

## Success factors for participatory procedures in deep geothermal energy projects

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It is widely recognized that participatory procedures lead to increased acceptability of decisions made about the deployment of new technologies with complex risk characteristics. In the present study, we examine success factors for participatory procedures involving the general public and other stakeholders in deep geothermal projects. We draw on three case studies of participatory dialogues with stakeholders and local citizens, conducted during deep geothermal energy projects in Switzerland and Germany. Success is measured by the stability of the decisions shaped by the conducted participatory procedures. Our results suggest that broad and context-specific risk management (including technical, economic, social and ecological aspects) as well as an honest commitment of the project developer to involving the public form the basis for sound participation. The general aim of the participatory procedure should be to form an acceptable project or decision but not to create acceptance of an existing project. It is important to consider local issues and to start participatory procedures as early as possible. Transparency during the project and open-ended decisions increase trust and are other prerequisites for success. Giving a pseudo-voice to local citizens may even backfire and raise the potential of public protest against the project. Individuals or groups that may be harmed by the project need to be given special attention. Moreover, it might be beneficial for the stability of the decisions made to involve local citizens by offering the possibility of making financial investments in the geothermal project. In our three case studies, we gained broad support from our participants for the early involvement of stakeholders including the general public. We conclude that local participatory dialogues are helpful for reaching stable political decisions about the deployment of deep geothermal projects and other technologies with complex risk characteristics.