Lifelong Learning – the added value of informal learning activities for a sustainable development of rural regions

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Abstract

Lifelong Learning strategies are provoked by regional politics as necessity to cope with societal, demographic, natural and economic challenges within regional development processes. However the empirical evidence concerning the added value of Lifelong Learning activities for the individual participant on the one hand and the sustainable development of rural areas on the other are scare yet. The present paper aims to contribute to this research gap via investigation of an Austrian case study: the "Montagsakademie" (translated: "Monday Academy") is an informal learning activity by the Karl-Franzens-University Graz, which is transmitted regularly via modern ICT infrastructure into 16 rural regions in Austria. One of the recipients is the Knowledge and Education Centre KB5 in the rural area of South-eastern Styria, which is in the centre of interest in the present paper. Through the dissemination of an anonymous online-questionnaire to the participants of the "Montagsakademie" in KB5 the individual motivations for taking part, the individual benefit (differentiated into personal, social and professional) as well as the estimated added value for the development of the region are investigated. The results of the empirical survey are analyzed by applying a generic framework, consisting of elements from cognitive-learning theory as well as action theory.

The results display an outstanding impact of the individual initial situation regarding the participation behaviour: gender, age, children, level of education, employment sector as well as framework conditions due to the occupational activity influence the Lifelong Learning attitude. Also the reasons for participating show a remarkable variety, with enhancement of knowhow for private and occupational purposes being the most frequently mentioned. The personal added value of the participation in the "Montagsakademie" reveals widespread differences between female and male attendants. However, the

estimations regarding the effects on the local and regional development are similar and seen in the reduction of reservations concerning science and scientific contents, the establishment of a feeling of togetherness and trust as well as the increase in attractiveness of the community and region. Only the motivation for and implementation of Lifelong Learning activities on the individual level lead to an overall transformation into a *Learning* region. Thus the paper concludes that the potentials of Lifelong Learning can be seen in the influence on the local and regional development opportunities and capabilities.

Key words: rural regional development, Lifelong Learning, informal learning, action-theory
JEL Codes: 021, 015

1 Introduction

The learning ability of regions enhances their strengths and competitiveness (Scheff 1999) and represents a strategic resource in coping with the structural change in rural areas (Holzinger, Delapina, Krajasitz 1998). The "Learning Region" was one of the first attempts to learning, as a process empowering the regional population also termed "human resource", the regional economy and not at least the social and cultural autonomy. Although the "Learning region" evolved in the 1990s it gained interest as a comprehensive regional development strategy not until the current programming period from 2007-2013. The European Union – due to the Lisbon agenda and the Europe 2020 strategy – aims to become the most competitive, regional knowledge basis in the world (KOM 2001). With this target the European Union admits to a clear innovation policy that is based on two interdependent elements: (a) the funding of the human resource by means of education, further education and Lifelong Learning and (b) the support of a knowledge-based, innovation-oriented economy. To that effect the following core issues are emphasized within regional development processes:

- the empowerment of the local population through (further) education and Lifelong Learning (ÖROK 2002),
- a wide access to education and qualification opportunities (ÖROK 2002),
- an incorporation of information and communication technology to overcome spatial barriers (Schnell, Held et. al 2005) as well as
- a revaluation of educational institutions as provider of knowledge and as incubators for learning and innovation processes (Schnell, Held et. al 2005; Streich 2005)

Learning as transformation process from information into knowledge attracts special attention for achieving the mentioned targets (Schläger-Zirlik 2003). Three main types of learning activities can be differentiated: a) *formal* learning represents the former course of education with a programme of instruction in an educational institution, which is generally recognized in a qualification or a certificate; furthermore it implies also further education within an organized context, offered by a specific institution and completed with a certified degree; in the majority of cases formal learning process are undergone to enhance and extend the skills and knowhow useful for the occupation or job career; b) *non-formal learning* refers to learning through a programme but is not usually evaluated and does not lead to a certification; c) *informal learning* refers to learning resulting from daily work-related, family or leisure activities (OECD 2006) without a certified degree or curricula; informal learning is controlled by the learner themselves focusing on personal interests and the personal willingness to learn. Consequently knowledge gathered through informal learning processes shows a high degree of application, due to the personal aims and benefits (Walser 2006).

Formal learning activities receive considerable attention from regional and economic sciences as their results, such as the development of human capital play a decisive role for the enhancement of the regional innovation potential, the regional productivity and competitiveness as well as the resilience of the regional economy. These connections can be adopted as scientifically evident (Florida 2007; Rutten, Boekema 2007). On the other hand research on the added value of Lifelong Learning activities – subsuming non-formal and informal learning activities – on regional development processes are scarce. Although politics associates expectations like the enhancement of the regional quality of life, the regional identity as well as the future sustainability with the term *Lifelong Learning* (Lebensministerium 2008a), empirical evidence is not evident on the large scale yet.

The present paper and the conducted empirical survey aim to contribute to the research gap of the benefits and added value of Lifelong Learning activities both for the regional population and the local and regional development processes. The survey has been conducted on the "Montagsakademie" („Monday Academy"), an informal learning opportunity initiated by the Karl-Franzens University in Graz (Styria, Austria) in 2004. The founding idea was to provide education for everyone, customized to the regional demand. The aim is to enhance the discussion between the affected regional population, local and regional decision-makers and the University, to offer information and knowledge that is relevant for action and to give incentives for (informal) learning processes (Peer,

2007). In doing so the lectures are transmitted via modern information and communication technology (ICT) to 16 rural regions in Austria. One of these rural "satellites" is the "knowledge and education centre KB5" (KB5) in Kirchbach (Styria). Thus the present paper raises the core question *How can and does informal learning influence regional development processes and why may that be important for rural-peripheral regions?* In doing so the present paper focuses on the empirical results obtained through an online-survey of the participants of the "Montagsakademie" in KB5. The investigation aims to gather insights regarding the added value of Lifelong Learning activities for the individual person on the one hand as well as the estimated benefits for the local and regional development on the other as well as to give insights into the "black box" of individual decision making processes for Lifelong Learning activities. The „Montagsakademie"" in KB5 has been chosen as case study a) due to its location in a rural-peripheral region and b) its regular and long attendance (since 2005) as "satellite" in the "Montagsakademie".

At first the paper gives insights into the state of the art regarding the "learning region" with special attention to the aspect "Lifelong Learning". After that a generic framework for the description and analysis of the results of the online-survey will be derived. The next chapter provides a description of the case study and is followed by empirical results of the online-survey. The analysis and discussion section completes the investigation and interprets the findings of the case study taking into account the existing literature.

2 The Learning region, Lifelong Learning and regional development – recent debate

At the beginning of the 1990s Lundvall (Lundvall 1994) stated that "*knowledge* is the most important strategic resource and *learning* the most important process" for the development of regions. Therewith the paradigm of the "Learning region" rose, entailing numerous attempts at defining and delineating it (Morgan 1997; Boekema, Morgan et al. 2000; Moulaert, Sekia 2002). As core elements constituting the learning region "knowledge", "learning", "innovation" and "networks" are denominated (Boekema, Morgan et al. 2000). Within the scientific dialogue on learning regions two categories evolved, focusing on different aspects, definitions and theoretical frameworks (Moulaert, Sekia 2002; Schläger-Zirklik 2003):

a) The learning region as an *economic concept*: the regional competitiveness is strengthened through the enhancement of human capital, innovation capacity as well as cooperation between educational infrastructure and regional economy.

Florida (Florida 2007) states that the establishment of a learning region assures "sustainable advantage", meaning that regions shift from a focus on short-run economic performance to sustaining performers due to the improvement of technology, continuous development of human resources and continuous environmental improve.

b) The learning region as a *society related concept*, aiming at improving the regional ability and willingness to learn (Lifelong Learning) and thus empower the regional human potential and enhance the quality of life (Lebensministerium 2008b).

2.1 The learning region as a society-related concept

While the learning region as economic concept attracts widespread scientific interest (see also Rutten, Boekema 2007; Boekema, Morgan, Bakkers et al. 2000; Morgan 1997) scientific research and results on the learning region as a society related concept is not that evident. The core element of the society-related concept of the learning region are *Lifelong Learning activities* including individual, collective / organizational as well as regional learning in non-formal and informal learning environments (Schläger-Zirlik 2003; Heintel 2011). Thus *learning* is conducted on different scales and in various ways within the region (see Table 1). Thus the learning region from a society-related perspective describes "(…) a network of regional stakeholders around the topic 'Lifelong Learning and education', emphasizing the strengthening of education and learning activities within the region as well as the empowerment of the regional population for learning activities" (Lebensministerium 2008a). From this perspective the learning region gained significance within the profession of regional planning and development. The benefits of *learning* within regional development are perceived in its a) guiding effect, b) building of trust and c) means of regulation (Heintel 2011). The implementation of the learning region is support throughout a variety of instruments, for example: various education seminars, survey of training needs, decentralized regional learning centres, co operations between educational institutions, implementation of new learning methods (e-learning, blended learning)

Table 1: Levels, targets and learning principles of the learning region (own illustration after Klemm 2001; Liebig 2004; Lebensministerium 2008a)

	Target	Tasks	Learning principles
Makro level (regional)	Sustainable regional development Enhancing Lifelong Learning activities	Knowledge management Education and learning demand Mission statement for further development	Social learning Organizational learning Informal learning
Meso level (collective / institutional)	Enhancing Lifelong Learning activities Establishement of appropriate structures	Network building Collaboration Quality assurance	Social learning Organizational learning Informal learning
Micor level (individual)	Enhancing Lifelong Learning activities Empowerment and competence building	Lifelong Learning Qualification Orientation	Informal learning

2.2 Lifelong Learning – the core activity of learning regions

The notion of lifelong education per se came into prominence in the 1960s and was described by Dave (Dave 1976) as "a process of accomplishing personal, social and professional development throughout the life-span of individuals in order to enhance the quality of life (…)". In 1995 the European Union published the White Paper on Education and Training ("Teaching and learning - towards the knowledge-based society"), emphasizing Lifelong Learning activities – defined as non-formal and informal learning – foremost for occupational usability. Although the emphasize regarding the meaning of Lifelong Learning has shifted from a mere occupational-related perspective to a more general humanistic one (Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, EC 2000), the added value of Lifelong Learning is still measured through labour market related usability (Bretschneider 2004; EC 1995).

The concept of Lifelong Learning is based on three principles which break the notion of traditional "front-end" formal education: it is life-long, 'life-wide' and centred on 'learning' rather than on education (Schuetze, Casey 2006; Green 2002, 281). The latter "(…) emphasizes the individual process of learning and de-emphasizes its social dimension that is associated with education and schooling" (Schutze, Casey 2006). This has the consequence a) that the 'where' and 'how' something is learned is determined by the learner themselves (principle of *choice*), b) that the learner has a great personal agency to make meaningful choices (principle of *taking action*) and c) that the individual needs motivation, ability and capacity to engage in learning beyond compulsory schooling

(principle of *motivation*) (Rubenson, Schuetze 2000). Schuetze and Casey (2006) distinguish four different basic models of "Lifelong Learning":

- the emancipatory or social justice model which pushes the notion of equality of opportunity and life chances through education in a democratic society ('LLL for all');
- the cultural model where Lifelong Learning is a process of each individual`s life, aiming at the fulfilment of life and self-realisation (LLL for self-fulfilment);
- the 'open society' model in which Lifelong Learning is seen as an adequate learning system for developed, multicultural and democratic countries (LLL for all who want and are able to participate);
- Human capital model where Lifelong Learning connotes continuous work-related training and skill development to meet the needs of economy (LLL for employment).

In the understanding of the case study within the present paper Lifelong Learning can be understood as a mixture of the social justice and the cultural model. What all models have in common is the aim to establish a "learning society", where there are recognized opportunities for learning for every person, wherever they are and how old they should be (Green 2002). The spatial realization of the "learning society" is the "learning region", implementing learning on the regional level (Lebensministerium 2008a).

3 Generic framework – Lifelong Learning as issue for the individual level

As shown in Table 1 the learning region is constituted by different learning levels applying different learning types. On the macro level (regional learning) as well as on the meso level (collective learning) social as well as organizational learning is emphasized. *Social* learning is characterized by social interaction between different actors, aiming to build joint mental models. Problem solving and the production of innovations are highly linked to social learning (Heintel 2011; Schläger-Zirlik 2003). *Organisational* learning has been emphasized mainly in microeconomic sciences, differentiating between a) emphasizing the mission statement and the corporate (company´s) philosophy and b) emphasizing the change in behaviour of its members (e.g. working practices) (Heintel 2011; Argyris 2005). The aim of both approaches is to strengthen the efficiency as well as the organizational potential to solve problems (Schläger-Zirlik 2002). Informal learning appears on all three levels, but is the dominating learning discipline on the micro level (individual learning). The focal point of the present paper lies on informal learning on the individual level.

3.1 Informal learning

Informal learning amounts to 60 – 70% of all human learning processes and thus shows high significance for the individual as well as for a overall sustainable development (Faure 1972). Informal learning as learning without a certified degree, educational programs or specific former educational institutions gained in importance within regional development (AG Informelles Lernen 2006). Regional development is a knowledge-based activity highly dependent on informal learning processes, emphasizing the strengthening of communication and collaboration structures, the establishment of network structures between different actors and specific interests (AG Informelles Lernen 2006). The potentials and strengths of informal learning within regional development are seen in the following aspects (Walser 2006; Schläger-Zirlik 2002; Moreland, Lovett 1997):

- Informal learning takes place in everyday life and is based on two pillars: the experiences that are made and the interaction with the surrounding (social and material) environment through discourses and actions.
- Informal learning is self-directed and follows personal preferences and interests. Thus it is accompanied by high motivation and "willingness to learn" by the individual.
- Informally acquired knowledge and competences display a high level of applicability: the learner has a target or a practical advantage in mind.
- Informal learning supports the adoption of different types of knowledge, e.g. factual knowledge, expert knowledge, knowledge of orientation.

The significance of informal learning for the individual learner can be recognized in the extension of the individual development potentials as well as the strengthening of the capability to participate in the development of the community and region ("empowerment") (v. Krogh, Ichijo, Nonaka 2000). Despite these advantages for the individual as well as for the region development, informal learning faces the challenge of being noticed and recognized (BMBF 2008). "As it is informal it is not bound to former institutions, and as it is not bound to former institutions it often escapes perception" (AG Informelles Lernen 2006).

3.2 Learning on the individual level

Until now there is no comprehensive theory on individual learning. The approach to learning theory from psychological sciences can be considered appropriate in the present

context: it distinguishes two types of learning theory a) the *behavioural* learning theory and b) *cognitive* learning theory.

The theory on *behavioural learning* focuses on the "external behaviour" (reaction, response) of the individual on stimuli from the external environment. Learning in this understanding is defined as a change in behaviour, resulting from an ongoing linking of stimulus and response (Pawlowsky 1992). Since the 1950s the behavioural learning theory has been repressed and replaced by *cognitive* learning theory. Learning within this theory is understood as *active* and *reflexive* interaction process between the individual and the surrounding environment. Thus it differs from behavioural learning theory in the following aspects (Schläger-Zirlik 2002): a) the *awareness* of the individual has moved in the centre of the scientific interest (aiming to open the 'black-box' of the stimulus-response paradigm) b) the *experience* of the individual is put in the foreground and c) cognitive learning theory aims to comprehensively grasp the learning phenomenon as a complex an active process to generate new insights (Pautzke 1989). One of the leading exponents of cognitive learning theory, Piaget (1985), recognizes learning as permanent process of the individual to establish a state of equilibrium between the surrounding (social and material) environment and his own perception and values. This request to establish a state of equilibrium can be implemented in two ways a) *assimilation*, as learning how to improve and b) *accommodation* as learning how to change (Pautzke 1989). The *social-cognitive learning theory* broadens the cognitive learning theory through the involvement of *observations*, that is to say that the individual does not have to make all experiences by him-/herself but can also learn through the observation of the experiences of others. Thus Bandura (1976) attributes the following skills to learning individuals a) change in behaviour can result from observation, b) the ability to anticipate (trough farsighted thinking and reacting) and c) self-reflection and –regulation. *Motivation* is the essential precondition to engage in learning processes. It can be extrinsic (caused by external impulses such as reward of penalty) or intrinsic (self-driven due to interest, curiosity etc.) (Bandura 1979).

3.3 Lifelong Learning from an action -theoretical perspective

For the analysis of the present case study "Montagsakademie" a generic framework (see Fig. 1) is set up consisting of the insights of the social-cognitive learning theory on the one hand and the action-theoretical approach by Werlen (1997) on the other. While *social-learning theory* supports the "Why" (e.g. individual motivation, values), the socio-geographic approach of action-theory focuses on the "How" (see Fig. 1). Thus it provides

insights into the following steps of individual action taking leading to the participation in informal learning activities:

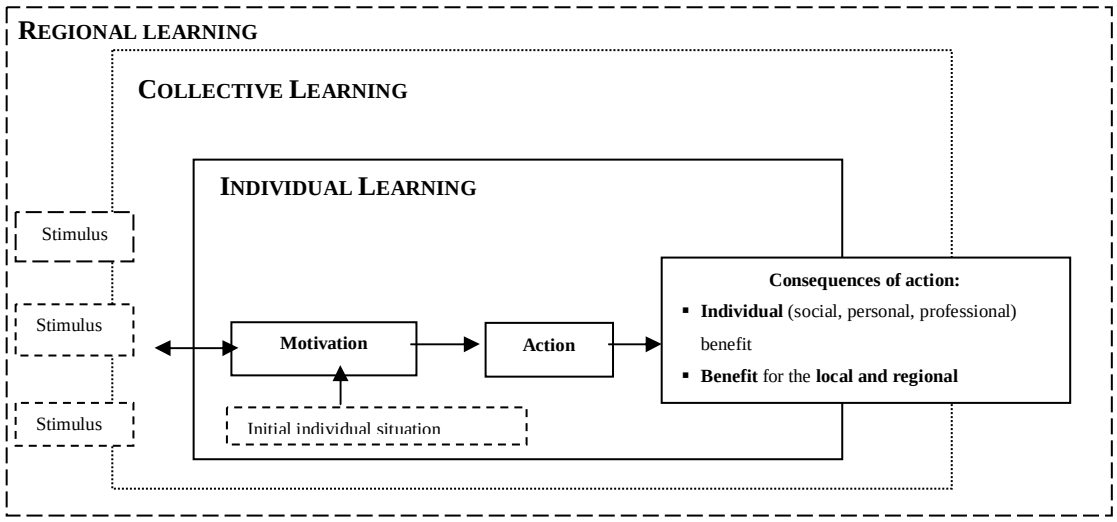
(1) *Initial situation* (gender, familiar situation, socio-economic circumstance, highest degree of education etc, .)

(2) *Motivation* (individual need, curiosity etc.)

(3) *Action* (participation in a learning opportunity is demand- and supply-driven, concurrence between different leisure or professional activities, other constraints [time, money, children, spatial distance])

(4) *Consequences of action* (individual benefit as well as added value for the local and regional development and also non considered consequences).

Figure 1: Generic framework for the analysis of the added value of individual informal learning activities (own illustration according to Werlen 1997



According to this generic framework an online-questionnaire consisting of 34 questions (30 closed, 4 open) has been elaborated to survey the individual benefit and also the estimated added value for the community and region from the participants of the "Montagsakademie" in KB5. The anonymous online-questionnaire has been sent out to the 711 mailing addresses from the participation list of the "Montagsakademie" within the timeframe from 2005 – 2011. The first announcement has been at the end of September 2011 a reminder email was sent out after about two weeks. The results of the empirical investigation will be described and discussed within the next chapters.

4 Case Study – the "Montagsakademie" in the Knowledge- and Education-centre KB5

The "Montagsakademie" (translated: "Monday Academy") is a Lifelong Learning activity, initiated by the Karl-Franzens-University Graz in 2004. This learning opportunity aims to give the interested public an understanding of science and scientific contents throughout regular lectures. Comparable with "normal" university lectures, this learning opportunity takes place every other week on Monday evening and free of charge. Apart from the local participation at the University in the city of Graz, it is possible to participate in 16 different regions throughout Austria: via modern Information- and communication technology (ICT) the lecture is submitted to educational institutions in foremost rural regions. One of this "satellites" is the knowledge and education-centre KB5. The "knowledge and education centre KB5" is located in Kirchbach in der Steiermark in the East Styrian hills, a structurally weak area 27km from the main capital Graz. The municipal Kirchbach counts 1.575 inhabitants (in 2011) and is a centre for the surrounding region due to its good supply with daily infrastructure (shopping facilities, schools and a parish). The economic structure is affected by agriculture and forestry but also small and medium enterprises. The region faces the challenge of ongoing outmigration of young qualified people due to missing job opportunities.

After numerous failed attempts to sell the abandoned court house in the year 2002 a group of five men decided to purchase it and to found the *Knowledge and Education Centre KB5* (*KB* for Kirchbach and *5* for the house number). Their decision has been influenced by different driving forces: (1) they noticed the ongoing resignation within the municipal since the closing of the court-house and intended to counteract this development via a revitalization and revaluation of the building; (2) they wanted to break down established structures and originate something new and innovative, and not at least they wanted to (3) "leave marks" (Steinwender 2011). In contrast to other interested purchasers, the five actors defined the peripheral location of the building as a potential and chance. According to them, the building has a reasonable distance to the next urban area: on the one hand it is near enough to benefit from certain urban infrastructures on the other hand its far enough to establish a own identity not being at risk from getting absorbed by the city.

The KB5 building has five floors with a floor space of 1200m². The first three floors are used for the enterprises of the five actors (an insurance broker, a designer, two IT companies and a lawyer).

The "Montagsakademie"	
First transmission	2005
Target group	interested public as well as local and regional stakeholders
Average number of participants	30 - 40
Area	Municipality Kirchbach (1.575 inhabitants) sub-region Kirchbach, consisting of 4 municipalities with around 4.300 inhabitants
Participants since 2005 in KB5	1.1.00 (Steinwender 2011) (equivalent to aroung 25% of the regional population)
Content of the lectures:	**Guiding themes:**
2005 summer semester	*Sustainable lifestyle*
2005 winter semester	*Commemorative Year for 60 years second republic, 50 years Austrain treaty, 10 years EU membership*
2006/2007	*How do we life tomorrow –how do we want to life tomorrow?*
2007/2008	*What is the human being?*
2008/2009	*Relations (social, spiritual, economic, ecological)*
2009/ 2010	*Time and space*
2010 / 2011	*Chaos (from a natural, social and humanitarian science perspective)*
2011 / 2012	*Mobility*
Other learning opportunities in KB5:	
Days of Utopia	*Different education centres within Austria are interlinked for one special week. During this week the "days of utopia" present scientists and practitioners discussing different models for the future and images for a desirable future.*
Bioversität Österreich (Bio-University Austria)	*This is an informal education event defining itself as "think tank" and "education offensive" for the rural area. Initiated by Bio Austria the KB5 actors enable the interested public to take part on this series of events focusing on the future of bio-agriculture, the production of renewable resources, health and biological food, the return of diversity in the food production, ecological footprint within agriculture, etc.*
Religion on Thursday	*This is an interdisciplinary series of lectures dealing with religion an, society related topics*
MiniMed	*Series of lectures to the topic "health and medicine"*

Table 2: The „Montagsakademie" in KB5 - data and facts (own illustration)

One floor provides seminar- and training rooms and the upper floor guest rooms. In the basement gastronomy was set up as to fulfil the demand of an integrated concept. The actors had the vision to establish a centre for "culture, communication, learning and business". From the beginning on they focused on "education and learning" and aimed to establish "a university in and for the rural area" with emphasize on the instrument "information and communication technology." The five actors are convinced that the development of a learning region requires "hardware" in the sense of a supply with ICT to overcome the lack of information. An adequate infrastructure in form of a W-LAN internet connection and the video conference system is not at the centre of attention, but means to

an end to provide this range of learning opportunities (see Table2). An appropriate supply with ICT – and the possibilities along with it – can make the rural area an attractive place to live and work for a broader range of lifestyles. Their vision is a "global village", which is defined as a village that combines two aspects: the world of the urban know-how and techniques and the world of the rural quality of life (Nahrada, 2006).

To approach their vision of a global village and a learning region, they set up numerous events (see Table 2). The first in a chain of events and the centrepiece of KB5 was and still is the "„Montagsakademie". In collaboration with the Karl-Franzens-University in Graz every other Monday a lecture is transmitted live from the university to the premises of the KB5 building. In the sense of a "university in and for the rural area" the presentations and lectures feature a generally intelligible but nevertheless on a high scientific level. After the former presentation there is time for a lively discussion, which is often combined with a shift in location to the gastronomy in the basement of the building.

5 The added value of the "Montagsakademie" as informal learning opportunity – empirical results

In autumn 2011 an anonymous online-survey of the participants of the "Montagsakademie" in the Knowledge and Education Centre KB5 has been conducted. The online-questionnaire has been sent out to 825 participants; 711 mailing addresses have still been in use. The invitation for taking part at this online-questionnaire has been submitted twice, in a two week interval. From the 711 mail distributions 45 have been returned, which amounts to a return rate of 7%.

The questionnaire consists of 34 questions which, according to the generic framework – are divided into five main sections: (1) Individual initial situation (2) motivation for taking part at the "Montagsakademie" (3) participation behaviour ("action") (4) individual benefit from the participation (5) estimated added value for the community and region ("consequences of action").

5.1 Initial situation and individual motivation for taking part at the "Montagsakademie"

Most of the participants (37%) have been informed about the "Montagsakademie" through word-of-mouth recommendations, another 23% through the local newspaper ("Kirchbacher Berichte") as well as through the regional newspaper ("Kleine Zeitung"). The internet played only a subordinated role. Regarding the individual motivation, the enhancement of

private knowhow (24%) was the foremost aim, followed by curiosity (18%) as well as the aim to get new inputs for reflection and discussion (17%). This results go hand in hand with the results of the open question *"What do you understand by Lifelong Learning and what individual implications does that have?"*: 25% of the participants emphasize the necessity of Lifelong Learning to cope with the ongoing changes in professional life, the need for remaining open for new fields and to open the personal horizon as well as the necessity of remaining curious. Considering the motivation for participation and the actual participation frequency, the following results occur (see Table 3): for those attending regularly since the beginning in 2005 "get new inputs for reflection and discussion", "support the 'Montagsakademie' as innovative new idea" as well as "make new and cultivate social contacts" are the leading reasons for participating; on the contrary, for those participants whose attendance was relatively rare "curiosity", "enhancement of knowhow for private purposes" and "support of the 'Montagsakademie' as innovative new idea" are the most motivating reasons.

	Participation frequency				
	Regularly till the beginning in 2005	Regularly within the last two years	Several times throughout the semester	Relatively rare since the beginning in 2005	**Total**
Curiosiy	3	2	11	6	**22**
Support the "Montagsakademie" as new innovative idea	6	0	10	4	**20**
Enhancement of knowhow for occupational purposes	4	1	5	2	**12**
Enhancement of knowhow for private purposes	5	3	18	5	**31**
Get new inputs for reflection and discussion	7	1	12	2	**22**
Make new and cultivate social contacts	6	2	5	1	**14**
Time-out from everyday life	2	0	2	1	**5**
Other reasons	1	0	2	0	**3**

Table 3: Connection between participation frequency and reasons for participation in the "Montagsakademie" (own illustration)

The individual motivation is appreciably influenced by the individual initial situation: that implies the social but also the spatial preconditions. The social preconditions include the family situation, gender aspects, age, level of education as well as framework conditions

due to the occupational activity. The spatial preconditions affect the reach ability of various (further educational) activities and thus influence the decision behaviour.

Although the sampling size is rather small an analysis using cross-classified table has been conducted to demonstrate connections between the individual social and spatial preconditions and the frequency of participation: meanwhile there is no significant correlation between the family status and the participation frequency, the analysis of the frequency of participation in correlation with children (below the age of fourteen) leads to the result, that a general participation is five times more likely without children below the age of 14 than with. A further interesting result is the fact, that none of the participating women had children in the age between 0-14, meanwhile 25% of the participating men had children within this age group.

Focusing on gender and the level of education, the highest expected probability for taking part in the "Montagsakademie" have *male university graduates*. The lowest expected probability to participate in the "Montagsakademie" show women with a secondary general school degree and also females with a degree from Universities of Applied Life Sciences. These expected outcomes go hand in hand with the observed frequencies (see Table 4). As expected also the *employment status* and the *age* influences the participation behaviour: the highest expected probability for participating on the "Montagsakademie" have employees between the age of 51 – 65 as well as 36 – 50 and self employees between the age of 51 – 65. Concerning the participation frequency employees between the age of 36 – 50 show the highest score, followed by self-employees between the age of 51 – 65. The less expected participants are trainees and labourers between the age of 20 – 35. Regarding the employment sector of the surveyed, the greatest part (40%) works in the field of public administration, social insurance and education, 22% in consulting and insurance, 12% in trade and repair service and 5% at a time in manufacturing, transport and communication as well as agriculture.

		Level of education							
		Secondary general school degree	Apprentice-ship	Intermediate vocational training	School leaving examination	Academy / College	University of Applied Sciences degree	University degree	**Total**
Gender	**Female**	1 (0,48)	2 (1,57)	0 (0,80)	3 (1,33)	4 (2,43)	0 (0,24)	2 (5,10)	**12 (27%)**
	Male	1 (1,31)	4 (4,27)	3 (2,29)	2 (3,61)	5 (6,57)	1 (0,65)	17 (13,79)	**33 (73%)**
	Total	**2 (4,5%)**	**6 (13%)**	**3 (7%)**	**5 (11%)**	**9 (20%)**	**1 (2,5%)**	**19 (42%)**	**45**

Table 4: Gender and the level of education as influencing factors in the participation in the "Montagsakademie" (the terms in brackets show the expected value)

Concerning the spatial preconditions, questions regarding the travel time needed and the means of transportation used to participate on the „Montagsakademie“ have been asked (see Table 5). The participation at the „Montagsakademie“ is more likely the shorter the travelling time is: the highest expected participation frequency appears for participants with travelling times below 15 minutes, which is consistent with the observed frequency (52% < 15 minutes and 30% between 15 – 30 minutes). 78% drive with the car while only 14% go on foot.

		Travelling time				
		< 15min	**15 - 30min**	**30 - 45min**	**> 45min**	**Total**
Frequency of participation	Regularly till the beginning in 2005	8 (5,29)	3 (3,13)	0 (1,40)	0 (0,97)	**11** (24%)
	Regularly within the last two years	2 (1,54)	1 (0,913)	0 (0,40)	0 (0,28)	**3** (7%)
	Several times throughout the semester	9 (10,8)	5 (6,39)	4 (2,86)	4 (1,98)	**22** (49%)
	Relatively rare since the beginning in 2005	3 (4,41)	4 (2,61)	2 (1,17)	0 (0,81)	**9** (20%)
	Total	**22 (49%)**	**13 (29%)**	**6 (13%)**	**4 (9%)**	**45**

Table 5: Travelling time as influencing factor on the participation frequency in the "Montagsakademie" (own illustration)

5.2 Participation behaviour (“Action”)

The attendance of the participants surveyed was quiet regular: 25% participated regularly since the beginning of the “Montagsakademie“ in 2005, 48% participated regularly several times per semester. For 89% the topic of the lecture played a decisive role for the participation, whereas for 11% the attendance was not dependent on the topic. Concerning the amount of travelling time needed in connection with the topic of the “Montagsakademie” the following result can be observed: the decision to participate was more dependent on the topic than on the travelling time needed. Also if the travelling time was below 15 minutes the participation took place only, when the topic of the lecture was of interest (see Table 6). Regarding the content of the „Montagsakademie“ 39% of the participants surveyed are of the opinion that the contents vary widely, 34% perceive it as “interesting”, 23% as “very interesting”. One comment added is, that sometimes the content is too scientific.

Regarding the question *Would you have liked to participate more often?* 80% answered with “Yes”, only 13% with “No” (7% gave no answer). Taking into account the participation frequency, from those participants whose attendance has been rare, 75% would have liked to participate more often meanwhile from those participants who

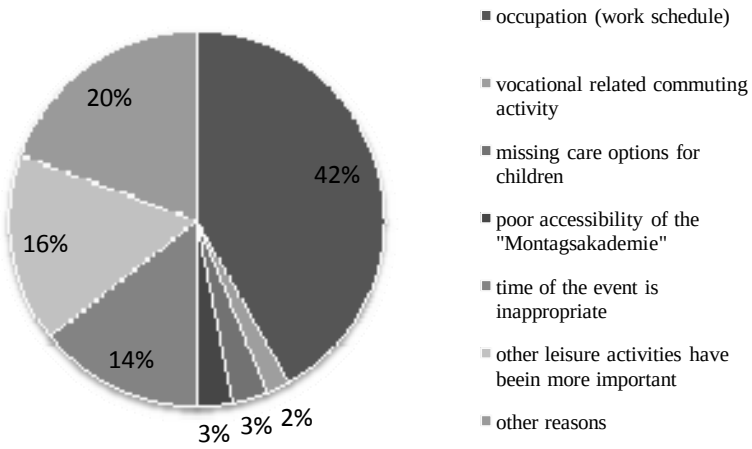
participated quite regularly, 86% would have liked to come to the „Montagsakademie“ even more often.

		Travelling time				
		< 15min	15 - 30min	- 45min	> 45min	**Total**
Topic and participation	Yes, participation took place only on interesting topics	20 (19,6)	12 (11,6)	5 (5,20)	3 (3,60)	40 (89%)
	No, the topic was not decisive for participation	2 (2,42)	1 (1,43)	1 (0,64)	1 (0,44)	5 (11%)
	Total	**22 (49%)**	**13 (29%)**	**6 (13%)**	**4 (9%)**	**45**

Table 6: Connection between the travelling time needed and the topic of the lecture with regard to the participation in the "Montagsakademie" (own illustration)

The question regarding the reasons for not taking part more often, leads to the following results: for 41% of the participants surveyed the occupation, foremost the working schedule was an impediment, 16% mentioned that other leisure activities (concert band, football club etc.) have been more important and for 14% the time of the event (weekday and time of day) was inappropriate for a more regular participation.

Fig 2: Reasons for not taking part more often at the “Montagsakademie” (own illustration”)



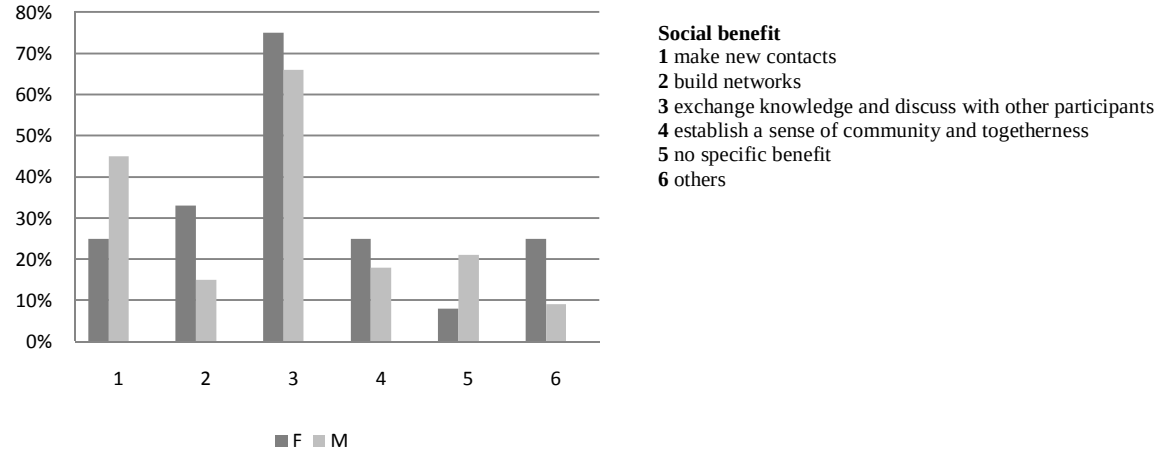
Concerning the general (further) education behaviour, 84% of those surveyed mention, that they attend also other Lifelong Learning and education opportunities in the region (Haus der Region Kornberg, Bfi Feldbach, WIFI Graz etc.). Furthermore the online-survey included the question, if through the participation in the “Montagsakademie“ the interest and motivation for other (further) education activities could be awakened. For 64% this is the case, 36% answered with “no”. The most interest in other (further) educational activities has been raised in those participants who participated several times throughout

the semester, while there has been nearly no effect on participants with a relatively rare attendance.

5.3 Consequences of Action – individual benefit and estimated added value for the region

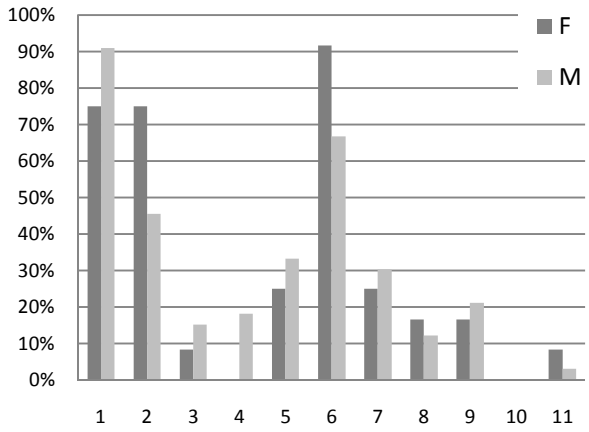
The *individual* benefit that results from the participation in the "Montagsakademie" can be differentiated into three areas of impact a) the social b) the personal and c) the professional. Concerning the *social* benefit, the most value-added is created through the exchange of knowledge and discussion with other participants (38%) followed by making new contacts (22%), building networks (12%) as well as establish a sense of community and togetherness (12%). The experienced social benefits are rather different between participating men and women (see Fig. 3). While women emphasize the exchange of knowledge and discussion with other participants (75%), establishing a sense of community and togetherness (25%) as well as building networks (33%), men perceive the social benefit in the making of new contacts (45%) and in the exchange of knowledge and discussion with other participants (66%). 21% of the men do not experience a specific social benefit at all.

Fig 3: Social benefit from female (F) and male (M) participants in the "Montagsakademie" (own illustration)



The *personal* benefit is mainly found in the enhancement of knowledge through the lectures as well as through the discussions (26%), the stimulation of critical discourses and reflections (22%) as well as in the contribution to personality development and awareness raising (16%). Also according this aspect differences between female and male participants occur:

Fig. 4: Personal benefit of female (F) and male (M) participants in the "Montagsakademie" (own illustration)

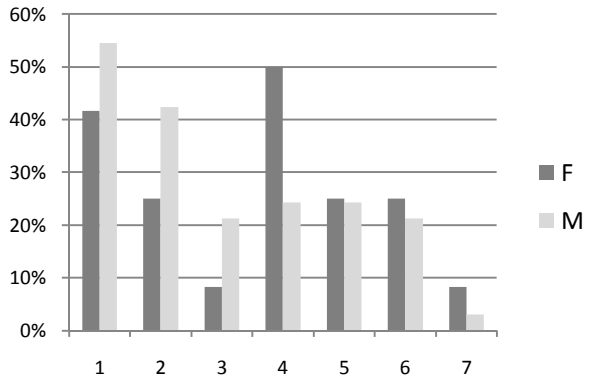


Personal benefit
1 enhance knowledge (through the lectures and the discussions)
2 contribution to personality development and awareness raising
3 contribution to the personal contentedness
4 raise of the quality of life
5 creation of identity with the community and region
6 stimulation of critical discourses as well as reflection
7 guiding effect
8 time-out from everyday life
9 fun and pleasure
10 no specific
11 other benefits

While female participants emphasize the contribution to personality development and awareness raising (75%), the stimulation of critical discourses and reflection (92%) and a time out from everyday life (12%), the male participants emphasize the added value of the enhancement of knowledge (91%), the creation of identity with the community and region (33%), the guiding effect (30%) as well as fun and pleasure (21%).

Concerning the *professional* benefits the enhancement of knowledge relevant for occupation (27%), making of new contacts (20%) and awareness rising for the importance of further educations (17%) are mentioned to be most evident.

Fig. 5: Personal benefit of female (F) and male (M) participants in the "Montagsakademie" (own illustration)



Professional benefit
1 enhance knowledge relevant for occupation
2 make new contacts (socializing)
3 establish networks
4 recognize the importance of further education
5 information regarding the possibilities of ICT
6 no specific
7 other benefits

For female participants the professional benefits include the recognition of the importance of further education (50%), as well as in the enhancement of knowhow relevant for occupation (42%). Male participants emphasize the enhancement of knowhow relevant for occupation in the first place (55%), followed by socializing (42%) as well as recognizing the importance of further education and information regarding the possibilities of ICT (24% each).

The usability of the professional benefits for occupational purposes is highly dependent on the level of education: the enhancement of knowhow relevant for occupation occurred for 100% of the participants with secondary general school degree, for 78% with College degree and 53% with University degree. Making new contacts is foremost important for participants with apprenticeship (50%) and school leaving examination (40%). 60% of the participants with school leaving examination register as benefit the awareness raising effect regarding the importance of further education. 67% of the participants with intermediate vocational training consider the information regarding the possibilities of ICT as professional benefit.

As estimated before the individual benefit of Lifelong Learning activities such as the "Montagsakademie" are manifold. Conducting a correlation analysis between the three types of individual benefits (social, personal, professional) the following results have been obtained, only considering significant results on the level of 0.01 with bilateral direction. It has to be stressed that these results show correlation *not* causality.

There is a strong *positive* correlation between:

- "contribution to the personal contentedness" and "raise of the quality of life"
- "enhancement of knowledge relevant for occupation" and "exchange knowledge and discuss with other participants"
- "recognize the importance of further education" and "establish a sense of community and togetherness"
- "contribution to the personal contentedness" and „time-out from everyday life"

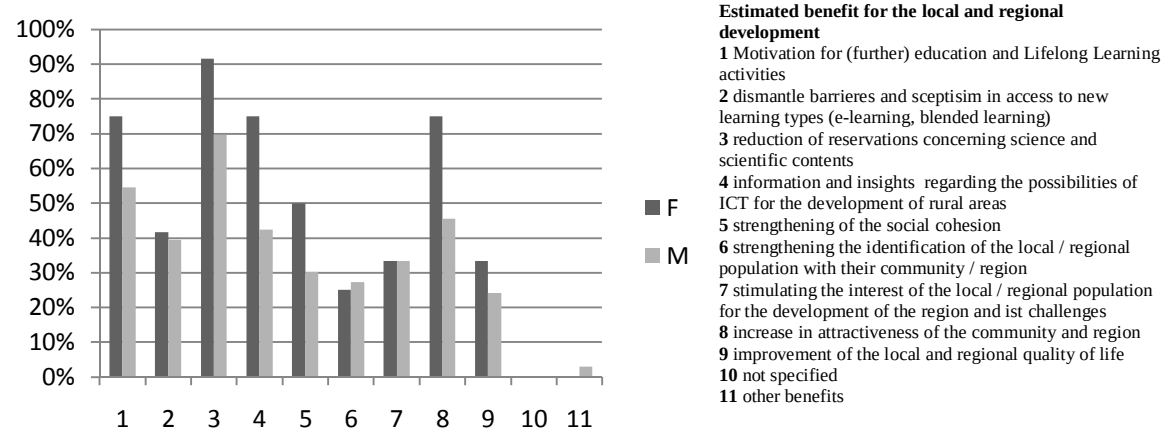
Negative correlations occur in the following areas:

- "exchange knowledge and discuss with other participants" and "no specific social benefit"
- "enhancement of knowledge relevant for occupation" and " no specific professional benefit"
- "make new contacts (socializing)" and " no specific professional benefit"

Apart from the individual benefit according to the participation in the "Montagsakademie", estimations regarding the most relevant effects of this Lifelong Learning activity on the local and regional development process have been collected. The significant benefits that accrue from the "Montagsakademie" are seen in the reduction of reservations concerning science and scientific contents (19%), the incentive impact on the further education and Lifelong Learning behaviour (15%), the increase in attractiveness of the community and

region (13%) and information and insights regarding the possibilities of ICT for the development of rural regions (13%).

Figure 6: Estimated added value for the local and regional development of female (F) and male (M) participants (own illustration)



With reference to the female and male participants nearly no differences occur regarding the estimated effects of the "Montagsakademie" on the local and regional development. Comparing the highlighted effect of "the enhancement of motivation for (further) education and Lifelong Learning activities" by female and male participants with Question 6 "*Did and does the participation on the "Montagsakademie" encourage you to attend further learning opportunities?"*, following results have been obtained (see Table 7): 64% of the participants surveyed answered that through the participation interest for further education activities has been awakened, for 36% that has not been the case. Comparing these results with the estimated benefits on the local and regional development, for 40% of the participants the individual incentive effect for further learning activities is concurrent with the enhancement of motivation for further Lifelong Learning activities on a local and regional level. For 24% the individual encouragement does not go along with an enhancement of motivation on the local and regional level. And 20% of the participants surveyed estimate an incentive effect on the local and regional level but not for them individually.

		The "Montagsakademie" motivates for (further) education and Lifelong Learning activities within the community and region		
		No	Yes	**Total**
Interest for further Lifelong Learning activities has been awakened	**Yes**	11	18	**29**
	No	7	9	**16**
Total		**18**	**27**	**45**

Table 7: Connection between the personal benefit and the estimated regional benefit regarding the incentive effect of the "Montagsakademie" for further Lifelong Learning activities.

Concerning the effects on local and regional development through the learning opportunity "Montagsakademie" a correlation analysis between the various benefits on the local and regional level has been conducted, only considering significant results on the level of 0.01 with bilateral direction. A strong *positive* correlation can be ascertained for:

- "improvement of the local and regional quality of life" and "strengthening of the social cohesion"
- "improvement of the local and regional quality of life" and "strengthening the identification of the local / regional population with their community / region"
- "information and insights regarding the possibilities of ICT for the development of rural areas" and "increase in attractiveness of the community and region"

The online-survey concluded with a question regarding the appreciation for the "Montagsakademie". Till now the "Montagsakademie" is a learning opportunity free of charge. In that effect the question was asked if there would be the willingness to make a financial contribution for participating in the "Montagsakademie". Only 16% would not be willing to pay something for attending the "Montagsakademie", 57% were willing to pay an amount up to 5 Euros, 27% are willing to pay up to 10 Euros. None of the participants was willing to pay 15 or more Euros.

6 Analysis and discussion of the results

The concept of the learning region describes "a process of social revitalization of living environments on the basis of participatory governance models and under consideration of knowledge management" (Schremm 2001b). Thus the learning region reflects the challenges of the knowledge society, which lie in the ongoing (structural) changes of the living and working environment, opening up new scopes for individual action and design on the one hand but along with these also more responsibility of the individual (OeIB 2004; Schremm 2001b). Facing this challenges most individual react rational by undertaking *learning processes* (OeIB 2004, 4). Apart from formal education there exists a widespread political agreement on the importance of Lifelong Learning activities for the individual but also for the development of communities and regions (Delors 1996). Nevertheless little is known about the added value of informal learning activities for the participant as well as for the surrounding community and region. The present paper provides insights into this research gap by conducting an empirical survey on the

participants of the “Montagsakademie”, a Lifelong Learning opportunity aiming to provide scientific knowledge to the interested public via online transmission. The decentralized Knowledge and Education centre KB5, situated in the south-eastern rural part of Styria, acts as “satellite” providing the “Montagsakademie” as Lifelong Learning opportunity to the surrounding region and interested regional population. The survey on the participants revealed that the individual initial situation plays a crucial role for the participation behaviour regarding Lifelong Learning activities. Also the motivation, the individual benefits and the estimated regional effects are manifold and diverse – not only from a gender perspective.

Starting with the question, where the participants got to know about the “Montagsakademie”, word-of-mouth recommendations were the preliminary source. In recent literature this topic has been dealt with as minor aspect, only the survey from the Austrian Institute of Adult Education (OeIB 2008) approves the role of word-of-mouth recommendations as information channel foremost in rural regions.

What attracts more scientific interest is the individual initial situation regarding the socio-economic as well as spatial preconditions: the survey revealed that the most influencing factors regarding the participation respectively non-participation in the “Montagsakademie” are *children*, *gender*, *age*, *level of education*, *the employment sector* as well *as framework conditions* due to the occupational activity. The survey on the “Montagsakademie” revealed that children with the need of childcare are more a participation impediment for women than for men, due to the fact that none of the participating women had children in the age between 0-14, meanwhile 25% of the participating men had children within this age group.

Another interesting outcome focuses on the level of education: the “Montagsakademie” as Lifelong Learning opportunity offered by the Karl-Franzens University is often associated with “highly, withdrawn scientific contents”, leading to a pre-selection of participants (Steinwender 2011) favouring participants with a higher education degree (University, Academy/College). Also Schuetze and Casey (2006), Hargreaves (2002) as well as Schiersmann (2007) emphasize the crucial importance of earlier “formative” years of education on the ability and motivation to engage in further learning later in life. While Schiersmann (2007a) interprets these outcomes as sign that adult education is unable to bridge the societal gap regarding education, Schuetze and Casey (2006) emphasize the not yet achieved goal of implementing Lifelong Learning, in the sense of “life-long”, “life-wide” and centered on “learning”. As this raises questions regarding the structure and

interrelationship between different sectors and actors of the educational system, striving for learning opportunities with multiple access, exit points, pathways and transitions leading to smooth progression of all interested participant (Schuetze and Casey 2006, 280).

Nearly the same scientific attention is payed to the influence of the employment sector as well as the framework conditions of the occupational activity on the participation in Lifelong Learning activities. The survey on the "Montagsakademie" revealed that the highest probability to participate have employees as well as self-employees (between the age of 51 – 65). These results underpin the research findings of Baethge and Baethge-Kinsky (2004) concerning the role of learning-friendly working conditions such as clearly regulated working hours respectively flexible time management for self-employees. Regarding the employment sector, the majority of the participants surveyed is employed in the public sector (40%) as well as in consulting and insurance (12%). Apart from the mentioned aspects of learning-friendly working conditions also the employment sector and the size of the firm influence the participation behaviour in Lifelong Learning opportunities. Schiersmann (2007b) and Siebert (2004) depict, that in larger enterprises the willingness to participate in learning opportunities is higher than in small ones. Schiersmann (2007) highlights that employees in the public sector as well as in the field of insurance and banks show the highest participation rate. Regarding the age of the participants in the "Montagsakademie", the majority is between 35 and 65. The actors of KB5 ascribe the low number of young attendants to the content of the lectures on the one hand as well as to the concurring leisure activities (football club, concert band etc.).

An aspect which should not be underestimated is the reach ability of the "Montagsakademie" including spatial nearness as well as time. Although nearness (in the survey defined as travelling time below 15 minutes) is a decisive influencing factor, nearness alone is not a sufficient condition for participation: the most influencing factor was and is the topic of the lecture. Although 57% perceived the content of the "Montagsakademie" as (very) interesting, 42% of the participants would like to co-determine the content. In the online survey the request was placed to align the choice of topics more with the regional need. Topics mentioned are for example: energy and renewable resources, health and prevention, migration. Also the survey of the Austrian Institute of Adult Education (OeIB 2004) emphasizes the importance of the adaptability of the learnt contents in everyday life apart from the sole enhancement of knowhow. Particularly within informal learning processes the applicability is of mere interest and influences the participation behaviour. This raises the question if the Karl-Franzens-

University as initiator of the “Montagsakademie” should not focus more on region-specific needs in the sense of “knowledge follows tasks” so as to guarantee the ongoing high participation rate (Peer 2007).

Regarding the individual motivation, the enhancement of private knowhow (24%) was the foremost aim, followed by curiosity (18%) as well as the aim to get new inputs for reflection and discussion (17%). The study of the Austrian Institute of Adult Education (OeIB 2008) accentuates that the intrinsic motivation including the aim to enhance the personal knowhow and competences as a well as curiosity are the dominating reasons. These outcomes are contradictory to the assumption, that Lifelong Learning is mainly driven by extrinsic forces, e.g. the need for an ongoing (further) education due to labour market-related demands and economic exploitation (Bretschneider 2004). The individual motivation is not by all authors interpreted as area of personal responsibility but interpreted as result of earlier established socio-economic circumstances (Schuetze and Casey 2006, 280).

What concerns the individual benefit of Lifelong Learning activities the enhancement of knowhow ranks first, followed by the exchange of knowledge and stimulation of critical discourses and reflection. The study conducted by the OiEB (2008) obtained a similar result but stated that a clear distinction between private and professional benefit cannot be made. Another outcome which cannot be supported by the survey on the “Montagsakademie” is the role of Lifelong Learning as activity to cope with the challenges of everyday life (blow of fate, rasing of children) as well as to counteract undesired individualisation. The reason for this can be the found in the broad range of Lifelong Learning activities targeting different topics and interested parties. Nevertheless the survey conducted on the “Montagsakademie” revealed detailed insights into the experienced added value, taking into account foremost the differences between male and female participants. One example for an apparent difference is the personal added value of “time-off from everyday life” mentioned by women (which also the OiEB study confirms 2004, 13) and in contrast to that the mentioned benefit for male participants to built up networks.

Concerning the added value for the community and region, it has to be mentioned that this aspect has mostly be discussed under the economic perspective, emphasizing the role of human capital and education for the enhancement of the regional productivity and competitiveness (Klemm 2001a). Consciously the present empirical survey focused on the “soft” added value for local and regional development, including the influence on the regional attractiveness, the quality of life, the sense of community and togetherness. The

investigation also shows, that there is a connection between the participation frequency and the growing interest into local and regional development issues, leading to the interpretation that the attendance of Lifelong Learning activities empowers the population for the engagement in their community and region. This assumption and expectation is also raised in the study of SPES (2009), who trace it back to the growth of the regional social capital. The interaction between the participants, the exchange of knowledge and building up of trust are core elements of the establishment of the regional social capital (SPES 2009; Falk and Kilpatrick 2000). As one of the main effect the reduction of reservation regarding science and scientific contents occurred, bridging the gap between the scientific "ivory tower" and the practical regional demands. Furthermore the "Montagsakademie" promotes the understanding of the need for Lifelong Learning. The surveyed participants mentioned that Lifelong Learning is a necessity to be at the pulse of the time, to develop further and to cope with the challenges of work and private life. The participants show the rational behavior as also the study of the OiEB (2008) confirmed, where learning is understood as means to an end to cope with individually perceived current and future challenges.

The empirical survey on the "Montagsakademie" gives insights into the question if, and how informal learning opportunities and activities enfold individual as well as regional added value. The individual benefit is perceived as personal, social and professional added value, although in various ways, depending on the initial socio-economic situation and also the spatial accessibility. The various individual initial situations is not to be underestimated as they influence not only the participation behaviour but also the resulting benefit. The "Montagsakademie" as a learning opportunity from the University unconsciously made a "pre-selection" of participants due to the scientific content of the lecture. But that did not take away the added value for the community and region, which is mainly enfolded in the strengthening of its social capital (SPES2009).

7 Conclusion

Coming back to the initial question if and how informal learning opportunities can provide personal benefit and influence regional development, the empirical survey conducted on the "Montagsakademie" in the Knowledge and Education centre KB5 has proven that a variety of personal and also estimated regional added values occur. Since 2005 the "Montagsakademie" in KB5 increases considerable interest in the local and regional population. That cannot only be ascribed to the content of the lecture of the

"Montagsakademie" and to the curiosity of the participants but also to the framework conditions, which have been provided in the building of KB5. Despite the increase of the personal and professional related know how – two areas which can not strictly be separated – the making of new (social) contacts, the establishment of a feeling of togetherness and trust are perceived as most fruitful outcomes of the participation at the informal learning activity "Montagsakademie". These result not only from the participation in the lecture but from the informal discussions and reflections after the "former" "Montagsakademie" in the gastronomy in the KB5 building.

Although the hitherto topics are perceived as (very) interesting, interest is affirmed to affect and jointly organize the future contents, taking more into account the regional knowledge demands (e.g. agriculture and renewable resources, energy, migration). The content of the lectures of the "Montagsakademie" is the leading reason for participating. Therefore, to achieve the estimated effects of Lifelong Learning activities such as raised identification of the regional population, increased social cohesion, enhanced regional attractiveness, the topics should be chosen more in the sense of a "knowledge follows task" so as to maintain the high participation rate. Further on not only the identity of the participants with their region through Lifelong Learning would be enhanced but also the identity of KB5 as regional learning infrastructure.

The Knowledge and Education Centre KB5 plays two main roles within the establishment of a learning region: on the one hand it functions like a multiplier that distributes and disseminates (scientific) knowledge through various activities (one of them is the "Montagsakademie") on the other hand it provides the material framework to bring people together, enhancing networking and thus supporting the establishment of social capital. These two functions lead to the building of a regional foundation of trust on which new issues – interesting and important for the further regional development – such as new learning types, the chances of ICT for rural regions can be broached incrementally.

With learning regions it is like with learning individuals: certain preconditions (e.g. knowledge basis) are needed to adopt new impulses and to take new development directions. A learning region can only be established if the single individual is able and willing to undertake Lifelong Learning Processes. Infrastructures like the Knowledge and Education Centre KB5 function as incubators for this individual transformation processes. Only the motivation and implementation on the individual level leads to an overall transformation into a *Learning* Region, whereas the whole is more than the sum of the single components, taking into account also the added value of networks and the

strengthening of social capital. Thus the potentials of Lifelong Learning can be seen in the influence on the regional development opportunities.

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