation in opinion rounds, it is not possible to express criticism. One resident spoke of the example that if someone does not fit the requirements for

a certain role in a work group, it cannot be expressed, only why someone else is better suited for that role.

4.6.1 Sociocracy structures in the *Wohnprojekt Wien* – the work groups

Through the organisation structure of sociocracy tasks have to be processed in circles or in the *Wohnprojekt Wien* called *Arbeitsgruppen* (Eng. Work groups). These groups are the basic structure and organise, handle, and fulfil tasks that occur in daily life. Every group is specialised for a certain topic or area. If a particular project covers several work areas, a project group is formed. In this project group, one or more people from each work group concerned work together, depending on the planned workload.

The following sections will illustrate the organisation of the residents in the *Wohnprojekt Wien* and will show through examples with which activities and work tasks the residents have to deal with.

Most residents reported that the *large group meetings* (Ger. *Großgruppentreffen*) were attended by about eighty percent of the residents. A separate childcare service is organized for the children, and sometimes two or three of the teenagers sit and watch the discussions. In the summer months the participation of the adults is decreasing. Hence, the large group meetings are organised about four times in the year. When elections for the seats of the work group leaders, the ombudspersons and the board of the association are held, at least half of the residents- about 30 to 40 people -have to be present for the group to be able to make decisions. To follow the concept and structure of sociocracy it is necessary that every adult resident is participating in at least one of the established work groups (Ger. *Arbeitsgruppe -AG*) or their subdivisions. Every work group is responsible for certain areas of the building and the fulfilment of related tasks.

The time effort spent is included in the free time of the residents. By signing the rental contract every adult resident obligates themselves to spend time in and for the work groups they choose. Several interview partners mentioned that the time effort has changed over the years. While the workload of some tasks has decreased, others have increased. During the time of the research the time investment for various tasks in the *Wohnprojekt* was set at eleven hours per month. Although this amount of time has been decided as a goal, the actual time investment of the residents' ranges from zero to thirty hours per month. The applied work effort of every resident is different and is depending on their personal situation. About half of the interviewed residents argued that there is still a difference of perceiving the spent time effort. This topic has also been discussed in the large group meetings with nearly all residents. For a certain period, lists have

been used to measure the time effort and the result showed this big diversity. It is also possible to have a period of rest without giving any specific reasons.

None of the interviewed residents perceived the working in the work groups as a burden or a sacrifice of their free time. As part of the group every group member is undertaking tasks in which they are interested and consequently also responsible.

During the conversation with residents, it became clear that every group member takes on certain roles and tasks. One of these roles is the coordination for the work group. This position is filled with the tasks to organise the meetings, create the meetings' agendas, and answer upcoming questions.

Almost every group also organises subgroups or project groups for special and time limited projects concerning the *Wohnprojekt Wien*. These project groups are handling tasks where several different topics need to be covered and hence, different work groups must become involved.

Nearly all people of a work group should join their meeting regularly. It is possible to miss a meeting from time to time. Every group is also writing protocols, so that it is transparent, when, what and how decisions have been made. The number of meetings held by the work group is dependent on the diversity of the topics. Most of them are already planned several months ahead.

New residents who are not familiar with the structure and the organisation of the work groups can contact *Ombudspersonen* (Eng. *ombudspersons*) who will help to assign the topic of interest to the fitting work group. If there is the suspicion that someone does not participate at all in any work group activity, the ombudspersons will get in contact with the person and try to find out what the problem is. If the person needs help, they will try to offer fitting solutions.

Due to the variety of tasks and projects it was not possible to observe all work groups. Following the structural organisation of sociocracy every work group has, depending on their tasks, several subgroups and project groups. During the research it was possible to discover the following main work groups: *Arbeitsgruppe Bauliche Nachhaltigkeit*, *Arbeitsgruppe Finanzielle Nachhaltigkeit*, *Arbeitsgruppe Service und Kommunikation*, *Arbeitsgruppe Ökologische Nachhaltigkeit* and *Arbeitsgruppe Soziale Nachhaltigkeit*.

The following section will illustrate observed work groups and examples of their responsibilities, subgroups, and project groups.

The *Arbeitsgruppe Finanzielle Nachhaltigkeit* (Eng. *Work group Financial Sustainability*) is called by the residents *Arbeitsgruppe FinRecht* (Eng. *Work group Finances and Law*) is managing the financial and legal matters of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*. Therefore, this work group

was handling the acquisition of a loan during the planning process, and nowadays the repayment of loans, but also the budget every work group has at its disposal.

The *Arbeitsgruppe Bauliche Nachhaltigkeit* (Eng. *Constructional Sustainability*) or sometimes *AG Bau* (Eng. *Work group Building*), as it is also called by the residents, is carrying out tasks which are concerning the building structure of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* and is responsible for the organisation of maintenance services. This group is responsible for the residential building with its building structure as well. In the beginning of the planning process this work group was in close cooperation with the architect and consequently was called *Arbeitsgruppe Architektur* (Eng. *Work group Architecture*). After the residents moved into the finished building, this work group's tasks changed and started to concern the correction of defects which happened during the construction process of the building.

During the research residents told me about a current issue concerning the wall paint, which is crumbling off and, consequently, has to be reapplied. There have been discussions about the solving and financing of this problem, because nearly every apartment has to be emptied - where can people place their furniture, how long will it take to repaint the apartments, who is responsible for any damage during this time and so on - only to name a few problems mentioned in conversations. The repair fund is managed by this group and used to pay repair costs. Every expense is carefully documented. Another example that concerns the tasks of this group is to control insect pests, in particular silverfishes, in the building. They need to find solutions to remove them through biologically and environmentally-friendly methods. One of the main tasks is also to provide and organise services to maintain the building's infrastructure, like for example the upkeep of windows, doors, heating, and the photovoltaic system.

Because of the fact that the association *Verein für nachhaltiges Leben* is the landlord and every adult resident is automatically part of the association, the *Arbeitsgruppe Bauliche Nachhaltigkeit* is sometimes undertaking this role and fulfilling tasks that normally are in the responsibility of landlords, like already mentioned organising maintain services.

The *Arbeitsgruppe ökologische Nachhaltigkeit* (Eng. *Work group Ecological Sustainability*)

The main task of this work group is to handle topics that are in relation with the idea of ecological sustainability.

At the time of the research this work group set the target to make the residents of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* more aware of ecological sustainable living. Due to the work group's perceptions so many interpretations of ecological sustainability are observed. The group wants to reflect resource consumption and take this subject in the discussion of the large group meetings. They had the impression this topic has receded into the background, although this

subject is a crucial part of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*’ idea. It is not the intention to force the other residents into a certain lifestyle, but to raise the awareness and maybe change a few things in daily life.

Part of the *work group ecological sustainability* is the subgroup *UG Lebensmittel* (Eng. *Subgroup Food*). This subgroup is responsible for the organisation of food provisions by *Foodcoops* or directly by Austrian farmers.

Another field of activity is that they take care of the raised-bed garden and decide on the composition of the little garden. They also plant the plant pots in front of the residential building. Hence, the garden on the roof top is their responsibility as well. Another project that has been in development is the installation of a beehive on the roof of the building. During the research this project was in the early stages of development, but it was planned to be realised by summer 2019 or spring 2020. This would also enable the possibility to make their own honey.

The tasks of the *AG Soziale Nachhaltigkeit* (Eng. *Work group Social Sustainability*) concern especially the social interaction and the community building of the residents in the *Wohnprojekt Wien*. The group’s main responsibility is the organisation of the community weekend which is held twice a year. During the time of the research one community weekend was taking place. One of the organising residents explained that every community weekend has a certain topic with workshops. The planned weekend focussed on the structure of the community and how its current state can be analysed, supported and if necessary improved. Therefore, they need to decide where to go, who will be organised for moderation and training regarding group building and communication, and also what are the goals they want to reach by the weekend. At the community weekend about three quarters of the residents participate in the community weekend. The event starts on a Friday when everyone is arriving at the booked place somewhere out of Vienna. On Saturday, the whole day is filled with activities depending on the overall topic. The event ends around Sunday noon, after the final discussions. The afternoon is used for the return trip. During the whole community weekend there is also a childcare programme, which is organised by the subgroup *UG Spiel* (Eng. *Subgroup Play*). This subgroup also takes care of the *playroom*. Depending on the topic of the weekend and the planned events it is possible that children at school age can participate.

Other subgroups which are part of the work group *Social Sustainability* are the *UG Sauna* (Eng. *Subgroup Sauna*) and the *UG Küche* (Eng. *Subgroup Kitchen*). They organise the cleaning and general maintenance of the respective rooms and decide on the interior.

Additionally, the *UG Mitgliedschaft* (Eng. *subgroup membership*) is part of the group as well. This subgroup is coordinating the applications and is conducting interviews with interested and for the *Wohnprojekt Wien* applying households applying for the *Wohnprojekt Wien*.

Residents mentioned the *Subgroup politics* as well. This subgroup developed through discussions at one of the community weekends, where the need for more political discussion and involvement was mentioned. This also concerns how the *Wohnprojekt Wien* wants to represent itself in a political way and how to handle the diverse political opinions in the *Wohnprojekt Wien* community.

The *Flexgruppe* (Eng. *Flex Group*) is responsible for the organisation of the *Flexräume*, the event rooms. These rooms in the basement can be used for events. They can be rented by residents of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* or by external organisers. The main tasks of the flex group are the organisation of time schedules of the rooms, but they decide what kind of events are held as well.

The area of responsibility of the *Arbeitsgruppe Service und Kommunikation* (Eng. *Work group Service and Communication*) includes the representation of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*. One of its subgroups is the *UG Grätzvernetzung*, which is responsible for getting in contact with other organisations in the neighbourhood. One example is the *Nordbahnvierteltreff* organised by the *GB*21*.

4.6.2 Living sociocracy- experiencing a work group meeting

During the research it was possible to participate in a work group meeting. The following description of the meeting is intended to serve as an example of how the process of decision-making is organised and how decisions are made.

Each work group is structured in the same way. But since the topics and the size of the group vary, the following description cannot be transferred completely to other workgroup meetings. The following example will describe a meeting of the *AG BAU* work group which took place in May 2019. The meeting was conducted in the evening in the communal kitchen of *Wohnprojekt Wien*, where the work group leaders had already made a flipchart with the most important topics.

Some additional points were added to the flipchart by other members of the group. Only four members participated in this meeting. According to the work group coordinator, some of the missing members apologized by email. According to the members, a meeting with less than five people attending is very rare. In general, the average is that eight people are attending. It was mentioned that it is nearly impossible for all members to attend at the same time. The

meetings are also announced a few months before the planned date, so most people can make time for it.

Since most meetings only take place every few months, all the two discussion topics were displayed on one sheet of the flipchart. The minutes were written by the work group coordinator. One of the participants was assigned as moderator for this meeting. Afterwards, everyone in the group who held the speaking stick in their hands could briefly tell how they felt and what they hoped for the evening. Afterwards, the discussion of the topics listed on the flipchart began and new information was passed on to the work group through the leadership circle.

Some topics on the flipchart could not be worked on because there were too few members present. These were postponed to the next meeting or discussed via email.

While each item was discussed by the responsible person, decisions on smaller issues were made immediately. A proposal was made and if nobody had any objections, the proposal was accepted. It was also reported that an approval or disagreement can be done by email, especially if it was not a serious work step.

A complex topic that a project group was working on was discussed in a round table, where the baton was passed from person to person. The person holding the talking stick presented his or her arguments.

The opinion rounds were not only held to discuss a topic, but also to differentiate topics and generate solutions. Thus, there were always several opinion-rounds on different topics, which aimed at finding the best possible solution for the group.

In doing so, the talking stick always moves to the person speaking. In some rounds there was even a dynamic that the talking stick changed position very often and quickly. This was especially the case when a topic was discussed with more energy. It is remarkable, however, that the group members who did not have the talking stick in their hands listened calmly and attentively to the person speaking.

What is important in the opinion rounds is that an ego-formulation was used in order to emphasise one's own argument and its justification.

Some smaller issues can also be discussed between the responsible persons in extra meetings. The other members are then informed by email and if there is no objection, a decision is made. After the most important topics were discussed and debated and it was noticed that it was already late in the evening any other remaining issues were discussed more quickly. The structure of these discussions remained the same as the previous ones but were discussed much faster. However, if it had been necessary, it would have been possible to present one's own

arguments, but there was agreement on many things. At the end of the evening there was another final round where the evening was reflected. Here too, the talking stick was always passed on to the person who was to speak.

4.7 Finding policies in living sustainable

After discussing the collected data, the following part will focus on the connection between the theoretical approach and the empirical research. Therefore, the perspective of the anthropology of policy will be used as an analytic lens to understand the collected data, but also how the research question can be answered. In this regard, this section will try to trace policies and the term *sustainability* within the *Wohnprojekt Wien* and how these policies influence the daily life of the residents.

First, it is necessary to take a look at influencing factors that impact policies in their functioning. As Clarke et al., Shore & Wright, Anthrope and Feldmann argue there are aspects that influence how policies are created, implemented and impacting people's lives. A short summary of the theoretical approach towards anthropology of policy should help the further understanding of how *sustainability* as a policy can be traced by analysing the *Wohnprojekt Wien*.

Following Clarke et. al.(2015) policy is always on the move; it becomes translated, reassembled and – to use the metaphor- shaped like clay. To stay with this metaphor, clay can dry and get solid, adding water it turns smoother and more formable and if there is too much water added, it turns into sludge. To link this metaphor with Clarke et al.'s perspective that policies are never a finished object but always become firmed and recreated. The way they become firmed and recreated are confronted with geographical scales and the involved vertical and horizontal governmental actors. (Clarke et al.2015,16) This includes the integration of variables in the analysis, like time and space. Through the recreation, transformation and transition of policies, they are under the influence of temporal and spatial mechanisms which form the meaning of policies as well.

As in the theoretical analysis of these theses discussed, the term *sustainability* can be traced as a policy, which becomes reassembling, translated, transmitted, recreated and reinterpreted by the different contexts -time, space, actors, language, governance and social practice.

Now it is possible to trace *sustainability* and its impact on the daily life of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*.

First, let's take a look at the components of time and *space*. The first ideas of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* developed in the association *Verein für nachhaltiges Leben* in 2009. In the first part of this chapter it is already mentioned that the association was targeting people who shared the

same idea and vision of how daily life should be characterised by *sustainable* acting and thinking. Hence, ideas of *sustainable living* were core elements in the origin of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*. Analysing policies, the location and the space where they manifest themselves are important components. In this case, the *Wohnprojekt Wien*'s location was not only a crucial part in its development but also for the application of a *sustainable lifestyle*. Due to the fact that the project was realised in Vienna specific legal building requirements were decisive for financial aspects and acquiring a building lot. The decision on how the *Wohnprojekt Wien* will be developed went hand in hand with the participation at the property developer competition (*Bauträgerwettbewerb*). The conditions of the application influenced the planning and development of the building and also the living concept for the *Wohnprojekt Wien*. The property developer competition contains four pillars which represent their assessment criteria for participating property developers. Only a few months before the *Wohnprojekt Wien* and its cooperation with the property developer *Schwarzatal* the *Wohnfonds_Wien* responsible for the competition added the fourth pillar of social *sustainability*. (see chapter *Bauträgerwettbewerbe*). The *Wohnprojekt Wien* benefited with its application at the competition by its planned living structure *cohousing* which is organised by sociocracy and participation of all residents.

Therefore, time and space, the when and the where, give information about how *sustainability* becomes applied, how and by whom it is used. The social dynamics are formed by these components, but also show that governance is depending on time and space as well. The *Wohnfonds_Wien* is an institution of the city of Vienna. Therefore, any political agendas, plans and programmes are influenced by the city of Vienna as a governing and executing institution. In this regard, how the term *sustainability* is understood and how it is used is depending on the visions of the involved actors on the governmental level of the institution *city of Vienna*.

The next analytic point is concerning the involving actors and consequently also the governance concerning them.

Where sustainability works as a framing policy it carries goals, visions, thoughts and consequently impacts the daily life of the residents. The life of the residents starts with becoming a member of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*, where you become part of organising yourself in the group as well.

Even the self-organisation and self-governance model of the residents is experienced as a sustainable way, where all opinions are equal, thought through and accepted.

Therefore, governance and social practice are interwoven and contain thoughts and tendencies of sustainability.

Athroe argues the importance of language and its meaning for policies. Although the German term *Nachhaltigkeit* is most present in the *Wohnprojekt Wien*, the residents are familiar with the use and understanding of *sustainability*, as well. Both terms share the same meaning and none of the interviewed residents does see any difference. What was considered were variations and different meanings of *sustainability* as a term, an idea or a vision. In this case, on the one hand there is a common way of thinking and acting in a sustainable way, but on the other hand every person has a different focus and understanding of it.

Another characteristic of how social and cultural anthropology understand policy is how policies frame social life or social practice. Therefore, *sustainability* as a policy can be traced in the activities and the organisation of the daily life of the residents. This means that nearly every set activity is under the agenda of including sustainability. One of the most prominent activities is the sharing process. The living circumstance of cohousing is based on sharing living space. Furthermore, it is the sharing of goods within the residential community. Sharing is seen as one of the most effective parts of living a sustainable life. Additionally, the sharing does not only focus on materials, but as well human resources. Through the division of tasks and activities which are necessary to keep the *Wohnprojekt Wien* running, also time and labour is distributed.

Although, there are defined common goals and visions of sustainable living and main overall common understandings are existing, little varieties of understanding *sustainability* are characterising daily life as well. The way goods are consumed, where they are bought and how waste is produced and reduced are aspects of the daily life which every resident decides for themselves.

To live as a community it was decided their succession as a group would only work with the implantation of sociocracy. This form of social structure and organisation would provide a tool to keep the community organised and support effective decision making.

Following this thought and implementation, Shore's and Wright' (1997) understanding of policies as a force which creates categories, types, roles and norms- sustainability is the main force of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The term *sustainability* started as an idea to sustain natural resources 300 years ago. This term impacted policies on various levels of governance. Through its application and the transport of the idea of sustainability, led to the assumption and the suspicion that sustainability becomes a policy itself. According to the anthropological concepts presented by Chris Shore and Susan Wright (2011) policy is a model to understand social and cultural dimensions of the people's daily life and frame actions reaching from any level of governance.

To answer the question if sustainability can be framed as a policy like it is reasoned by Shore and Wright (2011) is yes and no at the same time.

As already discussed, *sustainability* is an idea that influences policies which consequently frame social actions. The term *sustainability* is used in various ways and set in different contexts that it seems difficult to help to keep track where it becomes a policy and where it is an idea initiating a policy.

Through the case study of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* ideas of sustainability are traceable in the living structure and the social organisation. It shows that it can become a frame for social action. The way the residents live is based on an idea of sustainability but also was enabled by sustainability as policy. Different ideas of sustainability can be found on different levels of governance. On the global level the main concepts are the *sustainable development goals* by the United Nations, while on the municipal level these ideas are manifested in the principles of urban development programmes like the *STEP 2025*. Especially the beginning of the building project criterias of the *Bauträgerwettbewerbe* have been set, where sustainability is a crucial part for housing. Ecological, economic and social facettes have been implemented in housing provision competitions, from which the *Wohnprojekt Wien* benefited entirely.

Despite these already existing political decisions, the association *Verein der Nachhaltigkeit* had its own set of ideas, agendas and visions on how to implement *sustainability* in their daily life as a residential community.

Taking a look back at the beginning of the thesis and the research questions .

How do concepts of „sustainability“ become integrated in the cohousing project “Wohnprojekt Wien”?

Sustainability can be followed from the beginning of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* as a group of people, who wanted to live in an urban environment in a different living structure. Beginning at the planning process, to the financial organising of the project to the living structures and ongoing projects as well. *Sustainability* is tried to live in many facets, due to the amount of still different dwellers living in the *Wohnprojekt Wien*.

This leads to the second and third research question: *What kind of mechanisms of self organisation are employed by cohousing?* and *How is sustainability embedded in these mechanisms?*

The self organisation of cohousing communities as it is very common, has been applied even in the early stages of the planning process. *Sociocracy* is a way of finding consensus in a group and allowing different opinions and perspectives with the goal of a solution that is tolerated by all group members. Interviewed residents even see their self organising mechanism as a sustainable way in decision making. It opens the possibility for every participant to share their opinions, ideas and perspectives in a productive way. Decisions are not made by only one person, but by a group and transported to another one and presents it to residents. Most important is that it requires a lot of trust from the residents in each other. This trust can also only exist if the residents have a common sense or goal to work for. In the case of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* it is *sustainability* which builds the basis for their actions.

Following the approach of Clarke et. al (2015) and their use of the concept of *assemblage*, where policies become reassembled after they transit, leads to the conclusion that the idea of sustainability on different levels of governance, even in the case of self-governance.

Therefore, *sustainability* as a policy can manifest itself in the daily life of any members of the *Wohnprojekt Wien*. In this case every resident shares a common idea of *sustainability*, but there is still a place for every resident to have different variations of understanding and applying a sustainable way of living.

Still the research questions are mainly answered, there would have been potential for additional perspective to conclude in the research.

First of all, if it would have been a possibility to live with the residents for a certain period of time, new perspectives and insights might have opened. Additionally, it would be possible to experience the application of *sociocracy* in daily life and maybe get more awareness on the dynamics of the decision making in the group. A certain topic that never was really included during the research was the explicit discussion of gender and gender equality. It only showed that this topic wasn't present and it didn't seem under consideration. Although political topics have been present and been discussed by the *Wohnprojekt Wien* residents, they never wanted to show a certain political position as a whole group.

Due to the end of the research in autumn 2019 it also would have been interesting to get in contact with the residents during the Covid-19 regulations and lockdowns. Only through an email newsletter was it possible to follow up how they handled these new situations.

To conclude the residents of the cohousing project of the *Wohnprojekt Wien* shows that a common goal and set of agendas help them to function successfully as a community. In this case *sustainability* and all the attached programmes on international, national and local level manifest itself in their daily lives. The residents seemed to be a diverse community, even in understanding and interpreting the term *sustainability*, they did not want to enclose themselves from the urban neighbour they live in.

Sustainability is not just present as a loose idea in a cohousing project.

Furthermore, it is a driving factor for a functioning residential community.

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Abstract

Over the past 25 years, the term *sustainability* has gained on popularity and became an important part of development strategies and plans. National, international, and independent organisations and institutions have incorporated the concept of *sustainability* into their strategies and agendas. New privately organized housing provision with a focus on sustainability began to establish itself in the last ten years. However, the concept of cohousing is a rare phenomenon on the Vienna housing market. One of the first projects was the Wohnprojekt Wien (Vienna Housing Project). The residents are united by a common goal: to enable sustainable living in urban areas. Hence, the issue of sustainability is a central mechanism that influences not only the building structure but also the social structure. Using the theoretical approach of anthropology of policies, the concept of sustainability is analysed and its significance for the residents of the cohousing project is elaborated.

Zusammenfassung

In den letzten 25 Jahren gewann der Begriff *Nachhaltigkeit* (engl. Sustainability) an Popularität und wurde ein wichtiger Bestandteil in Entwicklungsstrategien und -pläne. Nationale, internationale und unabhängige Organisationen und Institutionen inkludierten den Gedanken der Nachhaltigkeit in ihre Strategien und Leitbilder. Neue privat-organisierte Wohnversorgungen mit dem Fokus auf Nachhaltigkeit begannen sich in den letzten zehn Jahren zu etablieren. Das Konzept des Cohousings ist jedoch ein seltenes Phänomen am Wiener Wohnungsmarkt. Eines der ersten Projekte bildet das *Wohnprojekt Wien*. Die Bewohner*innen verbindet ein gemeinsames Ziel: ein nachhaltiges Leben im urbanen Raum zu ermöglichen. Dementsprechend ist die Thematik *Nachhaltigkeit* ein zentraler Mechanismus, der nicht nur die Gebäudestruktur, sondern auch die soziale Struktur beeinflusst. Anhand des theoretischen Ansatzes *Anthropology of policies* wird der Begriff *Nachhaltigkeit* analysiert und seine Bedeutung für die Bewohner*innen des Cohousing Projektes herausgearbeitet.