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Stakeholder Management Interessengemeinschaft Aaregondel

Live Project Work 2021

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1 Introduction

The Live Project Work module connects students' theoretical knowledge with a hands-on business case. This project team consists of four part-time international management bachelor program students. With four different specialization programs and industries in which they are working, those students have gathered a broad range of academic and practical knowledge. For this project, the students get the chance to work with the interest group Aaregondel.

The interest group Aaregondel (IG Aaregondel) was founded in Mai 2021 by Reto Paul Grimm. The purpose of the IG Aaregondel is to launch an innovative urban transportation infrastructure, which meets the standards of the fast-developing communities in the canton of Solothurn. The east of Solothurn is undergoing significant changes and will continue to do so in the years ahead. For example, in Luterbach and Zuchwil, housing expansion is moving forward. While on the Attisholz-Areal, a transformation project will create housing for additional residents in the four-digit range by 2045. Furthermore, Biogen's biotechnology company will create up to 600 additional jobs for highly qualified personnel (Biogen, 2020). This increase in people will pose a significant challenge for the public transport infrastructure and create the untapped potential that needs to be filled.

Within the scope of this project work, the students develop and partially implement a comprehensive stakeholder management framework. This framework shall provide a clear structure and guidance for stakeholder management in the future to secure successful collaboration and communication between the stakeholders and the IG Aaregondel. Additionally, the project team gathers information from statistical calculations about the demographic development in these areas. The numbers and information will be used for financial models. These models, however, will neither be constructed nor applied by the student.

This paper starts with a literature review. After that, the paper is divided into a qualitative and quantitative research part. The qualitative part includes the stakeholder management framework, which will be essential for this project work and reflected throughout this paper. The framework will analyse all stakeholders involved or affected by the Aaregondel project. By elaborating on stakeholders' different viewpoints, opinions, and possible interests, the project team can filter out the most influential parties and contact them accordingly. Together with the IG, the team has developed interview guidelines for chosen stakeholders, which will allow for structured and beneficial discussions.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Project Stakeholder Management

The concept of stakeholders was first introduced into the general management discussion by Freeman (1984). It was then Cleland (1986) who introduced the stakeholder concept into the project management universe. A project stakeholder is defined as a person, group, or organization, inside or outside the project team that has either an interest in the project, is affected by it or can affect its outcome in some way (Eskerod & Huemann, 2013). The various stakeholders of a project may often conflict, and they might not all be delighted with the outcome (Olander, 2007). Consequently, stakeholder management helps evaluate and tactically approach the stakeholders concerning the project objectives to define which demands, interests, and concerns will be satisfied or addressed (Olander, 2007). Understanding to what extent a stakeholder can influence a project, react to decisions, and to what extent these reactions can influence other stakeholders could significantly leverage the success of the project (Cleland, 1986).
Therefore, according to Slack et al. (2006), the following three step approach for stakeholder analysis is recommended:

1. Identify stakeholders
2. Prioritize stakeholders
3. Understand key stakeholders

As mentioned above, it is crucial to determine who can have an impact on the project to assess risks and be able to develop strategies (Demir et al., 2015). As soon as the most significant stakeholders have been collected, one should bring a structure and prioritize them to allocate most of the effort and time (Demir et al., 2015). One way to approach this is by applying the concepts of agenda-setting, indexing, framing, and priming, which will be explained below in more detail. Lastly, to thoroughly understand key stakeholders' expectations and know how to manage them, an interest/influence grid, also known as stakeholder mapping, can find suitable strategies and make communication more effective (Demir et al., 2015)

2.2 Frameworks in Stakeholder Management

Stakeholder management can be conducted by applying different frameworks and methodologies. This section takes a closer look at the concepts of agenda setting, indexing, framing, and priming. Altogether, these will later be merged to a single framework which is used for the project work.

2.2.1 Agenda-setting

The term agenda-setting was initially introduced by McCombs and Shaw (1972) in their study "THE AGENDA-SETTING FUNCTION OF MASS MEDIA". Their publication, which is nowadays better known as the "Chapel Hill study", revealed the influence mass media has on the topics its readers perceive as relevant (Eichhorn, 2005). It is, however, necessary to mention that the sample size in the study was only 100 people. McCombs and Shaw (1972, p. 184) recognise the limited significance of their publication within the paper. Nevertheless, based on the Chapel-Hill study, Scheufele and Tewksbury (2006) defined *agenda-setting* as the theory that the mass audience's importance to any issue correlates to the emphasis the mass media places on this issue. If this theory is accepted and the mass media is seen as an essential factor to influence public opinion, then the following question arises: Who sets the topics that should be emphasised by the media and how (Eichhorn, 2005)? Thanks to McCombs and Shaws' study analysing the agenda-setting concept became a significant field in communication research. Until today, the two central variables, namely "importance" (salience) and "issue", are yet to be defined adequately (Eichhorn, 2005, p. 8). Being a complex but influential topic for whole societies, scientists will continue their research on agenda-setting.

2.2.2 Indexing

According to Lawrence (2012), indexing is used in media. She argues that news content tends to be in line with the political debate of elites. In the case of political elites, such as congressional leaders, news content is mainly influenced by their discussion. If congressional leaders favour a topic, news content does advocate the same opinion.

Bennett (2018) argues that many democratic press systems can use indexing to decide what news content to publish, as democracy assumes that the opinion of political elites reflects the public interest (Hallin, 1986, as cited in Bennett, 2018).

2.2.3 Framing

Framing is a communications approach based on psychology and sociology (Pan & Kosicki, 1993). The underlying consideration of framing is that the public's understanding of a particular issue is influenced by how it is characterized in news reports (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2006). It is believed that individuals cannot make sense of the world around them by themselves and therefore need "primary frameworks" to interpret and classify information (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2006, p. 11). Additionally, framing can be a helpful method to reduce the complexity of a subject for the audience. Gamson (1989) argues that framing is a connector of the content and meaning of a message. Hence, the execution of the framing process reveals the competencies of professional communication managers (Eichhorn, 2005).

Regularly, the concepts of agenda-setting and framing are confused. Based on media effects, Scheufele and Tewksbury (2006) identified differences in the creation, the processing, and the production of news messages as critical aspects to distinguish between the two theories. Especially the production, also described as the “locus of effect”, supports the understanding of the difference. Agenda-setting mainly focuses on how much attention a particular issue receives and, therefore, influences whether we think about the said issue or not. On the other hand, framing concentrates on the interpretation of an issue and, in contrast, influences how we think about something.

2.2.4 Priming

As the last step in the framework process, priming helps the receiver of a message develop a comprehensive opinion. *Priming* can be defined as a basic expression of human memory. It influences how people perceive and interpret topics and concepts in the world. (Henson, 2003).

With priming, mass media can increase the accessibility and importance of a message to the audience whilst making the message more conspicuous and accessible to be retrieved from memory when making a judgement (Scheufele, 2000).

Domke, Shah and Wackman (1998) define the priming effect as: “the process by which activated mental constructs can influence how individuals evaluate other concepts and ideas”. Their paper has tested hypotheses about the influence of different political issues discussed in media. Some topics discussed in media can activate specific memories and cognitions, which are more accessible for an individual when interpreting a message. For example, the paper explains that media that focuses on moral and ethical dimensions in their issues can prime the perception of readers and can lead to a moral and ethical based interpretation in other topics. As an example, this priming effect in political media can influence voters’ opinions about a presidential candidate.

2.2.5 Stakeholder mapping

After defining who the key stakeholders of a specific project are, an effective strategy that can be used next is stakeholder mapping (Williams & Lewis, 2008). The stakeholder map, developed by Mendelow in 1991, has received considerable recognition in the literature and serves as a tool to classify stakeholders based on their degree of interest and influence in the project (Williams & Lewis, 2008 as cited in Mendelow, 1991). As shown in Figure 1, this model is visualized as an interest/influence matrix divided into four sections where for each section, a strategy on how to manage the stakeholder is suggested (Ludovico et al., 2020). Thus, depending on where the stakeholder is placed, they should be either highly involved in the project, kept satisfied, informed, or monitored.

Even though both dimensions are somewhat subjective perceptions since there is almost no literature available on measuring them, they remain fundamental insights that help determine a stakeholder's approximate position and expectations (Reed et al., 2009). Another vital aspect of the model is its dynamic concept, as the location of a stakeholder in the matrix can change during the project (Williams & Lewis, 2008). Hence, when using an interest/influence matrix, one may try to analyse the stakeholder's current position and try to move the ones in the upper left quadrant (high power, low interest) to the upper right quadrant (high power, high interest), and the ones in the lower left quadrant (low power, low interest) to the lower right quadrant (low power, high interest).

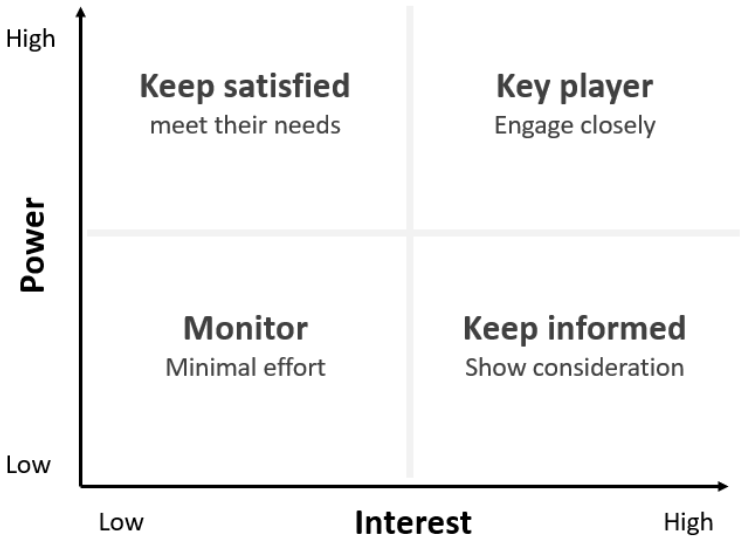


Figure 1: Interest / influence matrix (Williams & Lewis, 2008)

3 Method / Data

Two overarching goals were defined in the project charter for this project work. One was qualitative, and the other quantitative.

In the qualitative part of this work, the project team will engage with the stakeholders of the Aaregondel project to capture their sentiment. First, they will be identified, scaffolded according to specific criteria, then the attitude will be captured and analysed based on interviews/discussions. This will serve the interest group to successfully engage with the stakeholders in the long term to ensure the realization of their project.

In identifying the stakeholders, we proceeded as follows. At the beginning of the project team's assignment, they had to read up on the topic of the Aaregondel and familiarize themselves with the project. This research already revealed several stakeholders who seemed essential to the project

team. The nature conservation associations, for example, had already publicly expressed their opinion on the project, as the route of the gondola would pass through a nature reserve.
In the first meeting between IG Aaregondel and the project team, the critical stakeholders were determined and shortly afterwards, the interest group members compiled a list with the contact details of the respective stakeholders. This served the project team as a starting point for establishing contact. The project team then contacted the stakeholders identified by the IG Aaregondel as most essential and arranged eight meetings, all of which took place between the end of November and the beginning of December. In the next step, essential discussion points were defined with the IG, which should form the framework for the discussions between the project team and the stakeholders. The project team then refined these points and adapted them to the respective stakeholder to facilitate the most targeted and productive exchange possible. Finally, in consultation with the stakeholders, all conversations were recorded. This allows for a complete and thorough review of the meetings.

In addition to the interviews, the project team applies a stakeholder management framework to provide the interest group with a guide for future stakeholder management. This framework consists of the items "agenda-setting", "indexing", "framing", and "priming", as can be seen in Figure 2, and is explained in the literature review. The stakeholders are assigned to these categories based on their role in the Aaregondel project. Therefore, the four points should help analyse which stakeholders determine the topics, which give these topics the necessary weight, which influences the interpretation of the topics and finally, who activates the interpretation patterns. It is about formulating critical messages tailored to the needs of the respective stakeholders and how these can be met, in this case through the realization of the Aaregondel. This should result in a predefined desired behaviour that contributes to the implementation of the project.

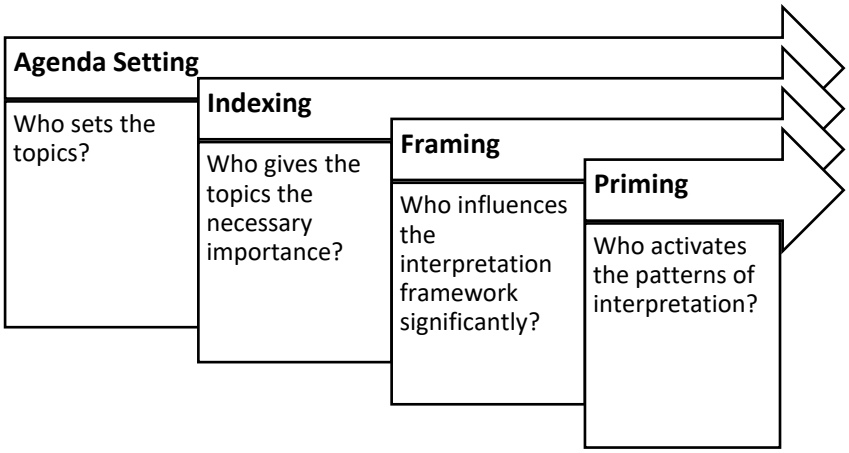


Figure 2: Stakeholder Management Framework (own illustration; Casanova, 2021)

The second overarching goal is a quantitative one. In doing so, the project team checks and verifies the figures on demographic change and demand figures that the IG assumes in its planning and highlights any differences. To check these figures, the project team refers to various sources from the responsible cantonal offices and the mobility concept developed by Halter AG for the Attisholz-Areal transformation project. These sources are secondary and contain primarily quantitative data.

4 Stakeholder Analysis

We have applied the framework presented above to the identified stakeholders in the following. First, the stakeholders identified in the meeting with the IG Aaregondel were classified below in a graphical representation, as seen in Figure 3, based on the previously explained stakeholder management framework. The stakeholders considered most important for the success of the Aaregondel project were then analysed based on various criteria. For the correct understanding of this work, it is essential to know that the analyses were carried out before the stakeholder meetings.

Agenda Setting

Stakeholders	Key messages	Targeted behavior
CWA Constructions Corp.	Contract / Platform for further projects	Lucrative collaboration
Seilbahn Weissenstein AG	Operations / Growth opportunities	Willingness to collaborate
Solothurn Tourism	Additional attraction for tourism and culture (Attisholz)	Positive mindset and promotion
Sport-Center Zuchwil	Increase visitor numbers	Positive mindset and promotion
Sovision	Regional and future-oriented transportation project (matching visions)	Promotion and development of project
Espace Solothurn (Location Promotion)	Location promotion / regional and future-oriented transportation project	Promotion through networking
Viso	Testimonials	Professional visualisation of the project

Figure 3: Stakeholder Management Framework applied to the interest group's stakeholders (own illustration; Casanova, 2021)

Stakeholders	Key messages	Targeted behavior
Municipalities	Development for residential and industrial projects	Non-bureaucratic support
Economy (Biogen, Halter, Swissprime, ABB)	Promotion of business activities	Lucrative collaboration
Industrial Association Solothurn	Promotion of industrial framework conditions (jobs and residential projects	Promotion through networking
Chamber of Commerce Solothurn	Promotion of industrial framework conditions (increase in quality of life)	Promotion through networking
Public Departments (Amt für Raumplanung, Amt für Gemeinden, Amt für Verkehr und Tiefbau, Amt für Umwelt)	Development for residential and industrial projects	Non-bureaucratic support
Kontexplan	Contract / testimonials for future oriented project	Consultation and support

Indexing

Figure 4: Stakeholder Management Framework applied to the interest group's stakeholders (own illustration; Casanova, 2021)

	Stakeholders	Key messages	Targeted behavior
Framing	Local Politics	Innovation, sustainability, economic efficiency, quality of life	Increase relevancy
Framing	Media	Conviction of an existing need to spread a positive attitude towards the project	Positive reporting
Framing	Nature Conservation Associations (BirdLife, Pro Natura)	Long-term sustainability / Inputs for optimal line management	Passive support / find agreement
Priming	National Politics	Innovative development project	Non-bureaucratic support
Priming	SBB	Expansion of public transport offer	Cooperation with Seilbahn Weissenstein AG

Figure 5: Stakeholder Management Framework applied to the interest group's stakeholders (own illustration; Casanova, 2021)

4.1 BirdLife

With 67'000 members and a network of over 400 local preservation associations, BirdLife is one of Switzerland's most prominent nature preservation organisations. Their offices are spread throughout Switzerland, enabling them to transmit their visions and opinions on a national scale and gain significant importance.

The organisation is committed to widespread their principles of preserving nature and biodiversity. Their goal is to curb the decline of endangered species and protect natural habitats. (BirdLife, n.d.)

According to the current line management of the Aaregondel, the gondola surpasses a natural preservation park and a bird reservoir. As those cable cars might be a possible distraction and threat to birds and their natural habitat, this project intervenes with the core values of BirdLife. Therefore, the organisation is an important stakeholder that must be considered and managed closely to execute the transportation project successfully.

4.1.1 How could the stakeholder benefit from the Aaregondel?

The objective of the IG Aaregondel is to introduce a new public transportation system that is low in both carbon dioxide and noise emissions. With the proper implementation, an urban gondola can transform the current transportation industry in Switzerland and set a benchmark for sustainable development.

Due to the projected increase in inhabitants and commuters travelling from the Solothurn central station to Attisholz, significant shifts in transportation are inevitable. Local authorities plan to extend the existing bus lines to meet the rising demand. Even though up to date busses can be entirely run electrical, significant problems regarding emissions and extraction of raw material (e.g., to produce batteries) are still existent.

On the other hand, the Aaregondel will be operated by a permanent electricity supply. Electricity in Switzerland can be regarded as a power source with very low emissions, which is a compelling advantage for the Aaregondel.

By focusing on sustainability whilst expanding the transportation system in Solothurn, the Aaregondel works in compliance with sustainable development goals (SDGs) and tries to shape the future of long-term sustainability in Switzerland. Considering the previously mentioned strengths of the Aaregondel, several opportunities for BirdLife can be elaborated. Even though some threats for birds and their habitat can be observed, the long-term ecological advantages can outweigh the immediate disadvantages that come with the construction of the Aaregondel.

4.1.2 Potential drawbacks for the stakeholder?

As mentioned before, the construction of the Aaregondel imposes some threats and risks for the natural reservoirs and bird sanctuaries in Solothurn. Both main goals of BirdLife, preservation of nature and biodiversity, may be harmed by the new infrastructure. Furthermore, the line management, developed by the IG Aaregondel, shows the direct and most effective transportation line, starting from the Solothurn central station to Attisholz, which is running along the river Aare. Building the transportation system without interfering in any stakeholder's dedicated area is challenging.

4.1.3 Key message

To succeed in the sustainable development of the canton Solothurn, various stakeholders need to work together, compromise their objectives, and try to find and reach a common goal. The IG Aaregondel strives to improve the infrastructure eco-friendly without interfering with any stakeholders' values and is happy to receive inputs from different experts. Together with the knowledge of BirdLife, alternatives to the line management can be assessed, and the project can be improved.

4.1.4 Target behaviour

Up to this date, all requests from the IG Aaregondel to have a conversation with BirdLife have been rejected. As mentioned before, the IG Aaregondel is looking for a compromised solution that fits the needs of most stakeholders involved or affected by the project. Therefore, the main goal of the interest group regarding BirdLife is to have an initial dialogue and assess some criteria.

4.2 Pro Natura

Pro Natura was founded in 1909 and counts as Switzerland's first nature conservation organization. It defends nature's interest and wants to preserve and promote the natural diversity of animals, plants, and habitats. Today, Pro Natura oversees around 700 nature reserves throughout Switzerland, including the section of the river over which the cable car would hang, as Figure 6 shows (Pro Natura, n.d.).

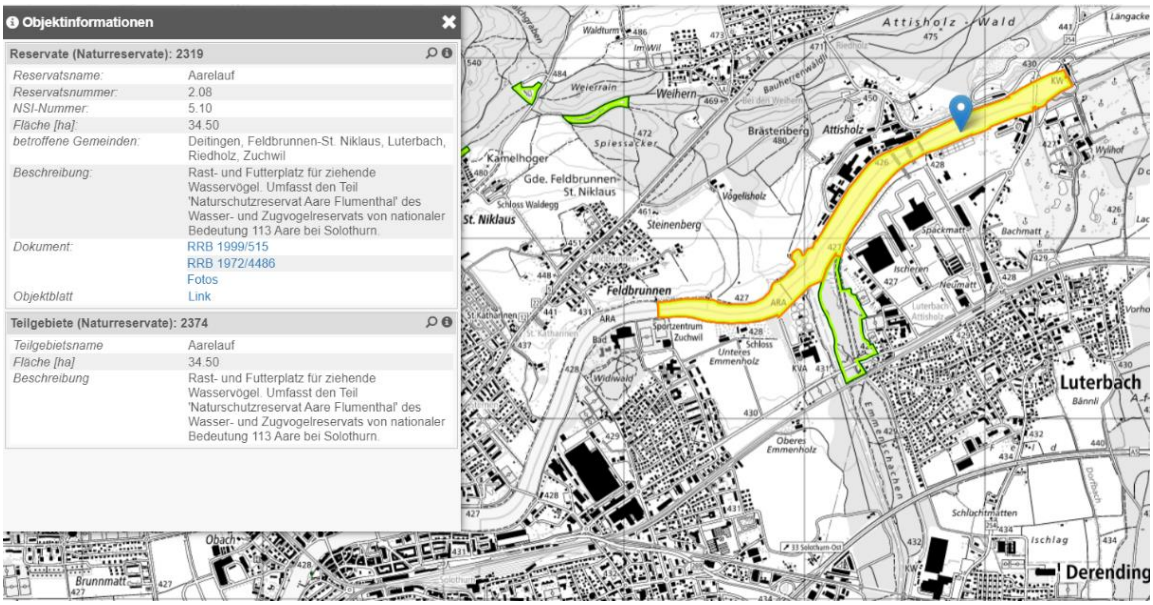


Figure 6: Map of the nature reserve affected by the Aaregondel (Kanton Solothurn, 2022)

This represents a major obstacle for the Aaregondel, as there is a general ban on building in the shore area which can only be circumvented with a special permit. For this reason, a constructive discussion with Pro Natura is vital to find a compromise that satisfies both parties.

4.2.1 How could the stakeholder benefit from the Aaregondel?

Due to the population growth in the developing areas of Eastern Solothurn, public transportation difficulties will inevitably arise. Currently, the problem is expected to be solved by extending bus lines and more people taking the car instead of public transportations. For Pro Natura, however, this solution might be even more disadvantageous than implementing a gondola, as more CO2 will be emitted and more land animals such as hedgehogs might be threatened. The Aaregondel could meet the growing demand for public transport and provide a sustainable, low-emission, and low noise solution. Furthermore, this addition to the public transport options would comply with Switzerland's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) 9 and 11 (Eidgenössisches Departement für auswärtige Angelegenheiten EDA, 2021):SDG 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote broad-based and sustainable industrialization, and support innovation. SDG 11: Making cities and municipalities safe, resilient, sustainable, and reduce the per capita environmental impact of cities, particularly with regard to air quality.

4.2.2 Potential drawbacks for the stakeholder?

Seventeen gondola masts are needed to construct the Aaregondel according to the current plans of the interest group. As these are currently planned in the bank protection zone, these masts contradict the basic principles of Pro Natura.

4.2.3 Key message

The Aaregondel provides an ecologically sustainable solution for a public transport problem in Solothurn. Especially in the long term, the Aaregondel contributes to nature conservation by heavily reducing carbon dioxide emissions and the fact that, unlike in electric buses, no batteries are needed. To get the most out of the project, Pro Natura is expected to collaborate in a dialogue to identify possible improvements actively.

4.2.4 Target behaviour

A fundamental rejection of the project Aaregondel from Pro Natura shall be avoided. Contrariwise, Pro Natura should recognize the value of the innovative project and, in cooperation, contribute to its success.

4.3 Halter AG

Halter AG is one of Switzerland's leading construction and real estate service providers. The focus is on developing potential sites, land, construction projects and real estate. What defines Halter's culture are values such as innovation and sustainability. Innovation results in a higher quality of life, better use of the built environment, and increased productivity. In terms of sustainability, they strive for long-term solutions and support sensible architecture and well-planned urban development. They also want to make the most of given technologies to create energy-efficient and environmentally friendly solutions (Halter, 2020).

With the Attisholz-Areal, Halter AG owns one of the most important development sites in the Solothurn region. The buildings, which are vacant after the closure of the cellulose factory in 2008, are to be used in the future as residential areas, work facilities, commercial spaces, gastronomy and cultural venues, and educational facilities. Implementation is scheduled for 2045 and will involve an investment volume of CHF 900 million by Halter AG. The existing public transport situation is not sufficient for the growing agglomeration in the east of the city of Solothurn. The Aaregondel, therefore, is a possible addition to the public transport network. The current routing shows that the final station of the Aaregondel is on the opposite side of the Aare from the Attisholz site. Therefore, its residents would directly benefit from this public transport solution.

For these reasons and the financial aspect mentionned above, we identify Halter AG as a critical stakeholder in the Aaregondel project.

4.3.1 How could the stakeholder benefit from the Aaregondel?

As the only one of its kind in Switzerland, the possible implementation of the Aaregondel project would be considered innovative. Halter AG has declared innovation as one of its core elements, and by supporting the project, it would be able to communicate this more strongly to the outside world and reinforce its conviction. Furthermore, the involvement would also lead to additional exposure since the media takes up and covers the topic, and it is talked about amongst the local population. This additional exposure can be positive and enhance the public's perception of the company but depends on several factors. It depends on how the media frames the topic and how the public views the subject.

Furthermore, the gondola would also represent an economically and ecologically sustainable addition to the public transport network from which Halter AG's resident clients and tenants would benefit. It has low land wear and tear, low emissions, and enables demand-oriented use and leaves hardly any waiting times. This meets Halter AG's desire for sustainable and long-term solutions

4.3.2 Potential drawbacks for the stakeholder?

As previously mentioned, the additional public attention can be a benefit. However, it can also become a risk if the public opinion and presentation are not aligned with Halter AG's, which could suffer reputational damage. In particular, if the nature associations, which hold a hostile attitude towards the project, succeed in taking over and controlling the public opinion on the subject. Therefore, potential clients for the transformation project could refrain from conducting their business with Halter AG or its Attisholz-Areal. Additionally, at this point, Halter AG might not see the need to get involved with the project as it is still in its early stages. They could first wait to see how the project progresses before taking the risks mentioned above.

4.3.3 Key message

The Aaregondel project offers Halter AG an ideal opportunity to substantiate its ambition to be a sustainable and innovative company and to be perceived as such while at the same time providing high-quality construction and real estate services.

4.3.4 Target behaviour

Halter AG should make a positive public statement on this subject. This could trigger a snowball effect and convince other stakeholders of the project. Ideally, it would support the Aaregondel project financially.

4.4 Swissprime / mha gmbh

Swiss Prime Anlagestiftung (SPA) is a pension foundation established by the Swiss Prime Site Group in 2015. SPA's goal is to invest its assets profitably, while environmental, social, and governance (ESG) criteria are central to its investment strategy. By investing more than CHF 60 Mio. in constructing rental apartments in the "Riverside" area, SPA became a major stakeholder for the IG Aaregondel. The mid-station of the Aaregondel is planned to be placed next to the 140 newly built apartments.

As stated on their homepage, SPA takes comprehensive sustainability goals into account when investing. For Instance, the foundation aims at bringing its investments in line with Switzerland's 2050 clime neutrality strategy. Moreover, regarding the social aspect of ESG, SPA's real estate portfolio is always focused on the tenants and the sustainable development of the area they live in (Swiss Prime Anlagestiftung, n.d.).

4.4.1 How could the stakeholder benefit from the Aaregondel?

The Aaregondel provides an eco-friendly and reliable transportation solution for the "Riverside" area and, therefore, stands for the exact values SPA has dedicated itself to. For the foundation, the project Aaregondel is an opportunity to simultaneously live up to its claims and enhance the residential area's attractiveness. Tenants would not only travel sustainably from an ecological viewpoint but at the same time also profit from a public transport system with - at worst - reduced waiting times and no traffic. Therefore, the objectives "environmental" and "social" from ESG would be addressed if the Aaregondel was built.

4.4.2 Potential drawbacks for the stakeholder?

At the current stage, at least two significant nature conservation associations are against the project because the masts of the cable car would be built too close to the Aare river bank and would potentially damage the national conservation area. Supporting a project that, in the short sight, harms the environment might produce adverse reporting about SPA. As the Aaregondel project is still in an early stage, taking the initiative and supporting the project might seem like an unnecessary risk and exposure to SPA.

4.4.3 Key message

The Aaregondel provides a unique opportunity for the SPA to live up to its sustainability claims, strengthen the perception as an innovative organization and provide attractive living space for its tenants in the “Riverside” area.

4.4.4 Target behaviour

A positive public statement towards the Aaregondel from the foundation is sought after. Ideally, the SPA would support the project financially.

4.5 Biogen

Biogen is a global biotechnology company known as a pioneer in neuroscience to conduct innovative and scientific research to combat severe neurological diseases. One of their new production plants that have been in operation only since 2021 and will create up to 600 new jobs is in Luterbach. This location is also the area where the IG Aaregondel has planned to build the terminal station of the cable car. Consequently, Biogen is a significant stakeholder whose opinion towards the Aaregondel and willingness to contribute might be crucial for its implementation.

According to Biogen’s mission statement, the company puts high importance on their fundamental values, which are guaranteeing the well-being of its employees, committing to diversity and inclusion, and assuring ecological sustainability. In 2015, Biogen was ranked No. 1 of the “Global 100 Most Sustainable Corporations in the World” (Corporate Knights, 2015) and had achieved climate neutrality by reaching the “Net Zero Carbon Footprint”, which means that they produce with zero net emissions of greenhouse gases. Therefore, having a corporate culture committed to sustainability to this extent might be promising a positive attitude towards the Aaregondel project (Biogen, 2020).

4.5.1 How could the stakeholder benefit from the Aaregondel?

As this area is expected to be highly developed in the future, it contributes to the fact that a public transportation problem will emerge due to the rapid increase of new inhabitants and workers. Thus, an eco-friendlier opportunity could be considered instead of having more people in this area that use passenger vehicles or introducing additional bus lines. With the realization of the cable car project, Biogen could benefit from an innovative, eco-friendly, reliable, and consistent public transportation mode. Furthermore, it would strengthen Biogen’s values of ecological sustainability, which could enhance their public image even more. Furthermore, the employees of Biogen would benefit from the ideal location close to the cable car station, which brings them to Solothurn’s central train station in only eleven minutes.

4.5.2 Potential drawbacks for the stakeholder?

Although it is an environmentally friendly project, the primary opponents remain the nature preservation associations, as the cable car would hang above nature preserved areas. This could lead to the opposite situation than mentioned above and even worsen their public image. One, therefore, must take this possibility into account as long as these associations remain opposed. Additionally, Biogen might not see the need or the benefit of having a cable car nearby and is therefore not ready to take the risk of attracting bad publicity.

4.5.3 Key message

The Aaregondel project offers Biogen an ideal occasion to present itself as a sustainable and innovative company. At the same time, Biogen shows that it values its employees, who can benefit directly from the gondola and thus further improve working conditions.

4.5.4 Target behaviour

A positive public statement on the Aaregondel by Biogen is desired. Ideally, they would support the project financially.

5 Interviews with Key Stakeholders

At the meeting between the project team and the IG Aaregondel, nine stakeholders were identified as essential for implementing the Aaregondel. The interest group contacted these stakeholders upfront via an email to introduce the project team and their mission and ask them to support it.

The project team then contacted all nine stakeholders and arranged and conducted a meeting with eight of them. Unfortunately, Biogen failed to respond to the multiple contact attempts and could, therefore, not be approached. The following section will summarize the most important insights which the project team has gathered during the stakeholder interviews.

5.1 BirdLife

The interview was held online on December 2nd, 2021, with Thomas Lüthi, Vice President VVS/BirdLife Solothurn.

5.1.1 Personal Attitude

Thomas Lüthi heard for the first time about the Aaregondel project through a newspaper article. Shortly after the article's publication, several news platforms asked for interviews about his opinion towards the project. While Thomas Lüthi believes the cable car is, in principle, a decent idea, he

does not see any chance for it to be realized. The project would have to go through an approval process which would most likely not survive because of various barriers. Examples of such barriers are objections from residents or the fact that some of the cable car's mast would be built into a conservation area along the Aare.

5.1.2 Position of BirdLife

BirdLife does not yet have an official position on the project. The union only debates about and comments on more advanced projects. Hence, they will not discuss possible official opinions before a feasibility study has been prepared.

BirdLife does not have enough resources to work on the project proactively and, for instance, propose measures for improvement. In consequence, Thomas Lüthi sees BirdLife as a passive negotiation partner for the future. BirdLife is open for discussions in the future and will not fundamentally reject the Aare Gondel.

5.1.3 Chances and Risks

As stated before, various risks are identified regarding the approval process of a potential cable car. These include objections from residents and, most notably, conservation areas along the Aare would be affected according to the initial plans.

In contrast, Thomas Lüthi does not spot beneficial aspects of the project. The cable car does not bring any additional value to the city of Solothurn or its residents from his point of view. Even though the Aare Gondel is an additional infrastructure for public transport, presumably, none of the existing infrastructures could be cut down because of it.

5.1.4 Next Steps

Consequentially, for BirdLife, the preparation of a feasibility study is the next step. It would reveal problems, obstacles, and the potential benefits of the project. Additionally, it would serve as a basis for future discussions. Thomas Lüthi further states that mainly clarifications regarding legal questions are essential.

5.1.5 Person of Contact

Thomas Lüthi stays the interest group’s person of contact for the future. Additionally, Mr. Lüthi tells us about the USO (Umweltverbände Solothurn). The USO is a union of various environmental and conservation organisations around Solothurn. Its current President is Laura Bruppacher (WWF).

Alternatively, the interest group could also contact her, and she will then coordinate between individual associations.

5.2 Pro Natura

The interview was held online on December 7th, 2021, with Ariane Hausamman, Managing Director Pro Natura Solothurn.

5.2.1 Personal Attitude

Ariane Hausammann received several requests for interviews from media platforms after the first article about the Aare Gondel was published. The idea of building a cable car in the city seems peculiar to her, and she did not think of it as a proper project in the first place. For these reasons, her interviews were rather negative. However, there is no fundamental objection to the idea from her side. Even so, she does not believe that it is realizable.

5.2.2 Position of Pro Natura

Pro Natura does not have any official opinion about the project. The Aaregondel has not yet been discussed during any board meeting. According to Ariane Hausammann, there is currently no interest or motivation to collaborate on the project in any way. Accordingly, Ariane Hausammann sees Pro Natura in a passive role, commenting on the ongoing process from their point of view. Nonetheless, Pro Natura stays at the interest group's disposal for open communication, as they do not fundamentally reject the project.

5.2.3 Chances and Risks

Ariane Hausammann believes the project is "something special". However, from her point of view, the Aare Gondel is rather disadvantageous to the city. Solothurn is a "canton of cars", and together with the existing public transport, the mobility requirements of the population are met in her eyes. Further, she does not believe that the new cable car could be run profitably. The most significant risk this project bears is the potential damage to the national water and migratory bird preservation area because of the line management.

While various risks are identified, Ariane Hausammann does not spot any advantages of the cable car.

5.2.4 Next Steps

According to Pro Natura, the next step must be preparing a feasibility study. They would be keen to see the study results as it allows them to take a stand on the project.

According to Pro Natura, independently of the feasibility study, the line management must be revised. Therefore, going with the actual plans seems not to be an option for them.

5.2.5 Person of Contact

Ariane Hausammann is the person to contact at Pro Natura for future communication. As Thomas Lüthi (BirdLife) said, Laura Bruppacher (WWF), president of the USO, may be contacted. The presidency of the USO changes every two years, the next time in 2023.

5.3 Halter AG

The interview was held on site on November 25th, 2021, with Patrick Senn, project leader of Attisholz-Areal.

5.3.1 Personal Attitude

Patrick Senn is not against the project in principle. However, his current information about the project is not specific enough. In his opinion, the construction of a gondola as planned by Reto Grimm shows more disadvantages than advantages, and as long as this is the case, he cannot support this project in any way.

5.3.2 Position of Halter AG

The general attitude of the company towards the Aaregondel project can be described as rather disinterested or neutral. In other words, the project is simply not a high priority to them, as they have already established a solution for the limited transportation possibilities in this area. Their goal, for which they have already invested a significant amount of their own funds, is to introduce additional bus lines and bus stops which will cover the insufficiently developed areas of Riedholz and the Attisholz-Areal. In their point of view, it is the safest and easiest way to solve the problem.

5.3.3 Chances and Risks

Patrick Senn sees potential in a gondola, as the canton stipulates that 50 % of the traffic should consist of public transport and bicycles. For this reason, there are also very few parking spaces in Riedholz and Attisholz. Furthermore, an advantage that the gondola would offer to Halter AG, compared to the buses, is the connection to the sports centre of Zuchwil, but this alone is not enough.

Consequently, introducing a gondola will not be superior to the new bus lines and bus stops but could well be introduced in addition.

On the other hand, one significant disadvantage that must be addressed is the direct view into Halter's newly constructed apartments that the gondolas would provide. In addition, Patrick Senn does not believe that the gondola would increase the attractiveness of Attisholz since the planned bus routes and new stations will already contribute to it.

5.3.4 Next Steps

Patrick Senn is aware of Halter AG's influence on the project, but he does not want to make a public statement at the moment because the project is not yet concrete enough. However, to increase the willingness of Halter AG to support the project entirely, the IG Aaregondel has to show them a clear overview of all advantages the gondola would offer to them and make clear propositions of how to tackle the disadvantages such as demonstrating better line management that is located farther away from the buildings.

5.3.5 Person of Contact

Patrick Senn confirms to be the right person of contact and remains available for any further meetings to concretize the mentioned aspects.

5.4 mha GmbH

The interview was held on site on December 7th, 2021, with Markus Hauri, board member of Espace Solothurn and investor representative of SwissPrime investment foundation.

5.4.1 Personal Attitude

Markus Hauri knows Reto Paul Grimm very well and is on good terms with him, but he does not believe in the realization of the Aaregondel, as it does not represent the appropriate mean of transportation for this area. He claims that the high investment that must be made at the beginning would not pay off, as the demand for taking the gondola will not be constantly high enough. Hence, the gondola's high capacity to transport people cannot be fully utilized.

Regarding the financial aspect of the gondola, it might be challenging to find an investor, which is why it might have to be financed by the public sector. However, here again, Markus Hauri sees a lack of public interest.

5.4.2 Position of mha gmbh

As a representative of Swiss Prime Anlagenstiftung, Mr Hauri confirms a need for additional public transportation, however, only in Attisholz. The area where SwissPrime builds its real estate properties is well connected to the central train station of Solothurn and the different communities, and there is, therefore, according to Markus Hauri, no need for additional public transportation. On the other hand, they would be interested in better connecting Zuchwil and Attisholz by implementing a boat, as it is perceived as scalable.

5.4.3 Chances and Risks

Since Mr Hauri underlines that there is no interest on the part of SwissPrime to implement a gondola, he can only highlight the barriers that will emerge during the project.

The way Markus Hauri knows the gondolas from the ski slopes, they produce much noise when moving over the masts, which would impact the quality of living and would lead to an objection in the construction process. As a result, the line management would have to be adapted to increase the distance to the buildings.

5.4.4 Next Steps

As one can conclude, SwissPrime's view on the project is that it degrades the quality of its properties, that there is no need for additional public transportation, and therefore the gondola is not desired.

To get support from SwissPrime might rather be unlikely, as they will not necessarily benefit from the gondola. However, to improve the attitude towards it and prevent possible drawbacks, the interest group must demonstrate that, from a technical point of view, the gondola can be scalable and how much noise will be generated. Furthermore, new line management must be proposed if the gondola produces noise to the extent that it could bother the inhabitants.

5.4.5 Person of Contact

Markus Hauri confirms that he remains available to the interest group for any further discussions.

5.5 Amt für Umwelt

The meeting took place online via Teams with Mr Zenklusen and Mr Hadorn on the 9th of December, 2021. Mr Zenklusen is head of the Amt für Umwelt while Mr Hadorn is head of the coordination department.

5.5.1 Personal Attitude

Personally, Mr Zenklusen finds the project exciting and visionary. However, he is averse and recognizes the many negative voices regarding the gondola.

Mr Hadorn also seems to be interested in the project. He experienced the cable car in La Paz. However, he wonders how big the profit of such a cable car is here in Solothurn compared to conventional public transport.

5.5.2 Position of the Office for the Environment

From the office's point of view, the following topics are of concern. Water protection, noise in residential areas, certain environmental goods that would be affected and need approval, and routing is considered problematic. They see the project like any other. Specific criteria must be met so that it can come about. Mr Zenklusen says that the most significant problems (nature conservation) concern the office for spatial planning.

5.5.3 Chances and Risks

Mr Zenklusen elaborates on the problems regarding the water space. Location-bound is required to build in the water space. However, he sees this as imperative for a gondola since the line does not theoretically pass close to the water. The other criterion is broad public interest. Does this facility need to be in this watershed, and is thus in the public's interest? Can that interest be demonstrated concerning this project? Mr Zenklusen considers this problematic but again mentions the theoretical flexibility of the line. Mr Hadorn confirms this and at the same time cites an uncertainty regarding the legal situation which would prevail in the case of erection of the masts outside the water space. About groundwater, Mr Zenklusen says that water protection aims to build as little as possible into the groundwater. This is about water quality but also about not obstructing the groundwater flow. However, this problem is not seen similarly with the nacelle masts, as these would only be erected at specific points. If, however, the nacelle stations penetrate the groundwater area, this would lead to many restrictions. It is a matter of balancing interests, leading to an exception.

Gentiana raises the boat issue, Mr Zenklusen replies that this is not compatible with the current legal situation. A year-round boat operation is not possible. There is a boat ban on parts of the area in winter due to the nature and migratory bird reserve. In addition, the number of passenger trips in summer is limited.

Both recommend that those responsible for the project consult with the relevant authorities early. So that problems can be addressed in good time and do not emerge late in the review and approval process at the federal level. However, Mr Zenklusen estimates that the office's role for the environment is relatively small.

Mr Hadorn also mentions the risk of objections from private parties/associations, which could overturn the entire project.

5.5.4 Next Steps

As a further stakeholder, Mr Zenklusen mentions the office for the forest, hunting and fishing regarding migratory birds and woods (Silvia Nietlisbach), which could appear as a potential stakeholder in the project's future.

5.5.5 Person of Contact

Mr Hadorn or someone from his department should be contacted for questions regarding permits and coordination about the environment.

5.6 Kontextplan

The meeting took place online in Teams on the 2nd of December, 2021 with Markus Reichenbach. He is the CEO of Kontextplan.

5.6.1 Personal Attitude

Personally, Mr Reichenbach seems interested and open to the idea of the Aaregondel. There have been exchanges between the IG and Mr Reichenbach in the past. According to Reto, the company is available to the IG in an advisory capacity.

5.6.2 Position of Kontextplan

There have no official statements been made by the organization regarding the project. It has been discussed internally.

The company considers the implementation of the Aaregondel within the framework of the already existing mobility concept for the Attisholzareal north as difficult. In essence, the mobility concept includes a target based on a modal split that allocates approximately one-third of the site's external internal traffic to public transport. The plan is to fill this third with extensive extensions of existing bus lines and additional connections.

5.6.3 Chances and Risks

Kontextplan sees the following positive aspects in the Aaregondel:

- The operation is continuous.
- It does not require a timetable.

- It is unique, reliable and represents a "privileged travel experience".

They ask themselves whether the gondola with a transport capacity of 2000 people/hour offers an overcapacity. From their point of view, existing public transport solutions offer sufficient capacity, which can also be increased flexibly. The company asks whether the gondola cannibalizes existing public transport offers. The existing bus line must meet a specified cost recovery ratio to be included in the basic public transport service, financed by tax money and ticket revenue. Private transport services, which Kontextplan AG would consider the Aare gondola to be, would potentially cannibalize this.

Another question is the social security of the gondola. Scenario: A woman goes alone into the gondola, and at the same time, a group of strange men gets on. According to the interest group, the plan is to operate the gondola only during the day, so the gondola would not be a full-fledged public transport service, according to the context plan. This problem puts the benefit of the Aaregondel into perspective.

Concerning the quality of access, Kontextplan sees the advantage of bus transport, as it is more flexible and offers a closer sequence of stops.

According to the IG Aaregondel, an additional bridge is planned at the final stop of the gondola, close to the existing bridge. However, Kontextplan sees the approval of such an additional bridge as challenging due to nature conservation issues.

5.6.4 Next Steps

Kontextplan does not want to take a public position on the project at the moment. Partly because the Aaregondel project is still in its early stages, but also because of their commitments to their mobility concept. Therefore, they do not take an active role in implementing the Aaregondel project right now.

5.6.5 Person of Contact

Mr Reichenbach is the right contact person.

5.7 Amt für Verkehr und Tiefbau, Abteilung Öffentlicher Verkehr

The interview was held virtually on December 8th, 2021, with Kjell Kolden, Head of Department for public transport at the Amt für Verkehr und Tiefbau.

5.7.1 Personal Attitude and Position of the Amt für Verkehr und Tiefbau

Kjell Kolden has already been informed about the project in March 2021 by Reto Paul Grimm. Generally, he thinks that it is an exciting idea and project. However, he also sees several risks. In his Position as ordering party of public transport in Solothurn, he has a neutral attitude towards the project. Several expectations need to be met to be accepted as a new form of public transport, including accessibility for disabled people, pricing system and interconnectivity to other public transport connections.

5.7.2 General Discussion about Public Transport

The general goal of the Amt für Öffentlicher Verkehr is to match the public transport offers with the different demands from the residential and business areas. Kjell Kolden explains that in previous years it was normal to bring new transportation infrastructure to the new residential areas. From now on, the plan is to develop new residential areas in place, where transportation infrastructure is already well established.

Kjell Kolden elaborates the four V strategy, which is also included in the new agglomeration program. This strategy consists of the four Vs in German: “vermeiden” (= avoid), “verlagern” (=shift), “verträglich gestalten” (compatible design) and “vernetzen” (=connect). With this strategy, the Amt für Verkehr und Tiefbau plans the development regarding transportation in Solothurn.

Currently, two bus lines are driving to Attisholz and one to Luterbach. The Amt für Öffentlicher Verkehr is convinced that those three bus lines are suitable for further development and expansion. More details about the expansions of the bus lines and the estimation of costs will be elaborated in section 7.2.2.

5.7.3 Chances and Risks

Kjell Kolden thinks that the Aaregondel could be a suitable addition to the public transport in Solothurn and could even have a positive influence on the attractiveness of the region.
Mr Kolden sees a clear advantage of the Aaregondel in the generous operating hours, as the variable costs are meagre. In addition, he thinks it could be very comfortable and laid-back transportation from the Solothurn central station towards the developing hotspots, Riverside and Attisholz. Another benefit that Kjell Kolden mentioned is the low carbon emission that the gondola would generate.

According to Kjell Kolden, the most significant risks and obstacles that the Aaregondel may face are the approval process and the funding. Additionally, he explains that the gondola is a very fixed

infrastructure that is much less flexible than a bus. If the Amt für Öffentlicher Verkehr sees that it would be better to drive the bus through another road, these adjustments could be made easily. With the gondola, on the other hand, adjustments are not possible due to the fixed masts and cables.

5.7.4 Next Steps

To this point and time Kjell Kolden and the Amt für Verkehr und Tiefbau cannot evaluate the project properly. The requirements to fulfil before a further assessment are the feasibility study, a consultation of the specialist bodies and a clear business plan. Kjell Kolden mentions the business plan because he sees the financing strategy as a decisive criterion.

5.8 Amt für Raumplanung

The interview was held virtually on December 6, 2021, with Sacha Peter, Head of Office, Amt für Raumplanung.

5.8.1 Personal Attitude and Position of the Amt für Raumplanung Solothurn

The Amt für Raumplanung Solothurn was one of the first stakeholders to receive information about the Aaregondel, as Reto Grimm presented the project to Sacha Peter before the public announcements.

At this point, Sacha Peter and the Amt für Raumplanung do not represent a specific opinion about the Aaregondel project, especially not publicly. In the interview, Mr Peter generally assesses the feasibility of the Aaregondel project and offers his expert opinion.

Sacha Peter has much experience in spatial planning and has got the chance to observe the development of two other gondola projects in Zurich. Therefore, he is aware of the various obstacles the Aaregondel project may face.

5.8.2 General Discussion about Public Transport and the Developing Areas

The problem that Mr Peter sees with gondolas lies in the approval process. In Zurich, the two gondola projects were launched by two big institutions, which both enjoy a very positive image in the region. One project was established by the Zurich Zoo, and the other by the ZKB, the cantonal Bank of Zurich. However, despite their positive image and their advantage regarding funding, both projects are stagnant due to several objections.

Sacha Peter refers to the recent agglomeration programs, reflecting the impact of the fast-growing regions such as Attisholz or the Riverside area. The Amt für Raumplanung values the bipolarity

which the development produces. On the one side, we have central Solothurn, and on the other side, we have the growing region of Attisholz. Additionally, the agglomeration program reflects the development of public transport. The Amt für Raumplanung is confident that this expansion of public transport, especially the express buses, will be sufficient and provide a comfortable way of transportation. For the development of public transport, the Amt für Raumplanung is working closely with the Amt für Tiefbau und Verkehr.

According to Sacha Peter, an important point to consider when developing public transport is analysing the bigger picture. New public transport should provide a connection from one point to another and must be interconnected and coordinated with the further connections. That way, public transport is attractive for local citizens and people travelling long distances. The Amt für Raumplanung assumes that the people living and working in the developing regions (e.g. Biogen employees) will have to commute to other cities outside of Solothurn. For those commuters, the express busses will provide suitable connections. Offering a comfortable and user-friendly experience requires interconnectivity, even for mobile applications. Sacha Peter offers an example of a commuter getting on the train in Bern and looking for a point-to-point connection to a specific destination in Solothurn. If the further connection in Solothurn is not integrated into the national SBB-Application, it is not user-friendly and the likeliness of it being used decreases.

The express buses in place are different from traditional buses regarding funding. A large sum is provided by the companies located in Luterbach, which benefit from improving public transport.

Currently, the express buses are running during peak hours in the morning, at lunchtime and in the evening, from Monday to Friday. However, Sacha Peter assumes that those running hours will be expanded during and on weekends. This way, business commuters will be using the buses and people travelling forth and back to the local recreation and entertainment areas.

According to Sacha Peter, it is generally difficult to convince more citizens in Solothurn to use public transport because private cars are still popular. Therefore, it is not easy to forecast if the buses or other forms of public transport will be attractive enough for the people living in the developing areas. Furthermore, Mr Peter explains that it is not yet clear what demographics will be living in the new buildings in Attisholz. However, many factors regarding public transport and parking lots were considered in the new mobility concept, and the concept delivers valuable insights to this complex challenge. Sacha Peter highlights that the bus is not a single solution to the problem but one of many parts of the mobility concept. The main goals of public transport should be to offer a comfortable travel experience and contribute to sustainable development regarding carbon dioxide emissions.

5.8.3 Chances and Risks

Regarding risks of the Aaregondel Project, Mr Peter mentions three main factors: neighbourhoods, town appearance and nature.

Firstly, the Aaregondel surpasses several neighbourhoods and residential areas, which residents may undesired. Thus, we have seen many underground developments in public transport (e.g. Lausanne). Even though underground transportation is more expensive to construct, acceptance from citizens is much higher because nobody sees it on the surface. Mr Peter refers to the so-called LULU-effect (locally unwanted land use) and the NIMBY-effect (not in my backyard).

Secondly, many people may find it disturbing to see a gondola in front of the historic old town and its cathedral.

Thirdly, the gondola is planned to be built along the Aare, where we find several natural habitats with national importance. Regarding objections coming from nature preservation organisations, Mr Peter explains that until recently, there has been a discussion in Solothurn, whether people on a Stand-Up Paddle are allowed to stand up or need to be seated on their paddle not to disturb wild animals.

Another threat that Aaregondel may face is the timing issue. Sacha Peter elaborates that many large projects in Switzerland were not completed, despite compliance with regulations. He mentions the stadium in Zurich as an example.

Sacha Peter sees the future in automated and on-demand transportation and thinks that future development will be focusing on those aspects. Mr Peter sees an advantage for the Aaregondel, as it can be running with very few employees and therefore is close to automation. However, he thinks that gondolas will have a disadvantage with their stable infrastructure in the future, including masts and wire cables.

The Amt für Raumplanung sees another development in mobility in Solothurn, namely pedestrians and bicycles. Those modes of transportations have increased in the past few years. They require another infrastructure and are also essential to consider as an alternative to private and public transportation.

5.8.4 Next Steps

Currently, the Amt für Raumplanung occupies no apparent role in the Aaregondel project. They are waiting for further progress to be announced and, most importantly, the feasibility study to be made. Another condition for the Amt für Raumplanung is a general balancing of interests because the mission of the Amt für Raumplanung is to provide a solution that is attractive for most citizens.

Additionally, the Amt für Raumplanung would like to see competing alternatives to the Aaregondel. The advantages and disadvantages can be adequately assessed only by comparing the Aaregondel with other alternatives.

For Sacha Peter, it is clear that several interest groups, ranging from citizens to economic networks, must stand behind and promote the project to increase the chances of its success. At the moment, he sees almost no public statements from stakeholders that back the Aaregondel.

6 Analysis of Interviews

The first and probably most important finding from the eight interviews with various stakeholders is that none of the parties interviewed fundamentally rejected the project. On the contrary, however, all stakeholders identified obstacles and risks rather than opportunities or possibilities that could arise from the potential implementation of the Aaregondel.

Almost all parties spoke about line management, which seems to be the number one subject of debate. Interestingly, the line management came up for different reasons with different interview partners. Pro Natura and BirdLife are primarily concerned about the national conservational area along the Aare, home to various species of birds. Both organisations do not believe that the project is realisable with the suggested line. Further, with the current layout of the line management, the cable car would interfere with several residential areas. The ones at Riverside and in Attisholz would be directly affected. Mr Senn from Halter AG and Mr Hauri do not think significantly of the proposed line layout. Mr Peter sees the same problem and believes there would be opposition from affected residents. Additionally, Mr Kolden states that the line of a cable car cannot be changed in the future. This is a considerable disadvantage compared to a bus line, for instance.
Besides the line management, various other concerns have been addressed. For example, as stated before, the two nature protection organisations have ecological concerns regarding the national conservational area. Another problem is the relatively high initial investment costs, which a cable car would bear. Finally, a bit more controversial is whether the current public transport solutions with the added bus lines are sufficient. Halter and mha, for instance, believe that especially connections to Zuchwil could be improved with the Aaregondel.
This alone, however, is not enough to justify such an investment.
Under the current circumstances, the project is not “concrete” enough for the interviewed stakeholders. Accordingly, none of them wants to make a public statement and then be exposed. Instead, they prefer to stay in a passive role at the moment. Nonetheless, all of them stay at the IG’s disposal for further discussions.

In order to maintain a constructive dialogue in the future, the preparation of a feasibility study is crucial for several stakeholders. They would most likely make a public statement on the project based on the result.

6.1 Stakeholder mapping

After the discussions with the stakeholders, we were able to create a first stakeholder map according to the model introduced by Mendelow (1991). We discovered that most of the key stakeholders can be placed in the *keep satisfied* section which represents a high influence and low interest:

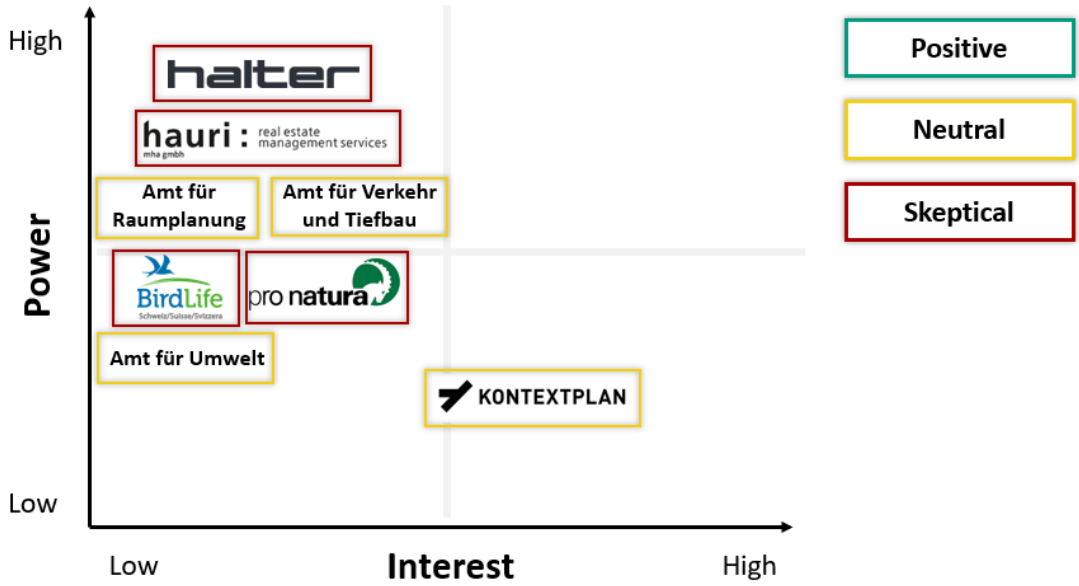
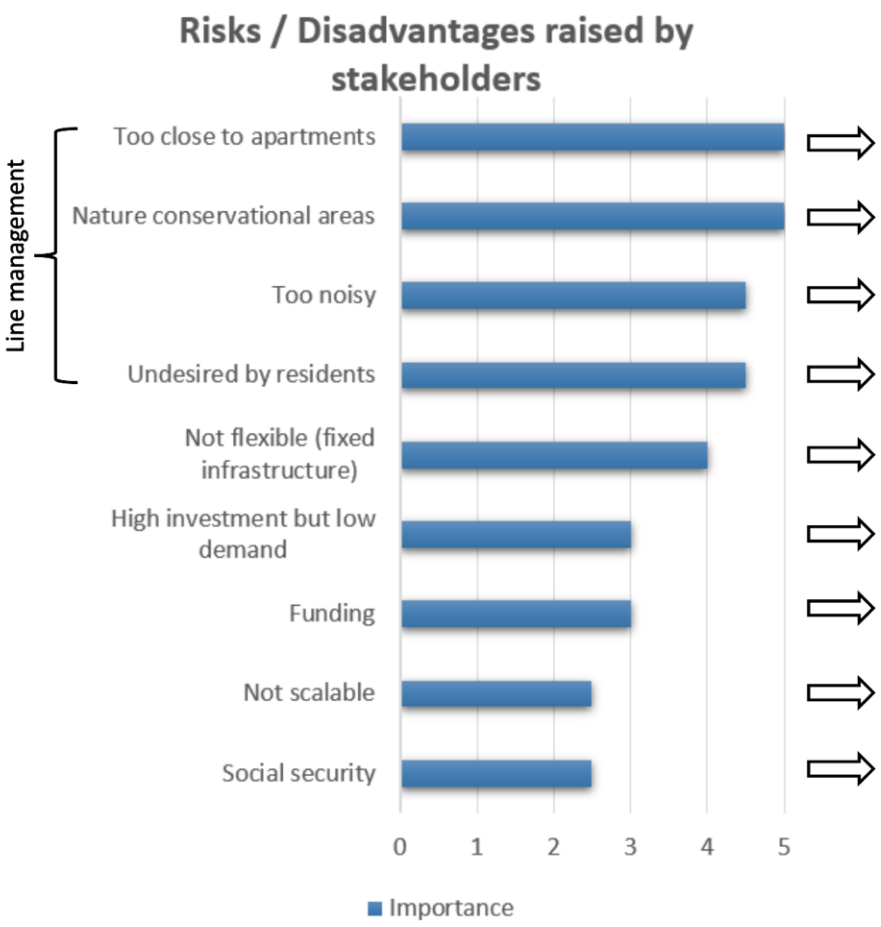


Figure 7; Own illustration based on Williams & Lewis, 2008; Logos taken from company websites and Wikipedia (Halter, 2020; mha gmbh, 2021; Birdlife, 2020; Kontextplan, 2021; Wikimedia Foundation, 2021)

The clear message of the matrix is to keep the stakeholders satisfied and meet their needs. Meeting the stakeholders needs in the case of the Aaregondel means preparing a feasibility study and adjusting the project according to the outcome. When adjusting the project, especially the opinions of the administrative offices must be considered very carefully, as they have the power to block the project over a long period. Halter AG and mha GmbH are seen as highly powerful because of their potential influence on public opinion and their financial resources. Moreover, the nature protection organisations could become rather powerful depending on the line management and the public opinion about it.

6.2 Action plan

Figure 8 displays a summary of the most critical concerns raised by the stakeholders in the interview. We have ranked them according to their importance and prepared direct implications and measures in an action plan consisting of three steps. The action plan should provide clear guidance for immediate future actions of the IG Aaregondel in order to bring the influential stakeholders from a low-interest position to a high-interest position and, therefore, successfully continue with the project.



Action Plan

Activity	When	Involved stakeholder
Propose a new line management with greater distance to apartments of Halter and SwissPrime.	Step 1	Halter AG, mha gmbh / SwissPrime
Propose a new line management that takes into consideration the nature conservational areas.	Step 1	Pro Natura, BirdLife
According to the IG, the Aaregondel produces little noise. Proof is needed or a new line management.	Step 1	Halter AG, mha gmbh / SwissPrime
Can have a big impact. Must be investigated in feasability study.	Step 2	Feasability study will be shown to all stakeholders
Disadvantage compared to the bus. Find sufficient advantages to outweigh disadvantages.	Step 2	Amt für Verkehr und Tiefbau, Amt für Raumplanung
A more precise demand forecast must be investigated in feasability study.	Step 2	Feasability study will be shown to all stakeholders
Develop a concrete financial plan. By tackling the disadvantages, additional fundings could be obtained.	Step 3	Amt für Verkehr und Tiefbau, Amt für Raumplanung
According to the IG, the Aaregondel is scalable. Proof is needed.	Step 2	mha gmbh / SwissPrime
Show how security is assured.	Step 3	Kontextplan

Figure 8: Action Plan derived from Risk and Disadvantages (own illustration)

Step 1:

As the action plan presents, the most critical disadvantages raised by the stakeholders are related to line management. If the IG Aaregondel succeeds in meeting with the Halter AG, Swiss Prime Anlagestifutng, Pro Natura and BirdLife, these concerns can be discussed. All previously mentioned stakeholders feel that line management is inconvenient. Thus, a collaborative and constructive discussion is of utmost importance for the success of this project. The interviews have shown that it would be immensely beneficial for the IG Aaregondel to have these discussions as soon as possible because possible adjustments in the line management would also influence the feasibility study outcomes.

Step 2:

In the second step, the IG Aaregondel must complete the feasibility study and present it to all stakeholders. All stakeholders mentioned that the project is in a very early stage and that concrete public statements cannot be made to this point and time. However, with the presentation of the feasibility study, the IG can deliver more specific insights about the project to the stakeholders. This can increase the willingness for further discussions and possible cooperation. As the IG Aaregondel has already explained, the consent of important stakeholders and positive public statements from those stakeholders may substantially impact the future success of this project.

After these two steps, most concerns of the stakeholders are already managed, and the project may face more minor obstacles.

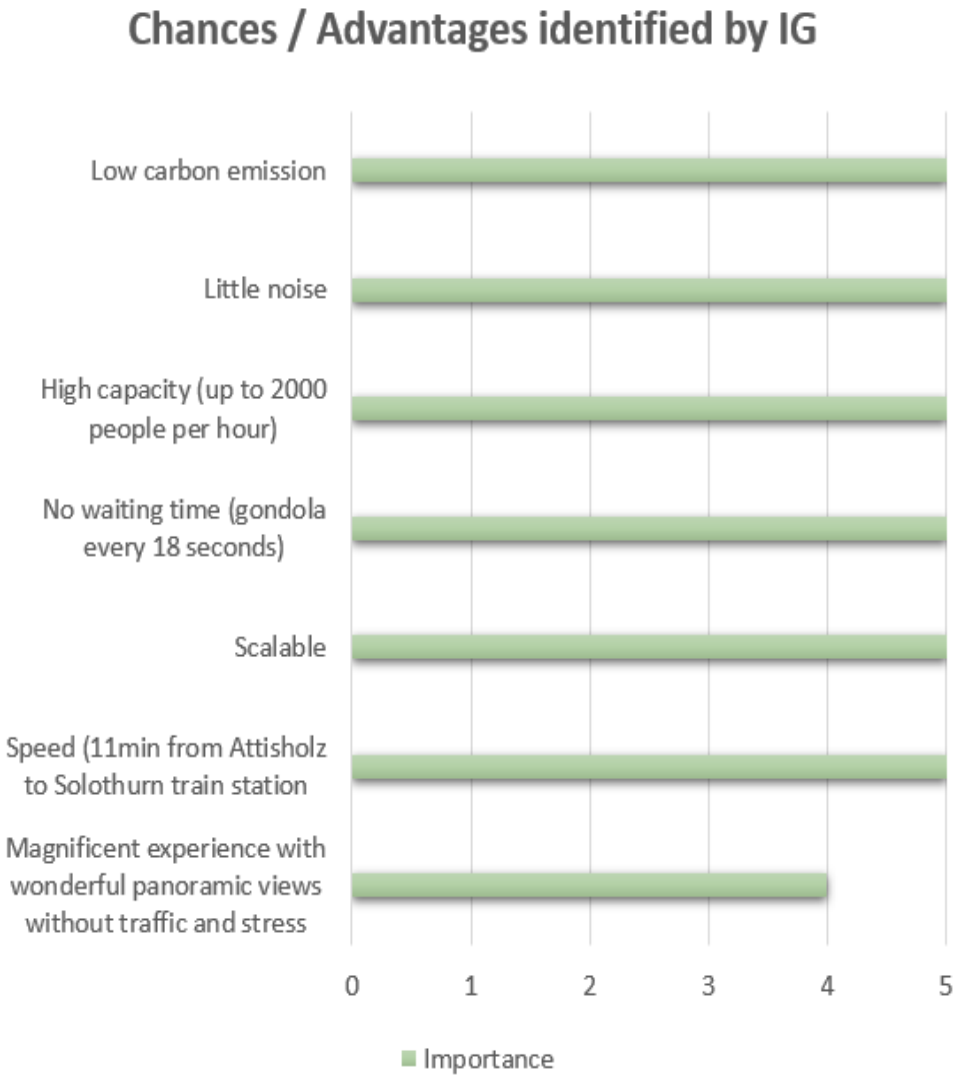
Step 3:

In the third and last step of our action plan, the project team highly recommends that the IG Aaregondel establish a profound business plan, including a financial plan. Stakeholders such as the Amt für Verkehr und Tiefbau have mentioned how important a detailed business plan is for a project of this size. Even if the feasibility study delivers great insight and can scale the project's success, a clear financial plan is needed. With the business plan, the IG Aaregondel can present their strategy in the upcoming project steps and elaborate on how they plan to finance the project. Therefore, stakeholders are convinced about the theoretical feasibility of the project and can evaluate the concrete actions of the IG Aaregondel.

6.3 Chances of the Aaregondel

Contrary to the risks and disadvantages discussed above, Figure 9 below highlights the advantages mentioned by the IG Aaregondel and additional advantages that stakeholders see in the gondola. For instance, besides IG's selling points, some stakeholders perceive the excellent connection to Zuchwil's sports centre, which would be established as a strength of the Aaregondel. Furthermore, the 50 % public transportation policy in this region may represent an opportunity for the Aaregondel to be implemented as an addition to the buses. Surprisingly, although the low greenhouse gases that a gondola emits compared to a bus is advantageous, it did not seem to be a strong argument for implementing the Aaregondel. Other positive aspects that were brought up are the privileged travel experience and the flexibility and stress-free commuting of not needing to consult a timetable.

Knowing how others perceive the project might help the client better understand his stakeholders and incorporate these added values in his presentations.



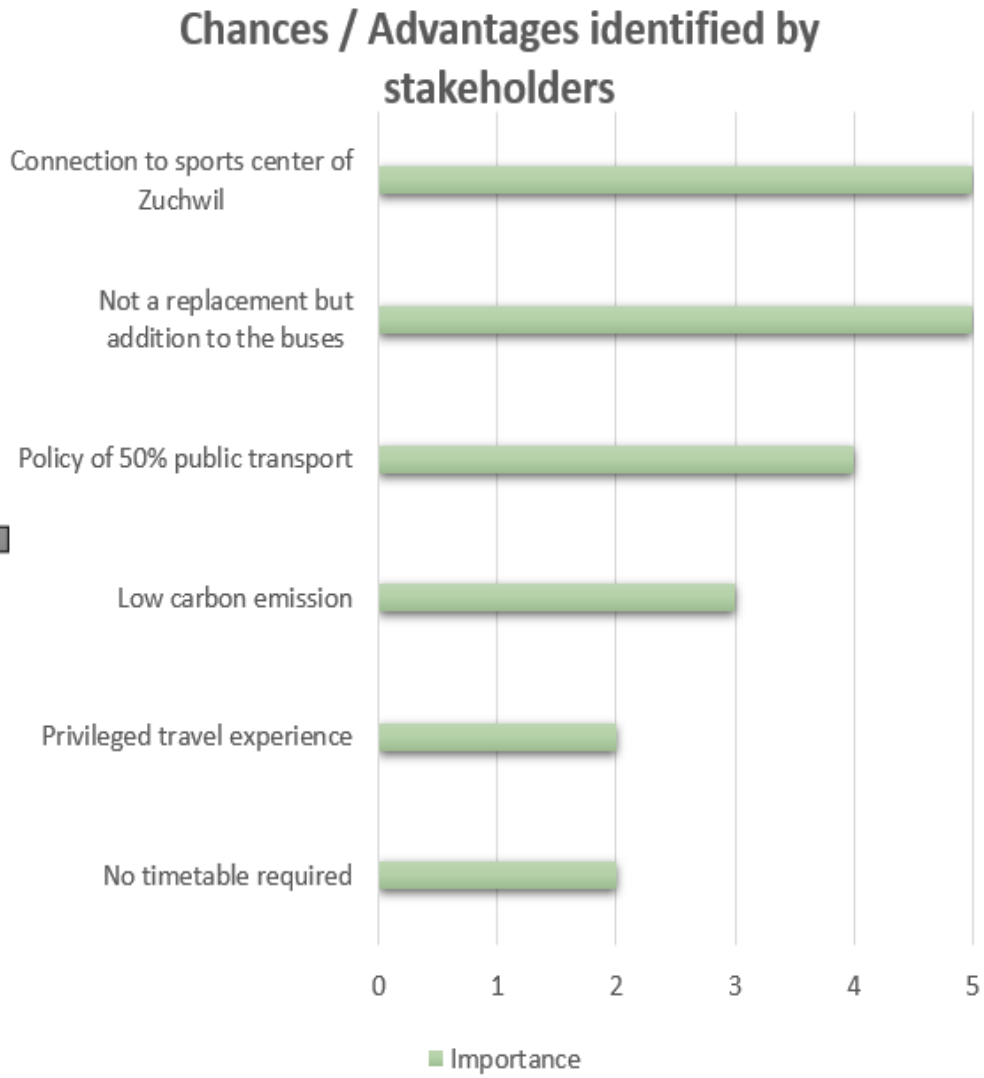


Figure 9: Chances of the Aaregondel (own illustration)

7 Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative part focusses on double-checking and verifying data and numbers which have been used by the IG Aaregondel regarding the demographic development in the relevant areas. As a result of the quantitative part, the project team prepared a table including crucial numbers and the corresponding sources that should serve the IG Aaregondel as an administrable overview. Potential deviations between numbers used by the IG Aaregondel and numbers found by the project team are commented below the table.

The study of relevant sources and the interviewing of various stakeholders led to additional findings and insights that could be of importance for IG Aaregondel. These findings are described in a separate subsection of the quantitative analysis.

7.1 Quantitative analysis - Overview

The demand figures used by the IG for its planning are difficult to estimate and verify. None of the project team members specialises in public transport, commuter numbers, day tourism, demographic change, or the like. Any insights provided by the project team are therefore inherently limited.
According to the IG, 50,000 strollers are pure estimates and, more precise counts would have to be made, possibly on-site and as part of the future feasibility study.
It may be worthwhile to look at the value-added by tourism in the canton of Solothurn, assuming that the estimated 50,000 include many day visitors. A total of 6.16 million guest frequencies were determined for 2017 in the canton of Solothurn. Across the canton, around 81 % of these are day visitors or 5.01 million frequencies in figures. However, this is in the same order of magnitude as in earlier studies for regions in the midlands. Concerning the Solothurn region, which also includes the Grenchen region, the share is 78 %.
Day visitors are defined as all guests who stay in the region on the study day but do not spend the night there. The days of stay of the guests are called guest frequencies.
If one looks at the nude figures, an estimate of 50,000 visitors does not seem unrealistic. Tourism in the canton of Solothurn is developing positively. In 2017, tourism in the canton of Solothurn generated total (direct and indirect) employment of around 3,000 FTEs. This corresponds to 2.7 % of cantonal employment, the share of the Solothurn region is 43 %. Thereby arises a gross tourism value-added of 280 million. CHF. Tourism thus contributes 1.7 % to the cantonal GDP, the share of the Solothurn region is 42 %. Between 2008 and 2015, employment in the canton of Solothurn increased by 3.7 %. As a result, gross value added increased by 7.6 %. Employment in the tourism sector rose by an above average 14 % and gross value added by 22 % in the same period (Rütter Soceco AG, 2018).

It is difficult to classify the estimated number of journeys per day of the gondola that the IG provides. The feasibility study on the east-west urban cable car line in St. Gallen can be compared. This study aims to examine the suitability of a cable car in three scenarios around the city of St. Gallen. It is intended to provide findings on whether a cable car should be pursued as a possible means of public transport in the urban area of St. Gallen. The passenger potentials calculated in the study are based on bus and rail line figures and mobility indicators from the base year 2019 and extrapolated to the forecast year 2040. In the case of scenario A for the east line, no change to the public transportation system is envisaged. This results in peak hourly traffic of ca. 1,700 passengers per hour per direction (pphpd) in the inner city area between St. Gallen railroad station and the Kantonsspital/Olma Areal but decreases rapidly the further east one goes and is also below the profitability line of 1,000 PHP. In scenario B, an additional expansion of the bus lines is planned by forming a bus hub. Thus, the minimum value of 1,000 pphpd is exceeded on all sections of the east line. Therefore, the peak capacity of the east cable car line is designed to a maximum of 2,200 pphpd for the forecast year 2040.

A peak capacity of 1,300 pphpd is assumed for the West ropeway line, assuming that bus line 151 is eliminated and all existing regional rail users switch to the ropeway. Without this consideration, the traffic demand potential would be too low to justify a cable car (Kanton St. Gallen, 2020).

When considering this feasibility study, it should be noted that, on the one hand, the figures of the IG are extrapolated to the day and those of the canton of St. Gallen to the hour.

There are also significant differences in demographics and commuter numbers between the two cities and cantons. The resident population of St. Gallen alone comprises around 80,000 people (Stadt St.Gallen, 2022). For the city of Solothurn, this figure is around 17,000 (Stadt Solothurn, 2019). There are significant differences in the number of jobs, with around 23,600 for the city of Solothurn across all three sectors (Stadt Solothurn, 2019. The number of employees in St. Gallen is around 85,000 (Stadt St.Gallen, 2021).

The commuter balance for the canton of Solothurn is minus 14,566 for 2017, while it is plus 4,981 in the canton of St. Gallen.

A direct comparison is not possible based on these figures alone. However, the findings and figures of the feasibility study for the cable car in the city of St. Gallen could serve as a guide and benchmark in the planned feasibility study of the IG.

Quantitative analysis	Figures IG Aaregondel	Verification	Source
Demand assessment for 2040			
Quartier Unterfeld / Riverside	2,450 inhabitants 370 jobs	The document "Agglomerationsprogramm Solothurn 4. Generation" shows a different result. → 1,110 inhabitants / 300 jobs after 2031	Agglomerationsprogramm Solothurn 4. Generation (p.167)
Industriezone Luterbach	1,200 jobs	IG's figures correspond to the figures mentionned in the "Agglomerationsprogramm 4. Generation vom Kanton Solothurn"	Agglomerationsprogramm Solothurn 4. Generation (p.170)
Transformationsareal Attisholz (Attisholz Nord, Riedholz)	1,200 inhabitants 780 jobs	The figures have been taken from the "Agglomerationsprogramm". Additional sources might help to get a better estimation of 2040:	
		• 1,200 inhabitants / 780 jobs after 2031	Agglomerationsprogramm Solothurn 4. Generation (p.170)
		• 2,200 - 2,650 inhabitants / 1,450 jobs	Mobilitätskonzept (p.6)
		• 2,500 inhabitants / 500 jobs	Attisholz Arealentwicklung
Sportzentrum Zuchwil	450,000 visitors p.a.	Forecast for the years 2030 and 2040 by Urs Jäggi, director of Sportzentrum Zuchwil. Verification through future feasability study.	
Tourism and Leisure	50,000 strollers p.a.	Verification through future feasability study.	
Population development			
Luterbach	2040 = 3,977 inhabitants	2040 = 3,977 inhabitants	Agglomerationsprogramm Solothurn 4. Generation (p.189)
		2040 = 1,303 employees	Agglomerationsprogramm Solothurn 4. Generation (p.190)
		2040 = 3,977 inhabitants	Bevölkerungsprognose 2040
Riedholz	2040 = 3,469 inhabitants	2040 = 3,469 inhabitants	Agglomerationsprogramm Solothurn 4. Generation (p.189)
		2040 = 632 employees	Agglomerationsprogramm Solothurn 4. Generation (p.190)
		2040 = 3,469 inhabitants	Bevölkerungsprognose 2040
Zuchwil	2040 = 9,677 inhabitants	2040 = 9,677 inhabitants	Agglomerationsprogramm Solothurn 4. Generation (p.189)
		2040 = 5,932 employees	Agglomerationsprogramm Solothurn 4. Generation (p.190)
		2040 = 9,677 inhabitants	Bevölkerungsprognose 2040
Solothurn	2040 = 23,074 inhabitants	2040 = 23,074 inhabitants	Agglomerationsprogramm Solothurn 4. Generation (p.189)
		2040 = 29,427 employees	Agglomerationsprogramm Solothurn 4. Generation (p.190)
		2040 = 23,074 inhabitants	Bevölkerungsprognose 2040
Usage of the Aaregondel			
Quartier Unterfeld / Riverside	600 people per day	-	Mobilitätskonzept (p.14)
Industriezone Luterbach	600 people per day	-	Mobilitätskonzept (p.14)
Transformationsareal Attisholz	900 people per day	-	Mobilitätskonzept (p.14)
Sportzentrum Zuchwil	200 people per day	-	Mobilitätskonzept (p.14)
Tourismus und Freizeit	300 people per day	-	Mobilitätskonzept (p.14)

Figure 10: Comparison of figures (own illustration)

7.1.1 Demand assessment for 2040 – Transformationsareal Attisholz

The figures used by the IG Aaregondel have been taken from the "Agglomerationsprogramm Solothurn 4. Generation". Regarding the planned completion of the transformation process in 2043, the numbers provided in the general mobility concept for the Attisholz area, and the commune Riedholz might be more helpful. According to this document, 2'200 – 2'650 people are expected to live in this area while around 1'450 jobs should be created in the same period.

7.1.2 Usage of the Aaregondel

Figures stated in this section could not be verified nor falsified by the project team. Section 4 of the general mobility concept for the Attisholz-Areal and the commune Riedholz, "Mobilitätsnachfrage Kernareal", provides some calculations regarding the mobility demand of the central area. While the calculations might be helpful and give some insights about primary considerations, they cannot be applied to the Aaregondel in general. This is since not all potential cable car passengers would travel from or into the Attisholz-Areal. Calculations for potential usage of the Aaregondel will always be based on assumptions.

7.2 Additional findings

This section elaborates additional insights which emerged while the study of relevant document or during interviews with stakeholders.

7.2.1 Boat connection as an alternative

At the IG Aaregondel meeting on October 26, 2021, a public transport operation via boat was considered an alternative to the Aaregondel. This idea is welcomed by Markus Hauri, Managing Director of mha GmbH. The company is responsible for the structural development of the riverside site in Zuchwil. He sees a connection via the waterway as a supplement to an attraction and does not consider the constructional hurdles too great. The Aaregondel transports passengers faster, he admits. However, he argues that a boat is easy to handle, manageable, and simple to adapt to the traffic demand.

However, the Office for Environment refutes such efforts for a boat connection. This operation is impossible in the winter due to the current legal situation from approx. October to March/April, boating is prohibited between the height of the Zuchwil sports centre and the Flumenthal power plant. Private boating is also restricted in winter due to the nature and migratory bird reserve. In summer, this is currently only possible thanks to an exception. This exception allows sixty passenger trips and restricts it to boats with a maximum engine power of eight horsepower.

7.2.2 Cost estimation of the bus-line

As a subpart of the quantitative analysis, we have tried to gather estimates of the costs for expanding the bus line. During the interview with Kjell Kolden, we have asked him for a rough estimation and have received some interesting insights.

According to Kjell Kolden, two additional busses are driving to the Attisholz-Areal and one bus driving to Luterbach. Since summer 2021, parts of the expansion plans have already been launched. On line 10, busses are driving during peak hours only. In the morning, at lunchtime and in the evening, from Monday to Friday. The other line, line 17, drives every day during the whole day. However, these busses drive from Gerlafingen via Derendingen and Luterbach until Attisholz.
As the previously mentioned bus lines to Attisholz have only been established this summer, there is not enough data to evaluate costs and usage. However, Kjell Kolden has provided us with a general cost estimation. There are two main factors to consider for introducing a new bus to a public transport system: the vehicle and the bus driver. In order to run one bus with one driver, costs can be estimated to be half a million Swiss francs per year. These costs include the salary of a bus driver, the maintenance, and the vehicle's depreciation. Naturally, depending on factors such as location and duration, bus providers can demand different prices; therefore, the cost coverage for the Amt für Verkehr und Tiefbau varies. However, generally, the cost coverage for the Kanton Solothurn is fifty per cent. This means that fifty per cent of costs should be covered with revenues from tickets, and fifty per cent will be provided as subsidies.

Between lines 10 and 17, significant differences regarding cost coverage can be recognised because line 10 is substantially financed by private companies located in the area. Bus line 10 will be running until 2024. In 2024, the Amt für Verkehr und Tiefbau will conduct an evaluation and assessment, also influencing whether the private companies will continue contributing to the cost coverage. Afterwards, the Amt für Verkehr und Tiefbau will decide about the future of the bus infrastructure.

8 Conclusion

The objective of this project work with our client IG Aaregondel was, on the one hand, to conduct a qualitative analysis about the key stakeholders of the IG Aaregondel and, on the other hand, to develop a quantitative analysis by verifying the demographic development of specific areas in the canton of Solothurn.

In terms of the qualitative analysis, the nine most essential stakeholders were identified by the IG on which we focused during this project. However, before the initial contact with each of them, some theory was gathered to understand the purpose of stakeholder management and how to address them in a structured manner. As a result, we found out that one effective way to address them is to identify all stakeholders, prioritize them, and finally, understand the key stakeholders.

To prioritize the identified stakeholders, we used a framework that consisted of four parts: agenda-setting, indexing, framing, priming. Each part represents the primary or desired task of a stakeholder whose targeted behavior ought to be achieved in the correct order. Furthermore, we gathered the current viewpoints and opinions of eight out of nine critical stakeholders by organizing online or on-site meetings. The collected findings were then analyzed and structured to draw valuable conclusions. We discovered through an interest/influence grid that the overall mood of the stakeholders towards the project is relatively neutral or skeptical. According to our judgment, most of them fall into the upper left quadrant of the grid, which means that they possess considerable influence but show little interest. As a result, we developed a graph presenting the most significant barriers identified by the stakeholders and an action plan to tackle them.

As part of the quantitative analysis, forecasts of the future tourism development and past cable car projects were analyzed to obtain an additional basis for estimating the use of the Aaregondel. Furthermore, various interviews with cantonal offices provided additional insights regarding the boat connection as an alternative to the Aaregondel and cost estimations for a new bus line. To assess the figures presented by the IG Aaregondel, we created a table comparing their numbers with the estimates stated in several official documents, such as the agglomeration program of Solothurn, the mobility concept and the 2040 population forecast provided by the cantonal offices. Nevertheless, our ability to accurately assess the estimates was limited, and therefore, a more detailed review through the planned feasibility study is required.

In conclusion, we believe that the findings discovered in this paper will positively affect the further continuation of the project Aaregondel. Although there is still a long way to go, accompanied by

many risks, uncertainties, and steps to be taken before the implementation of a cable car over Solothurn can be achieved.

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10 List of Figures