@gellis23

Complexity of concern:
Social acceptance of wind energy and the inevitability of dissensus

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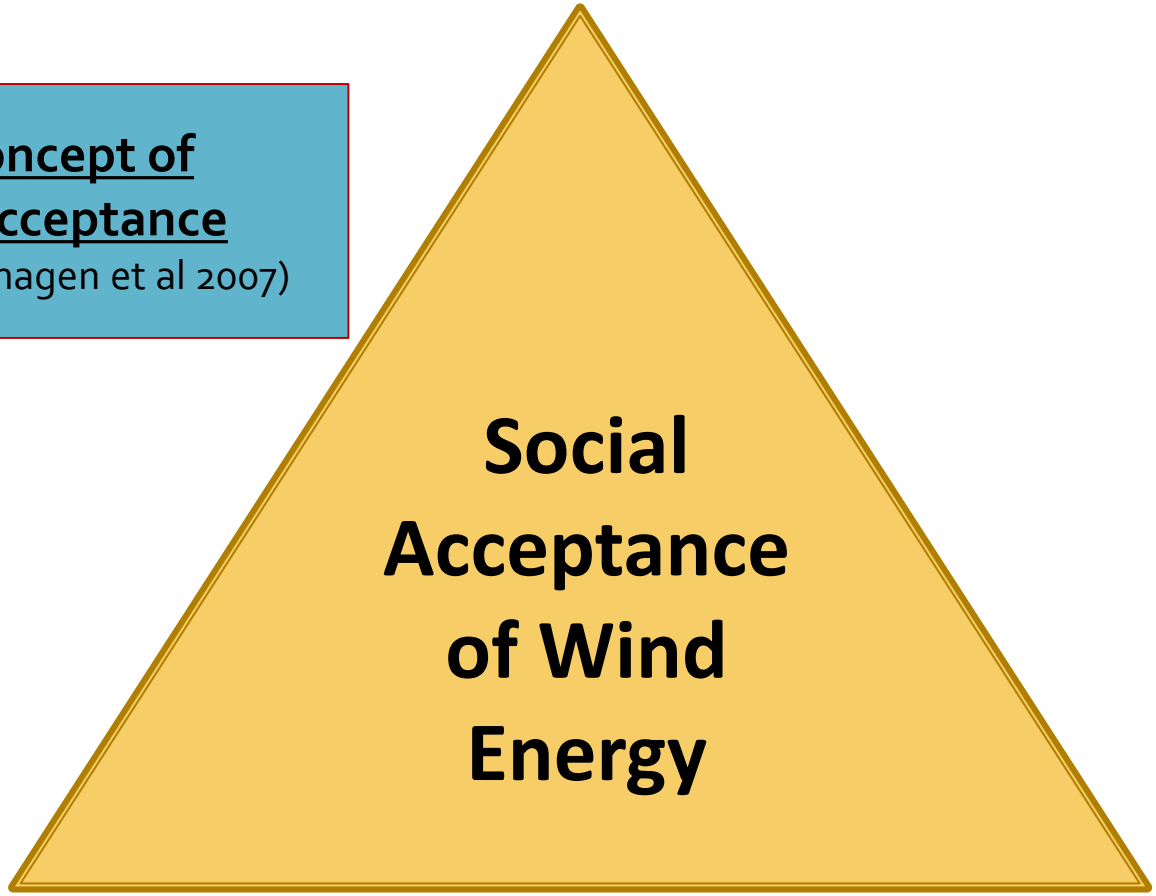
- The concept of ‘acceptance’;
- Drivers of opposition/acceptance;
- The goal of acceptance strategies?
- The need to start re-framing the problem …

Community acceptance

Related to the acceptance of specific wind energy developments by host communities.

The Concept of Social Acceptance
(after Wustenhagen et al 2007)



Socio-political acceptance

Related to acceptance of wind technology as a viable energy source and supported in government policy and by the general public

Market acceptance

Related to the acceptance of wind technology by investors, financial institutions and consumers of electricity

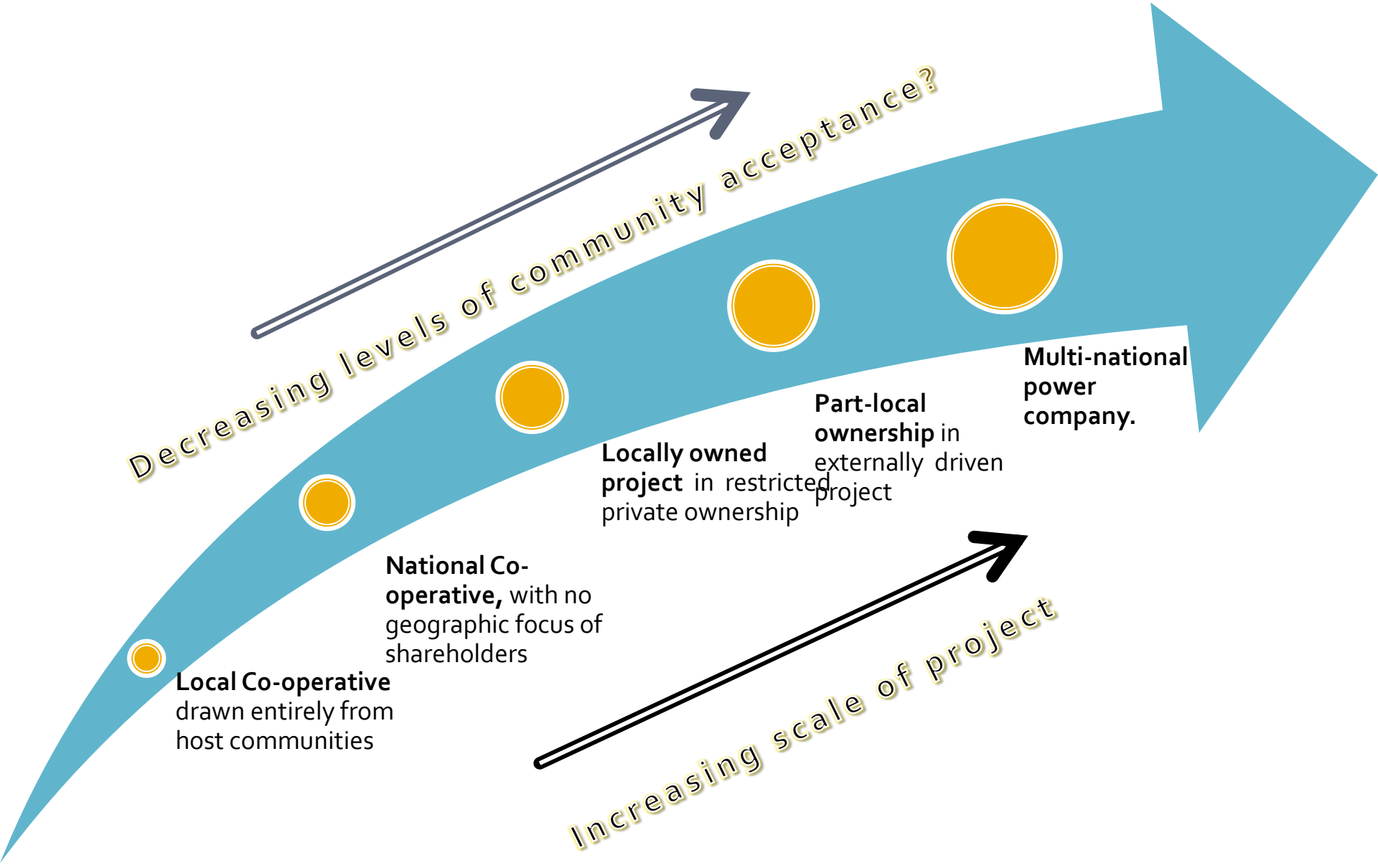
The language of 'acceptance'

- Social acceptance has been an invaluable concept for focussing on the 'problem' and its elements.
- Batel and Devine Wright (2013) and the language of acceptance;
  - 'Acceptance' justifies, legitimises and reproduces the top-down perspectives
  - It largely focussing on objectors;
  - It neglects terms such as support, uncertainty, resistance, or apathy.
- This also tends to prioritise the consenting process , not long term relationships,
- It this allows 'winners' rather than a settling of differences
- Are there alternatives or supplements to the concept'?

Opposition to wind energy projects is driven by:

- **Health and environmental impacts**;
  - Concerns over visual, bio-diversity, well-being impacts on local area etc;
- **Fairness of decision-making process;**
  - Lack of trust in developers, regulators and the transparency of the consenting regime;.
- **Perceived distribution of costs and benefits;**
  - Fear that external companies accrue key benefits, while local communities bear main costs;

Scale-acceptance trade offs?



Multi-level scales of concern and governance

- Multi-scalar influences on energy governance and the drivers for wind energy. For example in the UK:
  - Global energy/climate concerns
  - EU targets;
  - Energy as a UK national issue;
  - Reliance of devolved administrations for delivery of renewables;
  - The 'territorialisation ' of energy through the municipal planning process;
  - Local site battles aim to reframe level and scale of concerns.
- *Apart* from local site disputes , the spatial dimension of energy policy/governance is largely undeveloped.

Complexity of concern

- The normative goal of policy remains consensus, although this is rarely, if ever found.
- Dissensus across spatial scales of governance and project size, yet acceptance tends to be focused on individual projects.
- Dissensus across and between many key stakeholders, yet attention is largely focussed on objectors;
- Intricacies and influence of local cultures and contexts.

So where does this leave us?

- Community acceptance increasingly looking like it will define the ultimate level of wind energy across Europe;
- The situation seems to be getting worse rather than improving;
  - Denial-Anger-Bargaining-Depression-Acceptance
- Responses seem ad hoc (e.g. Community benefits)
- We don't really know what is working or why?
- Weak links between energy and planning policy
- Timeframes seem inadequate;
- Institutions, cultures and practices seem to be inadequate to the challenge of community acceptance.
- How can we stimulate innovation and experimentation?

Re-thinking acceptance?

- Replace acceptance with 'Transition' as the central focus of research enquiry and policy;
- Engage more stakeholders, at different scales and chronologies;
- Explore the appropriate use of authoritarian, competitive and collaborative processes

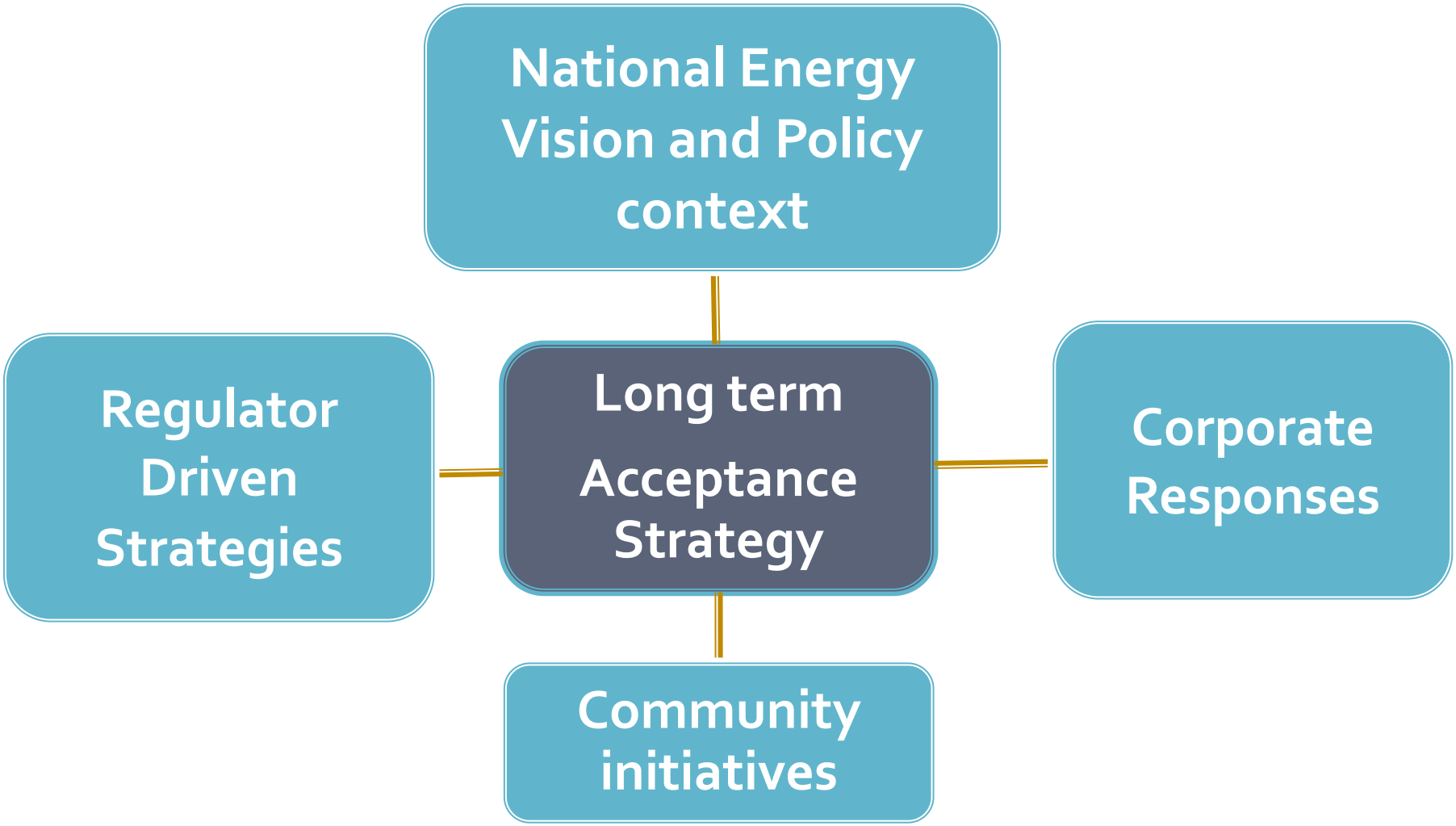
http://www.aurecongroup.com/en/thinking/archive/the-transition-towards-a-sustainable-public-private-partnership-regime.aspX

'Acceptance' as a Transition issue

- Reinforces energy as socio-technical system;
- Helps focus on the need to foster innovation niches for approaches to acceptance;
- Awareness of the influence of the regime to be open to such experiences;
- Gives rise to concepts such as :
  - Tension: mismatches between the regime and the landscape
  - Stress: internal mismatches within the regime
  - Pressure: mismatch from niches upwards
- The need for a long term vision, careful management and scope for innovation

*Frantzeskaki and de Haan

Elements of a better approach to community acceptance



Some suggestions…

- **Government Actions**:
  - A 30 year national transition plan: structures, cultures, practices;
  - Local transition plans;
  - Community energy strategy;
  - A focus on trust building in policy and decision-making.
- **Regulator Actions:**
  - Transparent decision-making with adequate opportunities for voice, in which all are respected;
  - Linking spatial planning policy with energy policy;
  - Compensation and ownership initiatives;
  - Rethinking the ownership of the wind resource?

Authoritarian – Competitive - Collaborative

Some suggestions…

- **Corporate actions:**
  - Recognising, mitigating, avoiding and compensating local impacts;
  - Greater self regulation or accreditation in social engagement
  - Creating space for innovation in 'acceptance' : Community wind auctions?
- **Community actions:**
  - Local advocacy and links to sustainability strategies (e.g. Transition Towns, LA21);
  - Promotion of Co-operatives and community asset transfers;
  - Increased use of intermediary bodies;
  - Deliberative processes for local energy strategies.

Authoritarian – Competitive - Collaborative

Final words

- Is acceptance still a useful concept?
- What are the implications of rejecting consensus and recognising the inevitability of dissensus?
- How can we conceptualise and manage the complexity of acceptance?
- Using Transition Studies to reframe 'acceptance' issues.

Thank you

- **Scenario 1: Current Trajectory**
  - Ad hoc improvements in engagement, varied practice, local pockets of opposition.
- **Scenario 2: 'Public rejection'**
  - Poor projects or major incident turn wind toxic, resulting in widespread collapse of social acceptance.
- **Scenario 3/4: 'Local variation' (nationally/locally-led)**
  - Practice varies according to practice of municipalities, some areas welcome wind energy, while, some reject it.
- **Scenario 5: 'Consolidation and re-powering'**
  - Wind energy becomes isolated to redeveloping existing schemes.
- **Scenario 6: 'Community-driven'**
  - Widespread support for community schemes, backlash to larger, externally owned schemes
- **Scenario 7: 'Social buy-in'**
  - Universal support, competing for attracting new schemes