



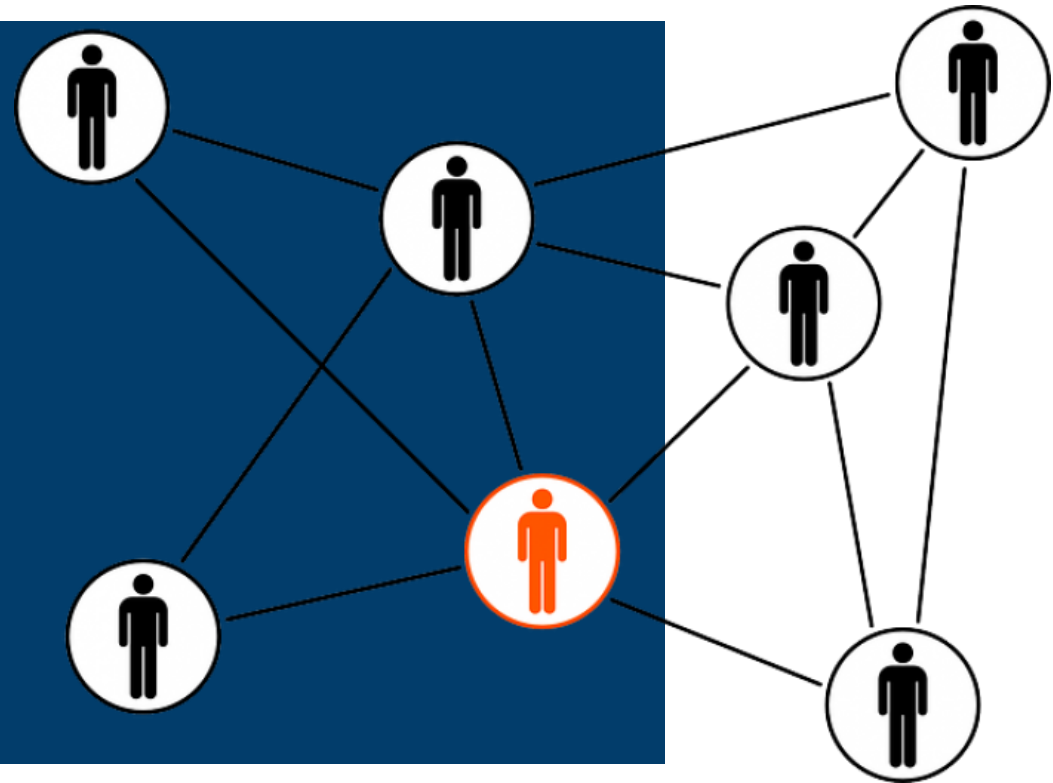
# THE SOCIAL – A POSITIVE DRIVER OF THE ENERGY TRANSITION?

## Six Case Studies from Germany

# THE SOCIAL – A POSITIVE DRIVER OF THE ENERGY TRANSITION?

## Overview

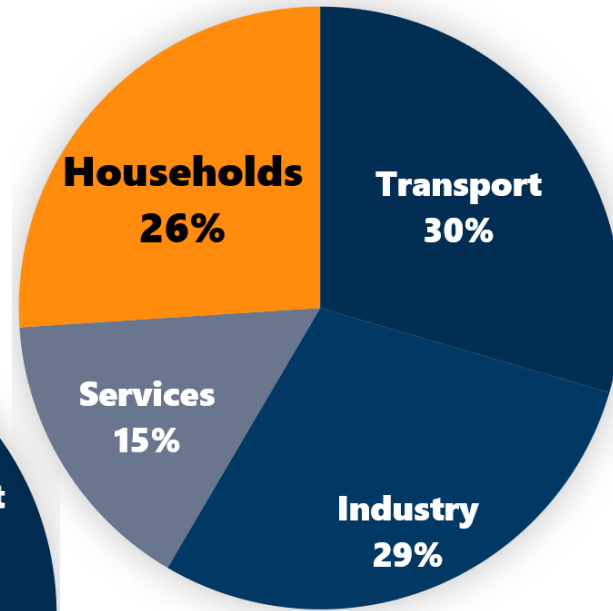
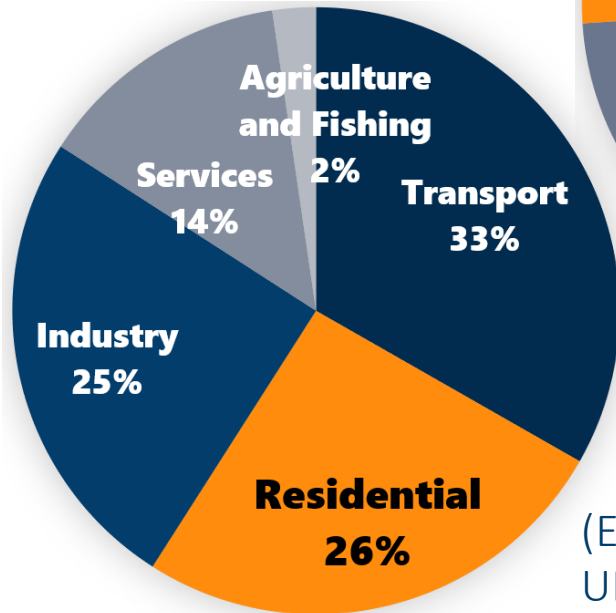
1. Introduction
2. Literature review & identified gaps
3. Research design & methodology
4. Results
5. Conclusions



# 1. INTRODUCTION – WHY BEHAVIOR CHANGE IS NEEDED

## Final energy consumption by sector...

### ... in EU-28 in 2016



### ... in Germany in 2017

(European Commission, 2018; UBA, 2019)

## Behavior change in the context of residential energy

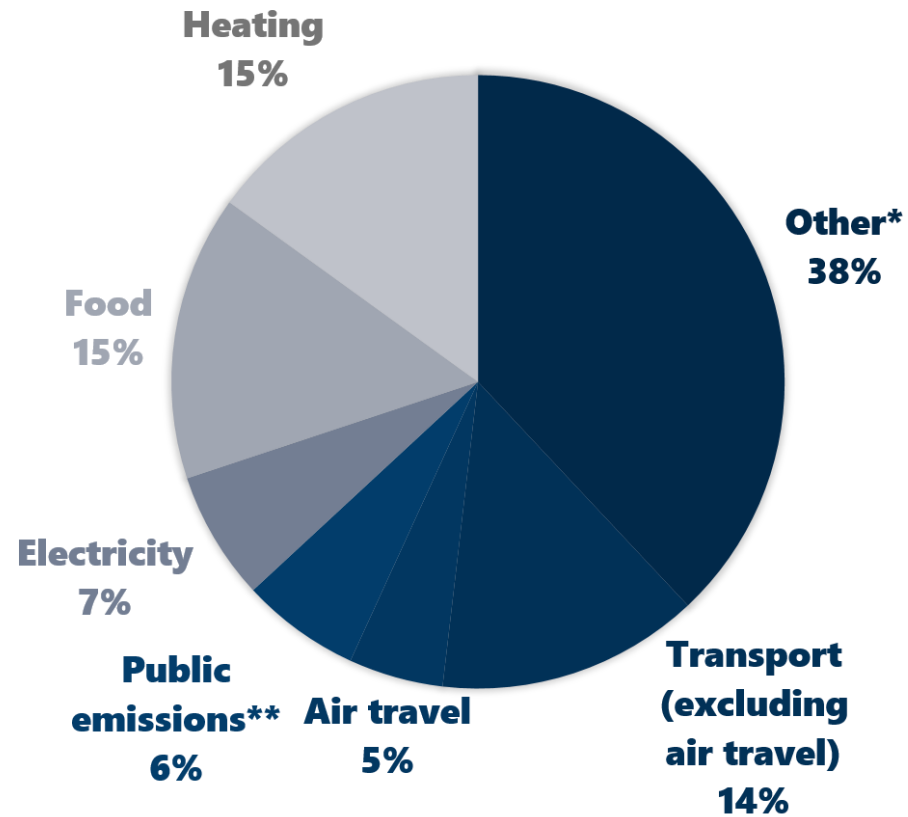
- active reduction in energy consumption
- adoption of energy-efficient technologies and measures around the home

## Citizen's involvement on the production side of energy

- become a prosumer by installing a renewable energy system
- join a community-based renewable energy project

# 1. INTRODUCTION – WHY BEHAVIOR CHANGE IS NEEDED

**Greenhouse gas emissions of an average German in 2017  
(total annual emissions per capita: 11.6 t CO<sub>2</sub> equivalents)**



**→ a broader uptake of sustainable consumption & pro-environmental behaviors is needed**

(BMU, 2018)

\* e.g. clothing, home appliances, leisure activities  
\*\* e.g. water supply, sewage disposal, waste disposal

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW – SPILLOVER EFFECTS

Study of extensive adoption of sustainable measures and behaviors

As **spillover effects** (Nilsson et al., 2017; Truelove et al., 2014) among citizens already active in the energy transition

Among prosumers

Among members of community-based renewable energy projects

Results: ambiguous

- (1) Reduced energy consumption (Keirstead, 2007; Stedmon et al., 2013)
- (2) Increased energy consumption (Hansen et al., 2017; Abi-Ghanem et al., 2011)
- (3) No changes in energy consumption and other pro-environmental behaviors (Wittenberg et al., 2016; Öhrlund et al., 2020; Bahaj et al., 2007; Palm et al., 2018; ...)

Results: no proof of spillover effects found (Rogers et al., 2012; Brummer, 2018; Sauter et al., 2014)

As other **observed** instances

Among individuals

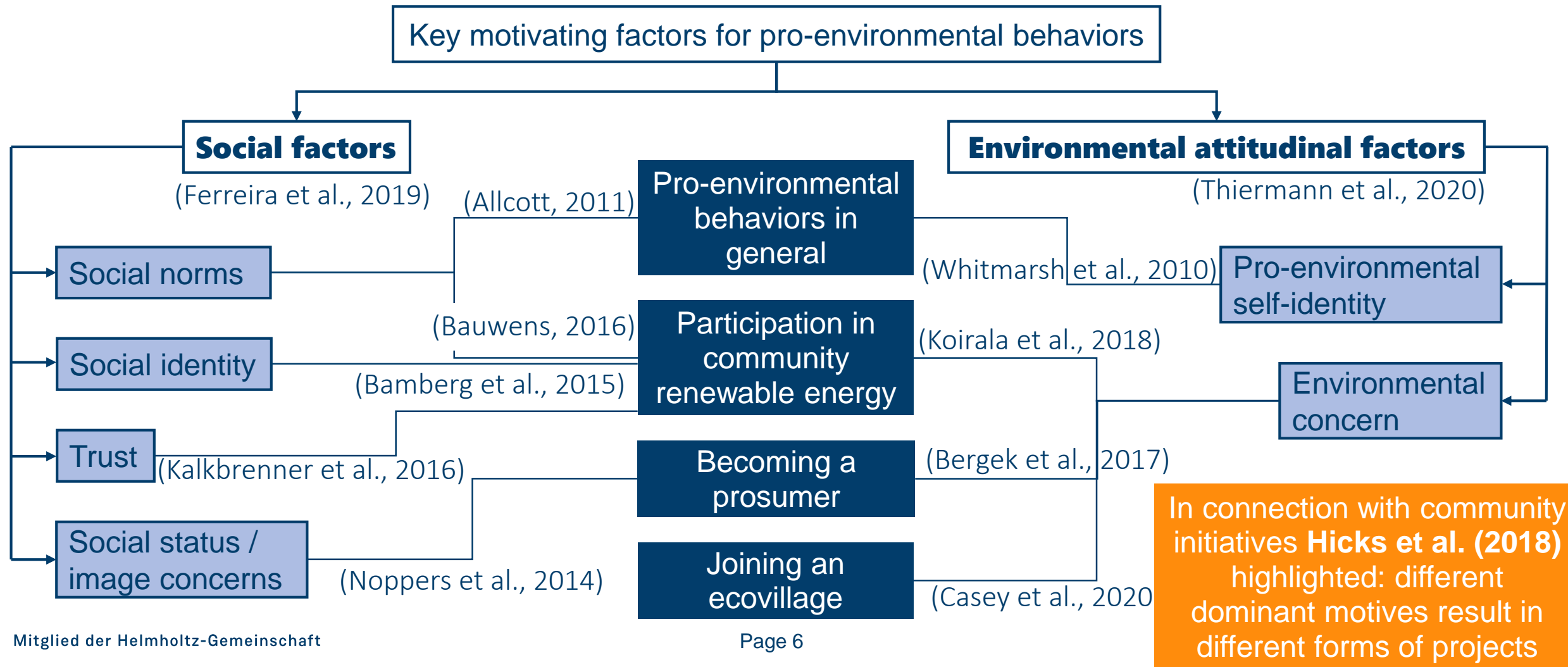
Among members of other community-based projects

Results: 'home front transitioners' (Hagbert et al., 2017)

Results:

- (1) **ecovillages** Schäfer et al., 2018; Litfin, 2014; Marckmann et al., 2012)
- (2) **eco-districts** (Bottero et al., 2019; Coates, 2013)
- (3) **cohousing initiatives** (Boyer, 2018; Hamiduddin et al., 2016)

# 2. LITERATURE REVIEW – MOTIVATING FACTORS FOR PRO-ENVIRONMENTAL BEHAVIORS



# 3. RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY – AIM AND HYPOTHESES

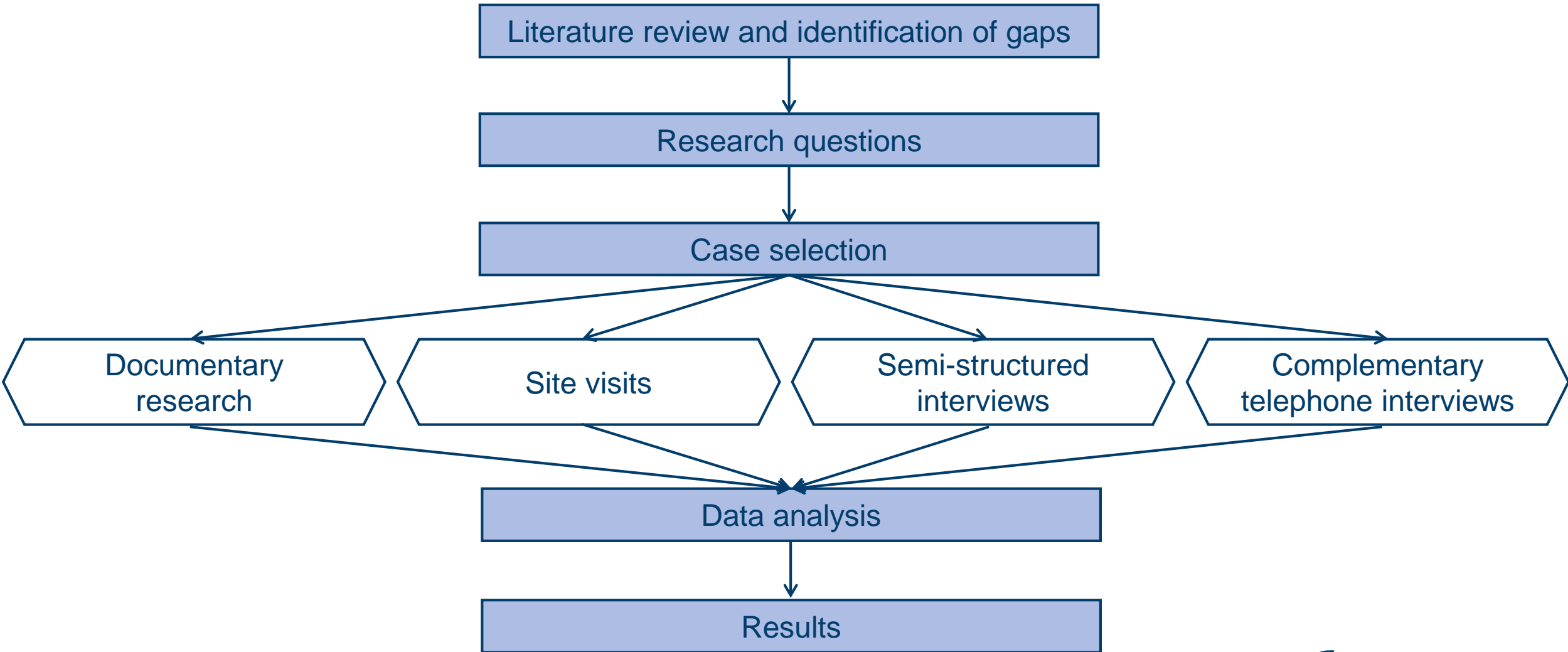
## **Aim of the study**

In-depth comparative case study analysis of a larger variety of projects, which exhibit extensive adoption of sustainable behaviors and measures

## **Hypotheses based on literature review**

- (1) A broad adoption of sustainable measures, technologies, and behaviors takes place when social factors have strong influencing power.
- (2) Key motivation to become active in these projects are pro-environmental attitudes and pro-environmental self-identity.

# 3. RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY





# 3. RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

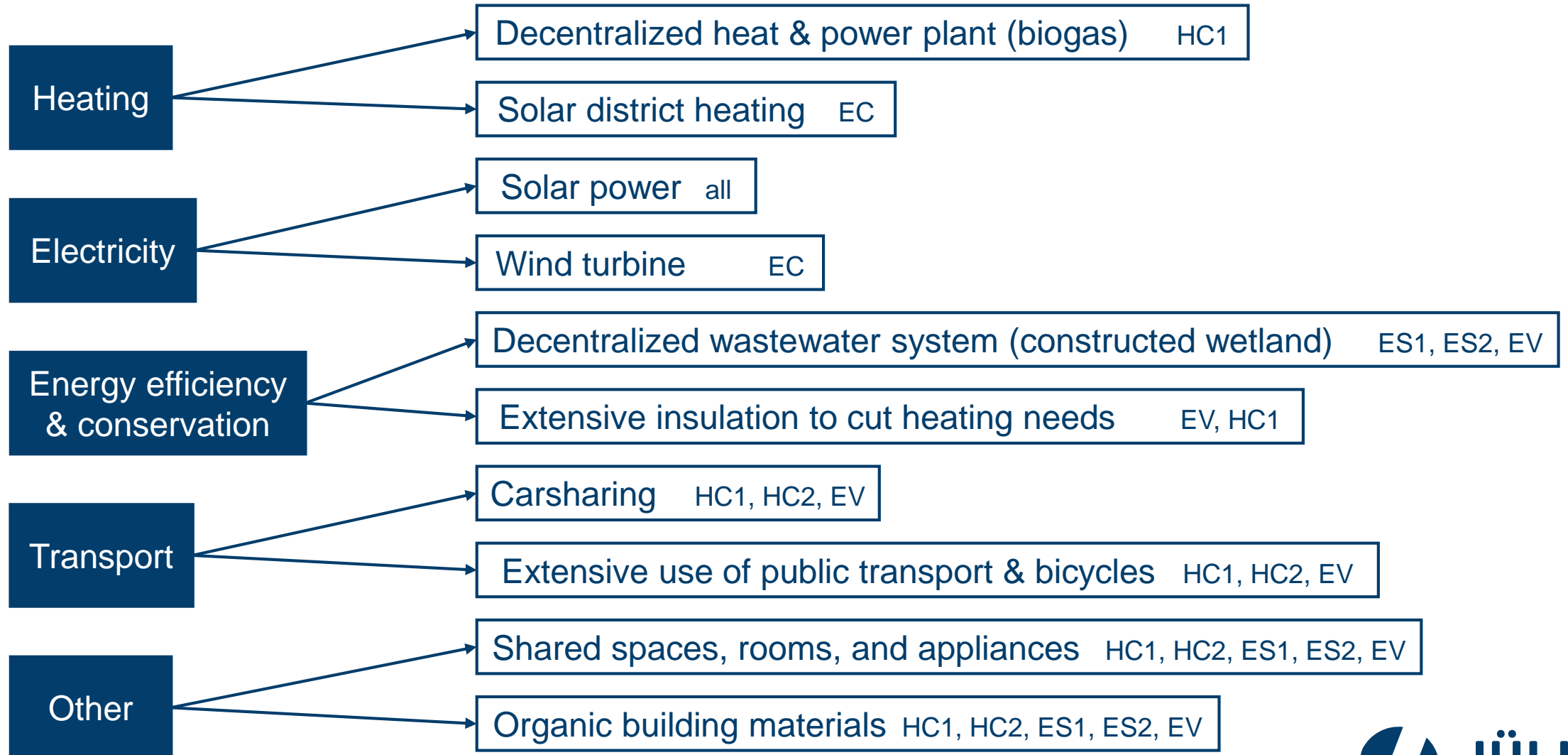
## Research questions

- (1) What kind of sustainable energy measures and technologies were introduced in the community projects? What other sustainable measures and behaviors were taken up?
- (2) What motivated people to create or participate in such projects?
- (3) What are similarities and differences in the case studies?
- (4) How and when did sustainability enter the projects and their members' lives?

# 4. RESULTS – THE CASES SELECTED

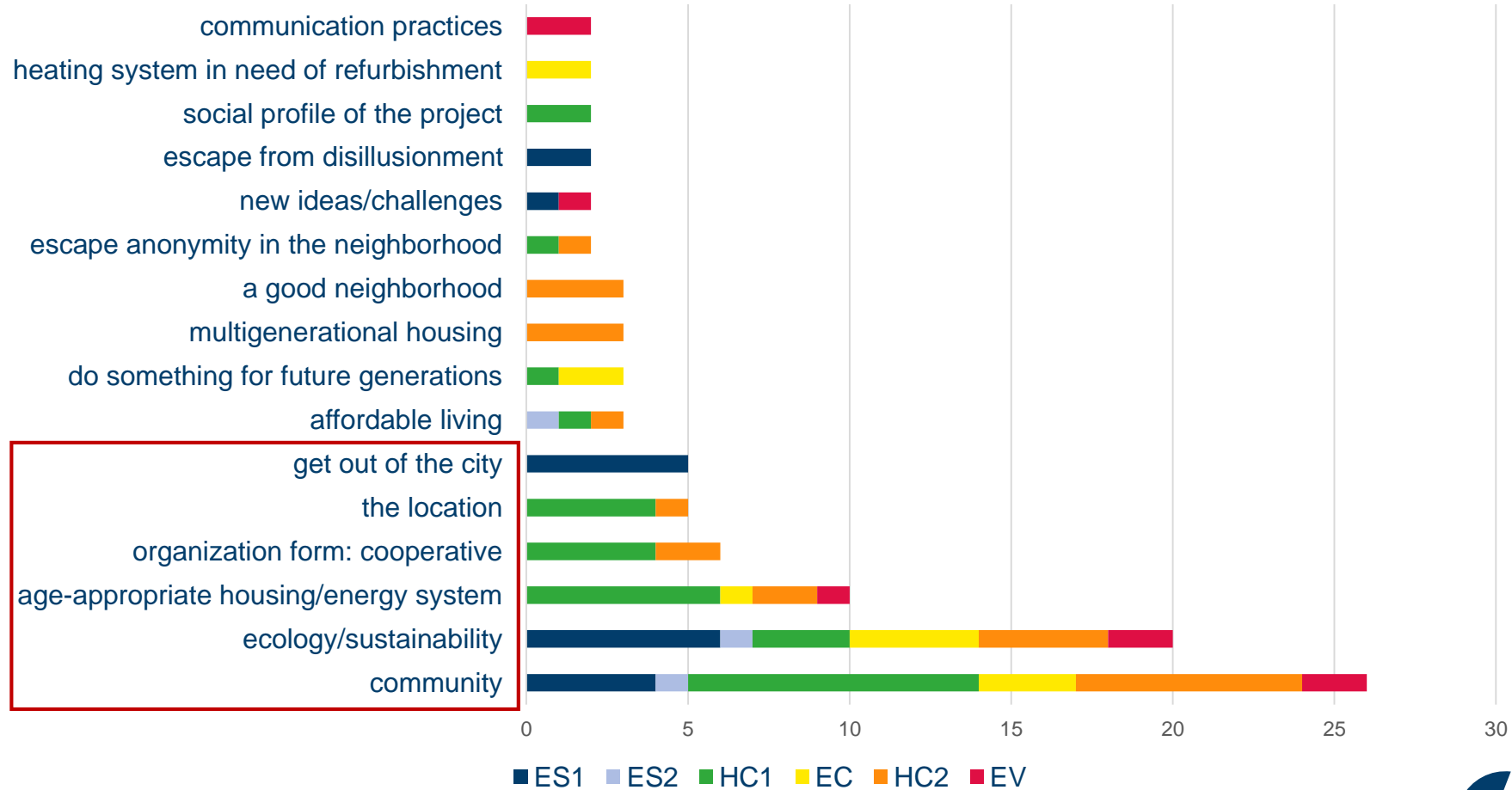
Community project name	Community type	State of Germany	Legal status	Membership	Landscape	Housing type	Founding year	Number of interviews
<b>Moldenhauer Hof</b>	eco-settlement (ES1)	Brandenburg	homeowners' association	16	rural	town houses	1992	6
<b>Landhof Schöneiche</b>	eco-settlement (ES2)	Brandenburg	homeowners' association	41	suburban	town houses	1992	1
<b>Gut Jahnishausen</b>	ecovillage (EV)	Saxony	cooperative	53	rural	flats	2001	2
<b>Möckernkiez</b>	housing cooperative (HC1)	Berlin	cooperative	2300; approx. 800 in residence	urban	flats	2007	11
<b>Bioenergiegenossenschaft Mengersberg</b>	energy cooperative (EC)	Hessen	cooperative	150 (households)	rural	detached houses	2014	4
<b>PatchWorkHaus Aachen</b>	housing cooperative (HC2)	North Rhine-Westphalia	cooperative	39	urban	flats	2008	7

# 4. RESULTS – RQ1: KEY SUSTAINABLE MEASURES TAKEN

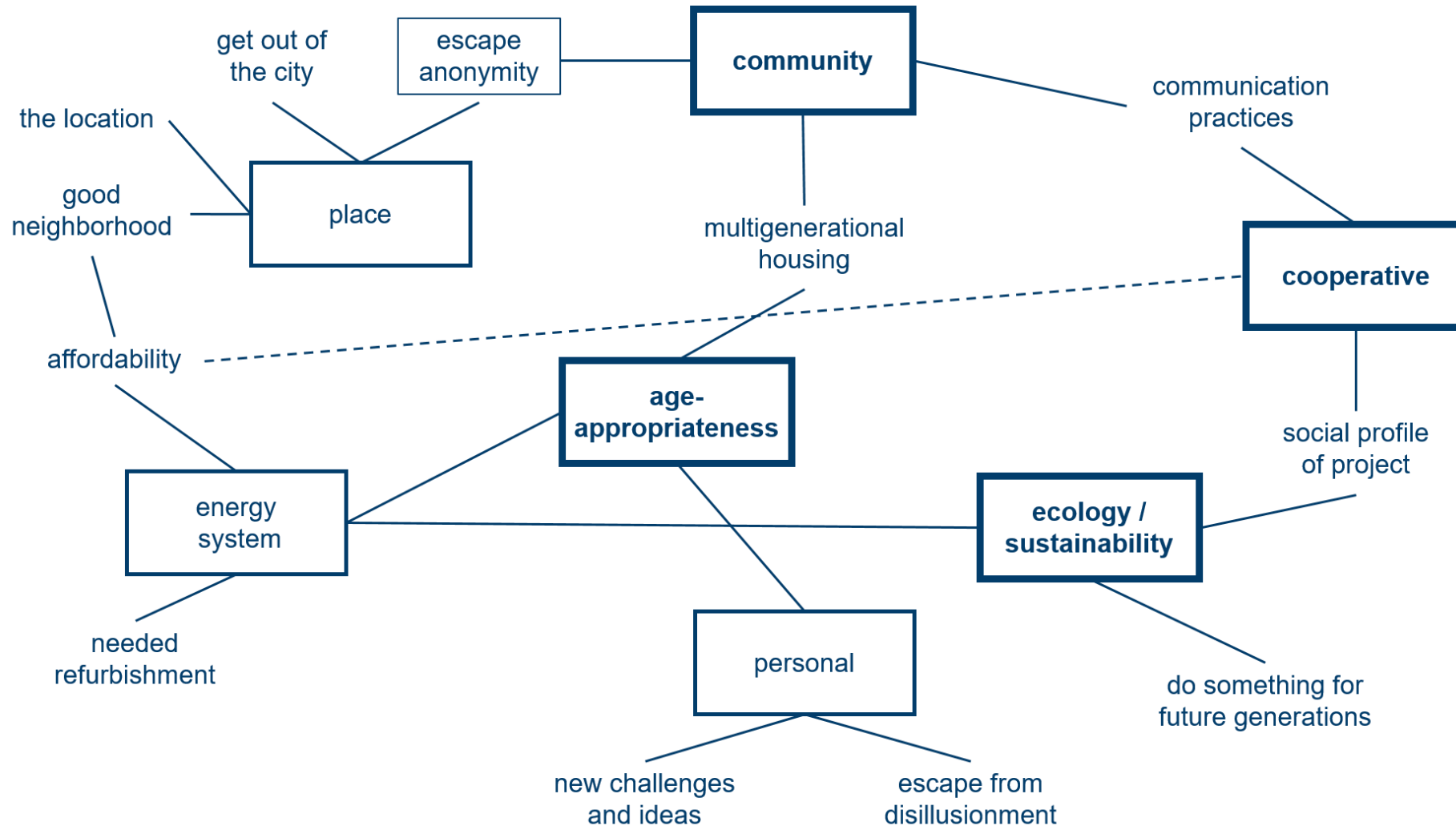


# 4. RESULTS – RQ2: MOTIVATION TO PARTICIPATE

Stated motives (multiple answers)

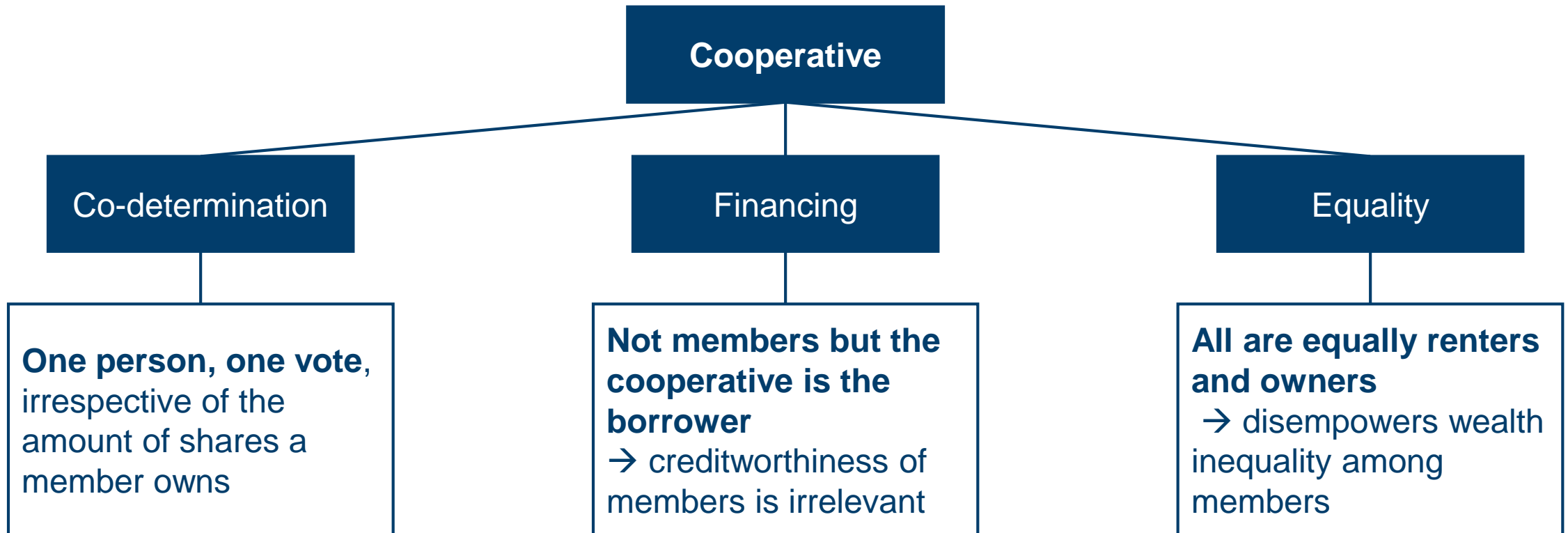


# 4. RESULTS – RQ2: LINKAGES BETWEEN MOTIVES



# 4. RESULTS – RQ2: COOPERATIVE AS MOTIVE

Under German cooperative law, registered cooperatives serve the purpose of promoting **economic, social, and cultural interests of its members** through joint business operations (**§1 I GenG**).



**These motives are all social characteristics of the organization form**

# 4. RESULTS – RQ2: TOP MOTIVES

**Top three ranked motives per project (in terms of times named by interviewees of a project)**

Ranking	ES1		HC1		HC2		EC		EV*		ES2**	
1	ecology / sustainability	6	community	9	community	7	ecology / sustainability	4	community	2	community	1
									ecology / sustainability	2	affordable living	1
									communication practices	2	ecology / sustainability	1
2	get out of the city	5	age-appropriate housing	6	ecology / sustainability	4	community	3				
3	community	4	organization form: cooperative	4	multigenerational housing	3	do sth. for future generations	2				
			the location	4	a good neighborhood	3	heating system needed refurbishment	2				

\* no ranking possible; these motives were named equally by the two interviewees in EV

\*\* no ranking possible; only one interviewee in ES2

# 4. RESULTS – RQ3: SIMILARITIES & DIFFERENCES

	ES1	ES2	HC1	EC	HC2	EV
<b>primary focus</b>	living space	living space	living space	energy supply	living space	living space
<b>keywords in mission statement/short description</b>						
community/collectively	x	x	x	x	x	x
sustainability			x			
ecology	x	x	x	x	x	x
social	x		x			
renewable energy				x		
economical		x				x
multigenerational			x		x	x
self-determined					x	
<b>existing or emergent community</b>	emergent	emergent	emergent	existing	emergent	emergent
<b>joint living spaces</b>	x	x	x		x	x
<b>existing buildings or new construction</b>	new	new	new	existing	new	existing
<b>sustainability/ecology among top three motives</b>	x	x		x	x	x



# 4. RESULTS – RQ4: SUSTAINABILITY

**Sustainability**  
– for some a matter of course

## Sustainability

### Instances of perceived social norms

#### Social norms against...

##### ... unsustainable consumption

“I no longer dare to order things from Amazon.” (HC1-11)

##### ... unsustainable energy supply

“In this group, I would never have dared to propose an oil or gas heating system.” (HC2-6)

##### ... unsustainable transport

“Sometimes a glance alone is enough if someone says: “I'm going to fly to Mallorca now.” (EV-2)

### The role of initiators

Campaigning for (new) members  
→ **Creators of social capital**

Trusted members of social network  
→ **Users of pre-existing social capital**

“Initiator convinced me of the necessity of sustainability/ecology (ES1-1, ES2-1), of community (ES1-4).”  
→ **Opinion leaders**

“Sustainability was not a concern for me” (HC1-1)  
→ **Enforcers of sustainability**

### Multidimensional sustainability

#### Ecology

Broad adoption of sustainable measures and behaviors

#### Economy

Realization of projects within members' financial means

#### Social

-Multi-generational living  
-Cooperatives  
-Creation/strengthening/future-proofing of communities

# 5. CONCLUSIONS – HYPOTHESES REVISITED

## Hypothesis 1:

A broad adoption of sustainable measures, technologies, and behaviors takes place when **social factors** have strong influencing power.

**yes**

## Findings:

- **Social needs**, i.e. a desire for **community** drove people to join and invest
- Use of and creation of **social capital**
- Realization of projects through **collective action**
- Communities, i.e. **social structures** are strengthened and created
- **Social norms** enforce sustainable behaviors

## Hypothesis 2:

Key motivation to become active in these projects are **pro-environmental attitudes** and pro-environmental self-identity.

**yes & no**

## Findings:

Underlying pre-existing environmental attitudes, **not among all, but among a critical mass** and critical individuals (initiators) are vital.

# 5. CONCLUSIONS

## → **Sustainability as a default option:**

If someone joins a project or living environment where sustainability measures and behaviors are established

## → **Strong environmental motives not necessary requirement:**

If critical mass has environmental motives & if other linked motives are met instead

## → **Demographic developments make growing interest in 'community' likely**

## → **Support programs of community projects should make sustainable measures a condition for funding**

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