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## Abstract

Wind energy projects face strong local resistance in Switzerland. The mobilization of the local communities is key to realizing wind energy projects as these eventually decide via referendum. In reality, arguments against these projects, rumors and fears prevail and persist and may even create major conflicts in a community. While we recognized in the projects we facilitated “not in my backyard” effects and mainly a group of opponents who raise their voice, we also found in over a hundred interviews which we conducted explanations on how and why these may

emerge: Project developers informed too late, and if so, the information they provided was too technical and too public relations driven, trying to convince stakeholders rather than trying to involve them into an open, transparent and co-creative multi-stakeholder process (MSP). By co-creation, we mean an open and participatory way of creating a common ground for a given project. This contribution will highlight the key practitioner learnings of creating and maintaining co-creative multi-stakeholder processes.

## Objectives

It was the goal of this project to develop a practitioner’s guide for planning renewable energy infrastructures in Switzerland, more particularly

- how stakeholders can be meaningfully involved into a potentially conflictual project planning process,
- describing the core principles and single steps of a multistakeholder-process (MSP)
- and presenting the key practitioner learnings.

## Methods

The practitioner’s guide has been derived from overall 6 in-depth qualitative case studies on renewable energy infrastructure projects of which 3 were wind energy projects. The authors, based on theories of cross-sectoral collaboration and stakeholder engagement, have designed and facilitated a multistakeholder process (MSP) for each of the projects. In addition to the prospective wind case studies, the authors also included a retrospective case analysis of another 5 wind projects. An overview of the data collected is given in the figure below. All projects were set-off with a series of internal and external

and the expectations for a given planning process that meaningfully involves stakeholders. This served as basis for defining a concrete engagement design for each of the projects. Consequently, the facilitation of the MSPs for each of the projects has been carefully documented (steering committee meetings, stakeholder roundtables, public events, website). A final, crosscase analysis allowed for identifying robust patterns across cases in terms of a generic MSP for developing renewable energy infrastructure projects in Switzerland.

### Data collected and analyzed for developing the practitioner’s guide.

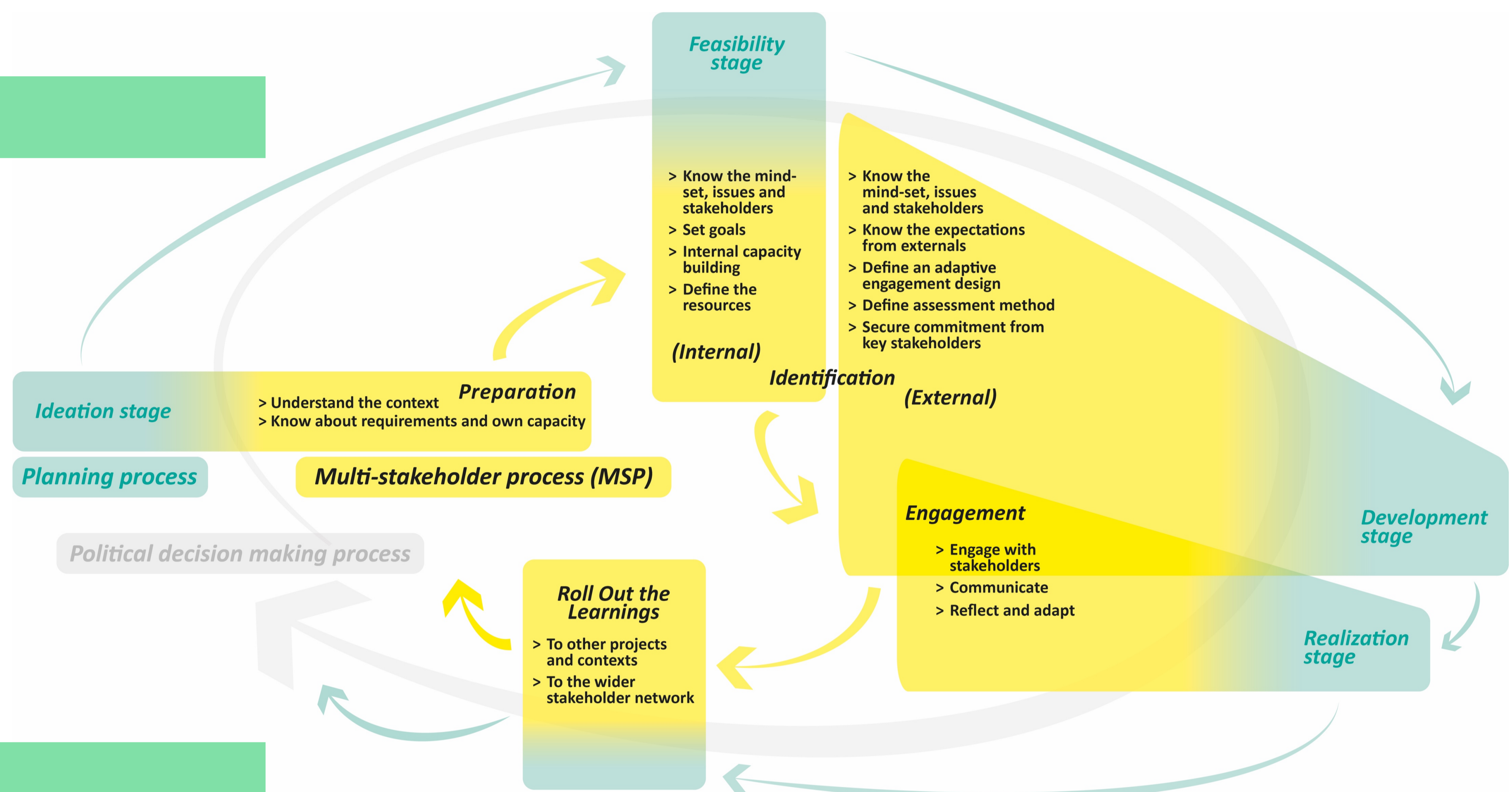
	Planning Process					Data				
	Multi-stakeholder process (MSP)	Preparation	Identification	Engagement	Roll out	Interviews	Steering committee meetings	Stakeholder roundtables	Public events	Website
Water	→	→	→	→	→	30	1	4	1	X
District heating	→	→	→	→	→	40	-	1	-	-
Geothermal	→	→	→	→	→	20	-	-	-	-
Wind I	→	→	→	→	→	50	4	4	1	X
Wind II	→	→	→	→	→	40	-	12	4	X
Wind III	→	→	→	→	→	50	7	9	5	X
Retrospective analysis of wind projects										
5 Wind Projects	→	→	→	→	→	50	8	1	4	X
Total all projects						280	20	31	15	
Total wind projects						190	19	26	14	

## Results

### The core principles of working in a co-creative MSP

- Be open to stakeholder needs.
- Be prepared to be transparent in all aspects so that stakeholders can grasp both pros and cons of a project.
- Allow for stakeholders to contribute to a project with their own solutions.
- Be ready to learn from stakeholders and work with them on eye-to-eye level rather than trying to convince them of a project.
- Create an adaptive governance structure and framework that allows for effective participation and thus also be ready to slow down the planning process in case stakeholders need it.

### The steps of working in a co-creative MSP



### The key practitioner learnings for working in a co-creative mode

- See the nature of projects as political and societal rather than purely commercial or technical. For that purpose, attune the MSP to the political process and the technical project planning process so that stakeholders can effectively participate.
- Set the stage for participation early in the project planning.
- Start involving stakeholders in the feasibility and development stage so that they are provided with information on the project and that they know about their rights and possibilities to participate ahead of time.
- Understand a project in its local context.
- Stakeholders mention a broad set of issues, not only related to the wind energy project per se: Be open to hear those.
- Adopt a design approach to an MSP with the final, democratic referendum in mind.

## Conclusions

- While our cases cannot be generalized in a statistical sense, they can give an in-depth account of what it means for developers to offer an MSP to stakeholders and how, as a result, public perception and so far mainly negatively coined narratives may change over time and as a result, a more engaged and constructive dialogue with stakeholders is possible.
- So far, co-creative MSPs are not common. In that sense, trust from all sides in working in such a mode and also knowing its potential and limits needs time to develop.
- See the long-term potential of MSPs in initiating more large scale change in the energy sector. Each project is a cell to go through a learning process that can be rolled out both to other projects and also the wider stakeholder network.

## References

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