

“Local Energy Transition Experiments” for a low-carbon society transformation – Piloting a transition management process in the Bernese Alps




Research project by: CDE Centre for Development and Environment, University of Bern;
Wyss Academy for Nature & Canton of Bern, Office for Environment and Energy (AUE).
Funded by the Swiss Federal Office of Energy

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We initiate, implement, and evaluate a transition management process towards climate neutrality in the Berner Oberland-Ost.

The «Regional Conference Oberland-Ost» made it a strategic goal to become climate neutral.



More specifically, we aim to jointly develop “energy experiments” which reduce the region’s carbon footprint.

- Housing
- Consumption
- Private sector (incl. agriculture and forestry)
- Communication
- Mobility
- Energy
- Tourism

Research Questions

- How to support the development and implementation of local projects or «energy experiments»?
 - Which socio-technical and social innovations are triggered by the applied participatory approach?
 - What institutional, economic, infrastructural, ecological, and social factors support or inhibit implementation and establishment of corresponding innovations and how could these be addressed through (adapted) policy (mixes)?
 - To what extent can the context-specific results be generalized to other areas in the sense of a reflexive governance approach?



Theory

Transition management

- Process is guided by theory from
 - Transition literature (Geels 2002; Coenen et al. 2012) & Transition management (Loorbach et al. 2017; Wittmayer, 2016; Luederitz et al. 2017),
 - Social acceptance (Wolsink, 2018; Wüstenhagen et al., 2007)

Transition team – Initiation and guiding of the process



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Canton de Berne



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Transition arena – Develops a common vision and agenda

Around 40-50 representatives from i.a. municipalities, energy sector, tourism sector, mobility sector, agricultural and forestry sector and civil society and more...

Transition networks – Implements elements of the agenda

9 different project ideas

Theory

Supporting factors

- Strategic goal of the regional conference
- Engaged and strong/close collaboration of scientific and local stakeholder
- Process informed by scientific knowledge



Timetable

Local actors

Implementation of the
Transition Agenda i.e. the
«energy experiments»

September
2021

December
2021

June
2022

November
2022

Summer
2023

Workshop 1
Joint Problem
Framing

Workshop 2
Vision &
Transition
pathways

Workshop 3
Transition
Agenda

**Networking
event**

Workshop 4
Joint
reflection

- System and stakeholder-analysis
- Interviews with local actors

Survey

- Local population
- Attitudes towards vision developed in the workshops
- Attitudes towards climate-neutral activities

**Launch
participation-
platform**

Developing a Transition Agenda

Providing Feedback

- Evaluate each goal on:
 - Potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (based on CO₂ Balance)
 - Synergies with other goals (Mapping of interactions à la Nilsson et al. (2016))
 - Acceptance by the local population (Survey)



Providing Inspiration

- Inviting speakers from other Alpine regions
- Collection of best practices, from within and outside the region.



Developing a Transition Agenda

Sector

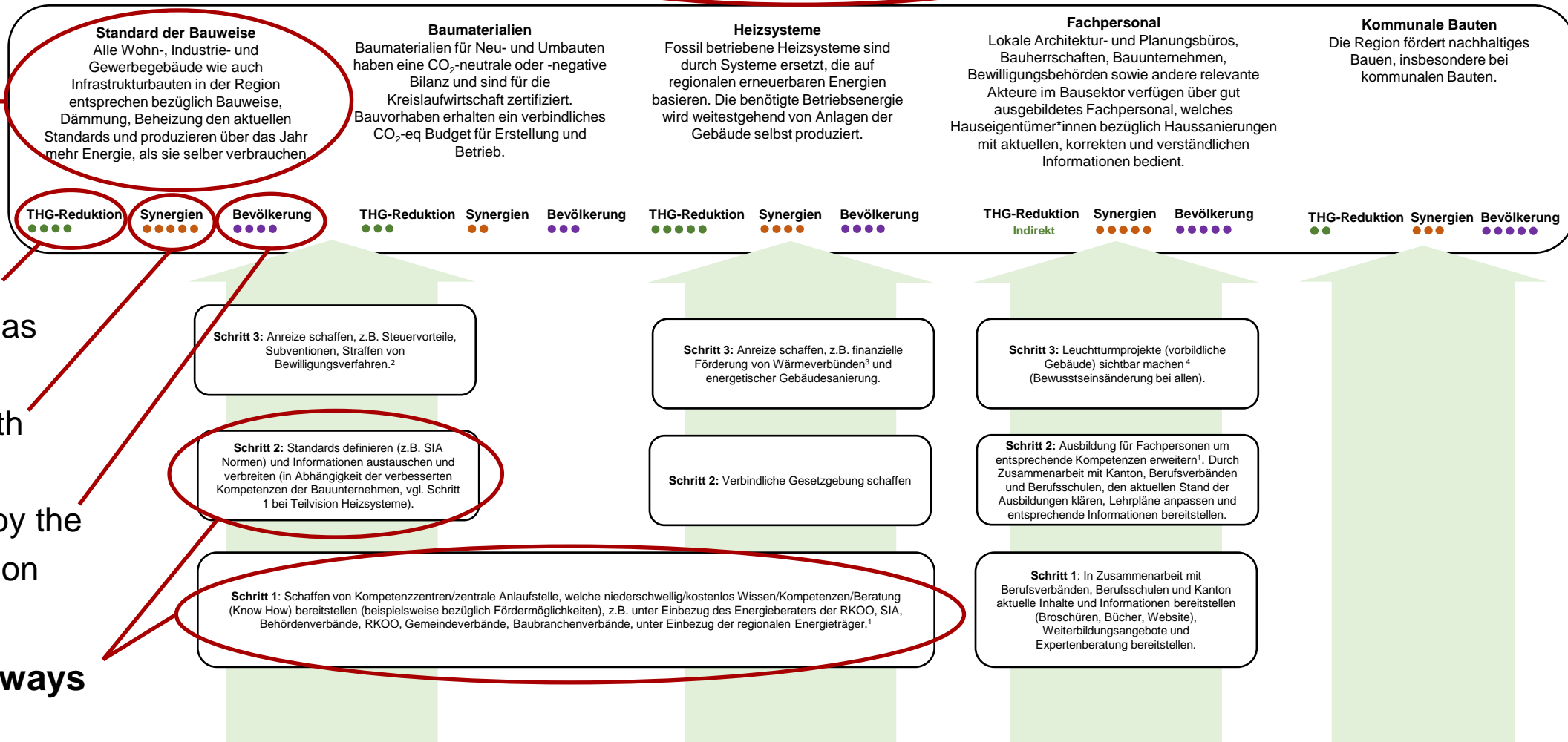
Gebäude und Wohnen

Goals

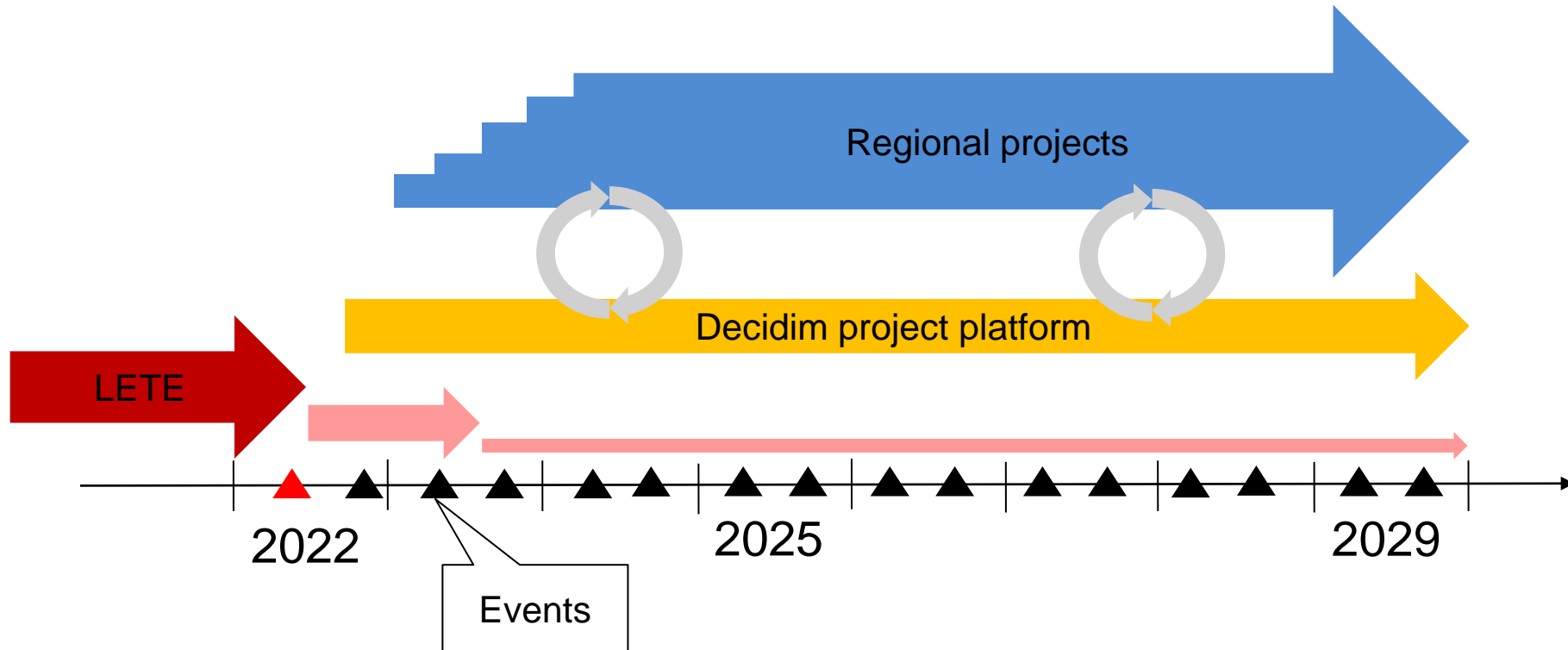
Evaluation

- Potential for reduction greenhouse gas emissions
- Synergies with other goals
- Acceptance by the local population

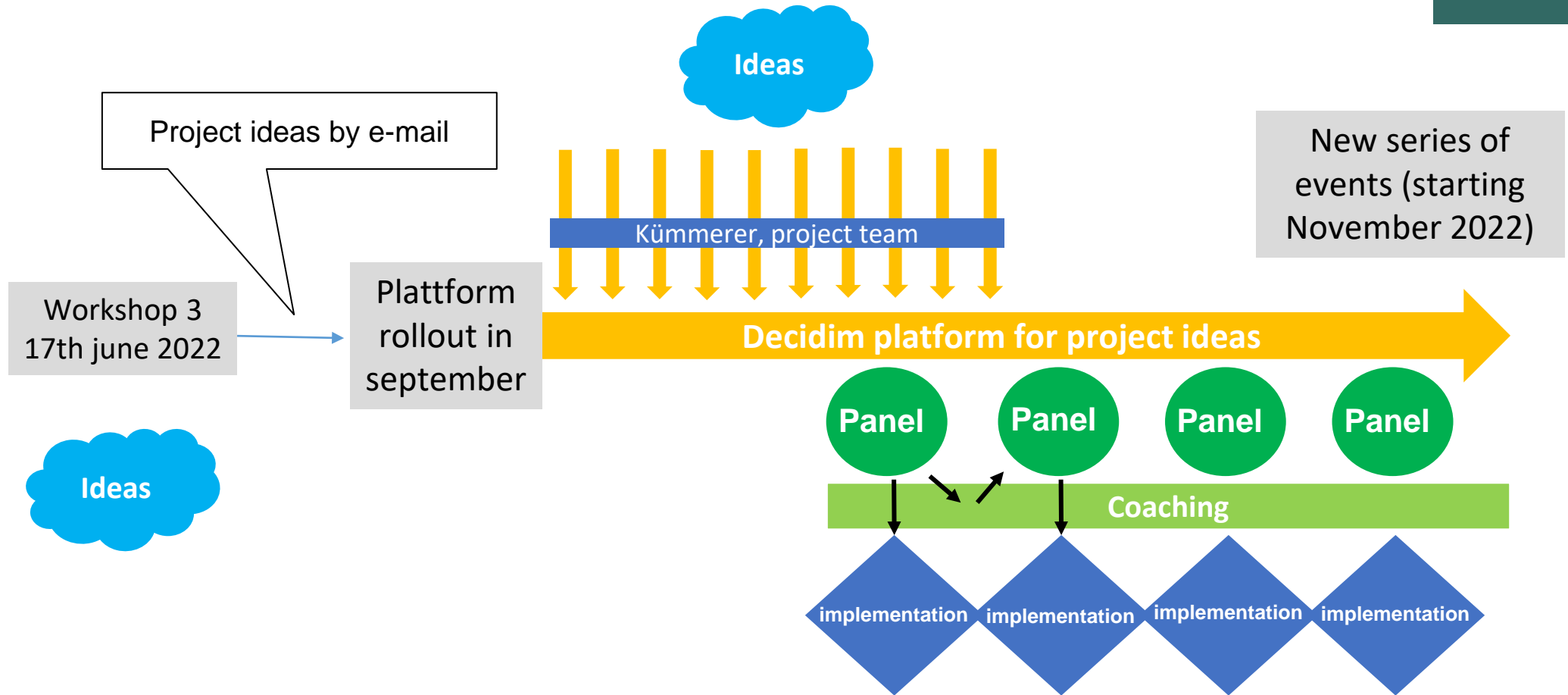
Steps of the transition pathways



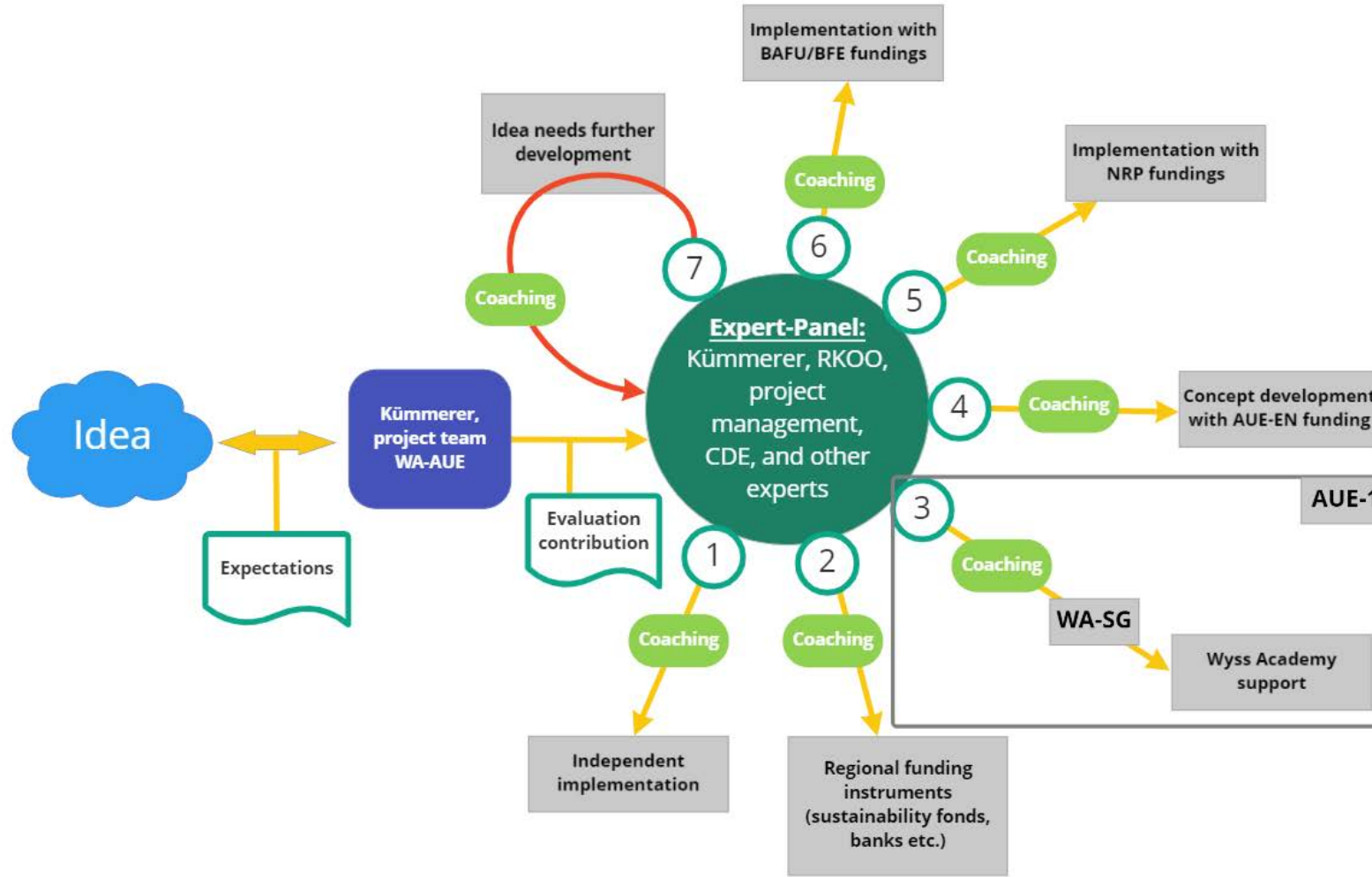
Project overview



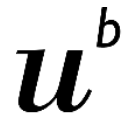
A continuous process



From ideas to implementation



Achievements



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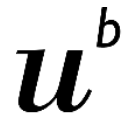
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- Shared and highly committed common problem view and visions
- Project ideas / «energy experiments» developed by local actors, informed by the common agenda
- Institutionalizing and anchored process («Kümmerer», support from Canton)

Future challenges

- How to keep actors engaged?
- How to reach the local community and businesses (use of digital platform, physical events, «Kümmerer» -> caretaker)
- To what extent can the research process be replicated in other regions?

Thank you!



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More Information

Project website:

https://www.cde.unibe.ch/research/projects/local_energy_transition_experiments_for_a_low_carbon_society/index_eng.html

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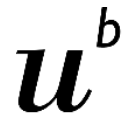
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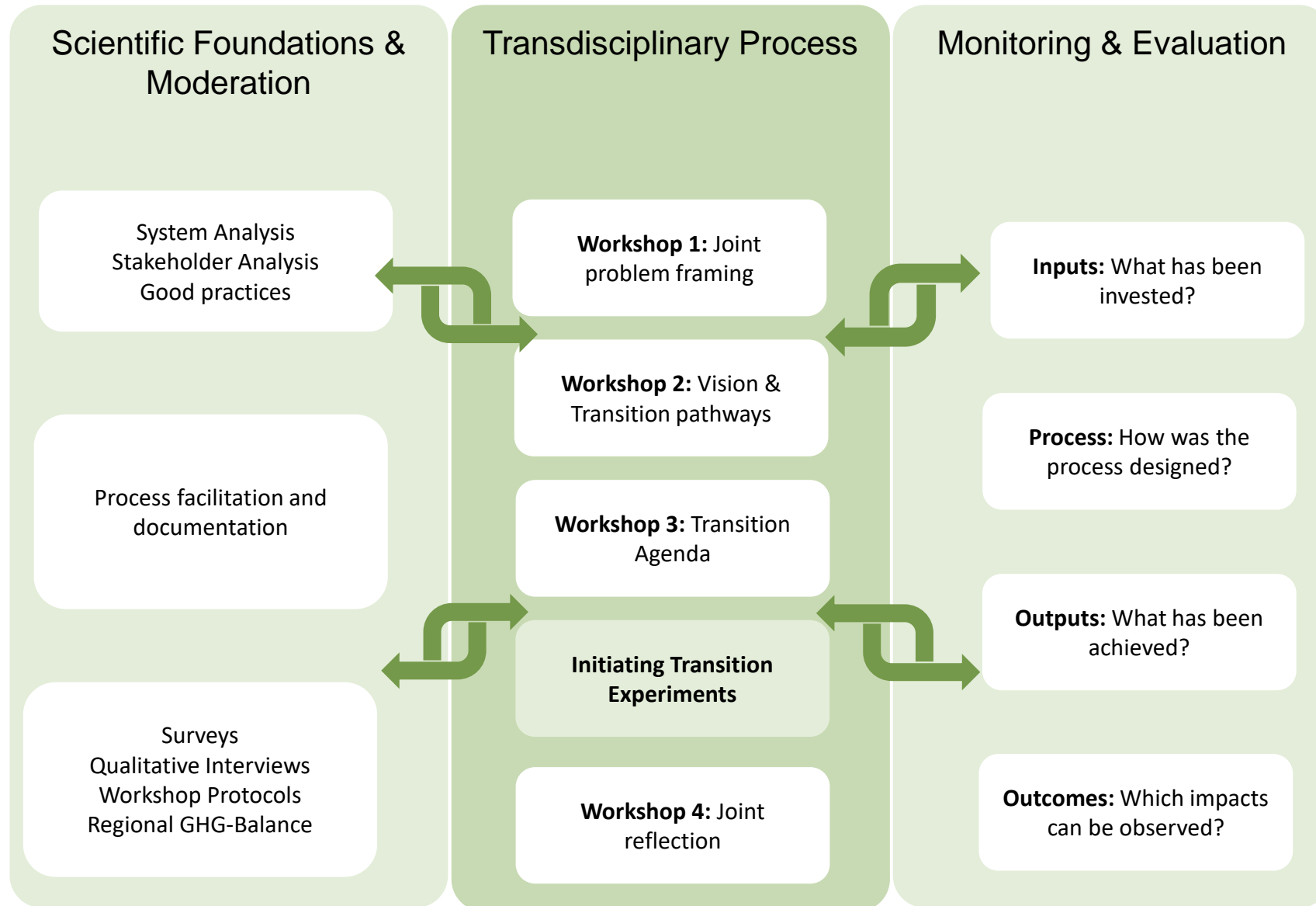
Appendix



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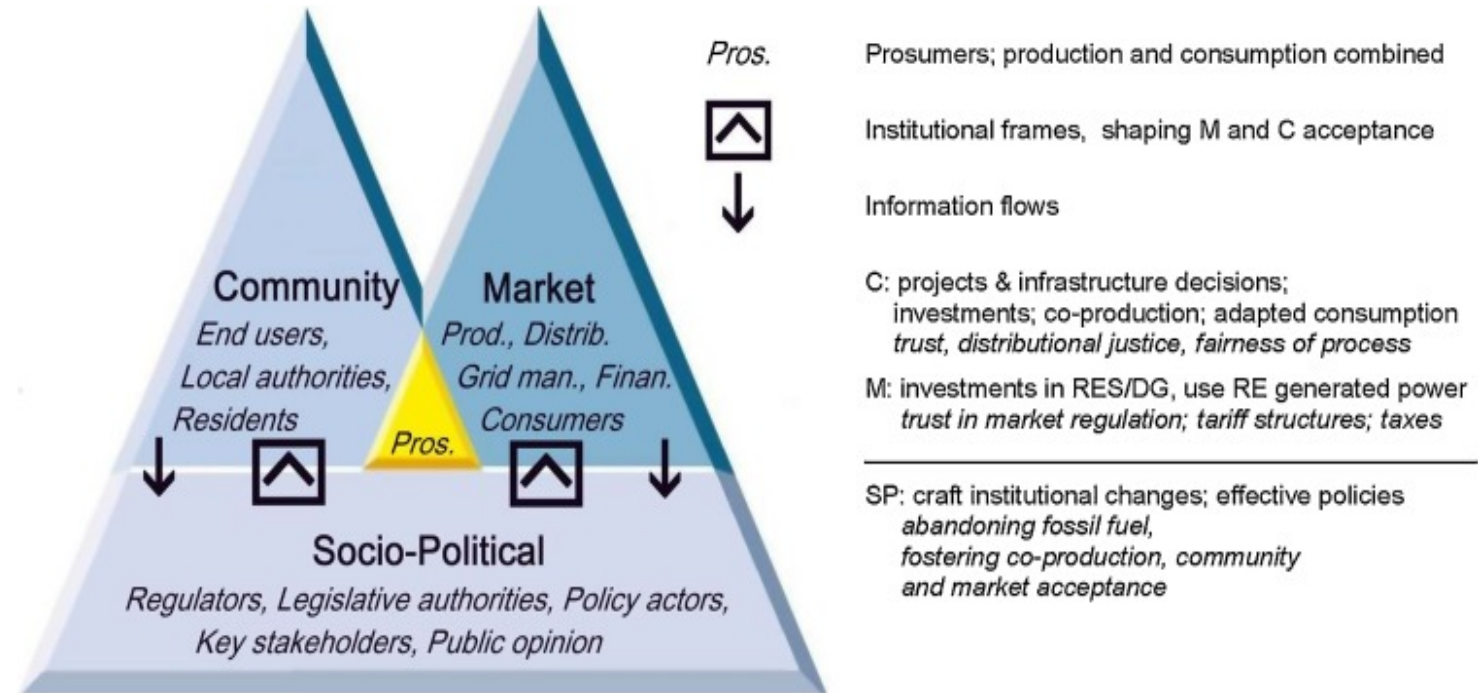
Project Overview



Theory

Social acceptance

- Socio-political acceptance: General positive/negative attitudes. Does not imply support for concrete or local projects.
- Community acceptance: Concerns the acceptance of specific projects (such as siting decisions).
- Market acceptance covers economic dimension. Adoption of technologies by consumers, as well as investors.



Theory

Transition literature

- Over the last 10 years → Rise of scientifically guided multi-actor initiatives which aim to support sustainability transitions (Hyysalo et al., 2019; Luederitz et al. 2017).
- Transitions as socio-technical processes (Geels 2002; Loorbach et al. 2017).
 - Lack of spatial dimension (Coenen et al. 2012; Truffer et al. 2015) therefore take into account:
 - Difference in regional political systems and power dynamics.
 - Spill-over to regions with different geographical features.

