

# Chapter 11

## Stakeholder Analysis for (Mediterranean) Wetland Governance: The Case of Ljubljansko Barje Nature Park, Slovenia



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**Abstract** Wetlands in Europe are vulnerable interconnected environments, significantly contributing to biodiversity. They are often challenged by the overlapping of different levels of spatial planning and authorities in charge of their preservation and management, by the lack of coordination and incapacity of administrative authorities to handle complex territorial dynamics. In this study, we present the methodology used to engage relevant stakeholders in wetland governance in Ljubljansko Barje Nature Park, located in the southern part of the Ljubljana Basin, Slovenia. The main focus of this chapter is the detailed explanation of the implementation of effective governance for the Ljubljansko Barje Nature Park, acting through a participatory process in which users, private and public entities are committed to mainstreaming wetlands preservation into their ordinary activities. The Wetland Contract is a document signed by different stakeholders, aiming at the active participation of stakeholders in solving a selected problem in a wetland. Its implementation and the use of selected cooperative participatory techniques assure greater coordination among stakeholders and decision-makers in order to limit and absorb conflicts among different issues, primarily between preservation issues and economic activities, but also those opposing cultural heritage valorisation to the protection of natural values.

**Keywords** Environmental decision-making · Stakeholder mapping · Effective governance · Mediterranean wetlands · Wetland contract

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## 11.1 Introduction

According to the Ramsar Convention (1971) for the protection of wetlands (articles 1.1 and 2.1), wetlands are defined as:

... areas of marsh, fen, peat land or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres [...] and may incorporate riparian and coastal zones adjacent to the wetlands, and islands or bodies of marine water deeper than six metres at low tide lying within the wetlands.

Wetlands in Europe are vulnerable interconnected environments, significantly contributing to biodiversity. Their protection intertwines environmental aspects and governance concerns. The project “WETNET—Coordinated management and networking of Mediterranean wetlands” was developed in order to tackle the issue of implementing multilevel governance for Mediterranean wetlands to achieve overall and network effects on wetlands ecosystems as well as on connected local systems. The research generated aims at ensuring higher coordination between different levels of spatial planning and authorities in charge of wetland management, whilst limiting conflicts between preservation issues and economic activities (WETNET Application Form 2014). Based on River Contracts—an innovative methodology for water management based on the active participation of local actors, the research seeks to test and transfer Wetland Contracts, acting through broad participatory processes where users, private and public entities are committed to mainstreaming wetlands preservation into their ordinary activities. Wetland Contracts promote consultation processes between various key actors and active participation from a range of stakeholders. Therefore, Wetland Contracts are voluntary agreements to foster a dialogue and shared responsibility among actors. The Ljubljansko Barje Nature Park was selected as a pilot area. After 150 years of human intervention in this marsh landscape, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the first realizations emerged regarding the need to protect it. Efforts to protect the Ljubljansko Barje intensified during the 1980s, until the marsh was protected as a Nature Park in 2008 in order to protect the natural values, preserve the biodiversity and maintain and enhance the landscape diversity. Despite being protected, the Park continues to face many pressures and threats that may endanger its future sustainable development.

In order to develop and implement the Wetland Contract in the pilot area, a stakeholder’s analysis should first be undertaken. With the aim of guaranteeing proper governance of the Wetland Contract implementation, the contract should be designed by stakeholders comprising representatives from (1) public authorities, (2) knowledge providers, (3) civil society and (4) the economic sector. This structure ensures that the principles of territorial consultation are respected during each stage and through the final agreement, including the definition of objectives, content and the rationale for its actions (Bravard 2016).

In this study, we present the methodology used to identify and engage relevant stakeholders; i.e. all people, groups and institutions, willing to embark on the process of improving the governance of Ljubljansko Barje Nature Park.

### ***11.1.1 Theoretical Framework***

The various functions of wetlands give them unique importance for both plants and animals but also for humanity. Wetlands are important for the people who live around them but also for the global freshwater supply. The overuse of finite freshwater resources which constitute 2.5% of the total water volume of our planet and the projected future increased use of freshwater paint a bleak picture for wetlands, and thus for humans. Water shortage is already evident in many parts of the world, and according to FAO (2019) by 2025 two-thirds of the world's population could be under water stress conditions. Lack of freshwater and increased population growth present a real threat to humanity. However, the solution to this problem cannot be found in a single response. Considering that wetlands store and purify water and replenish underground water sources, their conservation is vital for our future. Wetlands are also important as part of cultural heritage. Their ecological functions have overshadowed this aspect of their importance, but it is now getting increasingly more attention. Wetlands are inextricably linked with the cultural heritage of humanity and are a cradle for local knowledge and tradition, religious beliefs and aesthetic values. Effectively, the conservation of wetlands contributes to the conservation of human tradition (Medwet 2017).

Specific characteristics of the climate and the long history of human presence make the Mediterranean a unique region. For thousands of years, the wetlands around the Mediterranean Basin have provided people not only with essential services like water, food, materials and transport, but have also played a major part in their social and cultural activities. Major civilizations were established in association with and dependent on wetlands for resources like water. Major cities have been built in or very close to wetlands (e.g. Venice), where significant archaeological remains can be found. In the twentieth century, with the advent of industrialization, intensive agriculture, urbanization, population pressures and legitimate health considerations, the bond between man and wetland was broken and hence many wetlands were destroyed. Wetlands were perceived as dangerous places filled with dangerous animals, evil spirits and disease-carrying insects that needed to be “sanitized” or seen as unimportant, fallow land to be drained and converted to other uses (Medwet 2017).

Three specific features are especially characteristic for the Mediterranean wetlands (Papayannis and Salathé 1998):

1. Mediterranean wetlands are very diverse, a result of the climatic variability of the region. In the North, the wetlands are large river deltas and lagoons, and in the South they are sabkhas and marshes that are seasonal and may appear every few years. Also, artificial wetlands range from oases and salt pans to contemporary reservoirs created by hydroelectric and irrigation dams.
2. There are strong ties between local inhabitants and wetlands. These ties are evident from the fact that Mediterranean people not only used them but lived and still live in or near them, as demonstrated by ancient Greek trading posts such as Empurias (Catalonia, Spain) and Narona (Croatia). Venice and Tunis, two large Mediterranean cities, are built-in wetlands (Matvejević 1990). These choices in

settlement demonstrate how local communities in the Mediterranean Basin have developed strong cultural bonds with wetland sites.

3. Mediterranean wetlands are in a degraded condition and under threat. The last century has seen the loss of more than half the wetlands, which has resulted in a dramatic degradation of their functions and loss of their values (Finlayson et al. 1992). Even though many attempts have been made to counteract this trend, degradation and loss have not yet been stopped or reversed (Papayannis 2002).

In order to protect wetlands from these threats, it is important to involve stakeholders in all levels of governance and change the destructive practices that have been implemented until now. Wetland loss to a large extent is due to ignorance and misunderstanding of their role, so an important step in effective wetland conservation is informing public policy officials, decision-makers and the general public about the true values and functions of wetlands (Medwet 2017). The sustainable management of wetlands cannot be achieved without the active participation of all stakeholders. For this purpose, a stakeholder analysis is a prerequisite for any development of or intervention into wetland management, as emphasized by the Ramsar Convention.

In the Mediterranean countries in general, wetlands are not high priorities on the political and strategic development and conservation agendas. This derives from a series of factors (MED-survey 2011):

- The main development and conservation policies and agenda as well as public institutional set-up are not based on specific ecosystems but on economic, social and environmental considerations;
- Economic and social development is the driving agenda of most Mediterranean countries, with economic growth, employment, food security, poverty reduction and national security being the priorities;
- Wetlands represent less than 3% of the entire terrestrial surface of the Mediterranean Basin, which is a very small part in terms of land use and planning for decision-makers;
- In most non-EU countries, wetland protection and sustainable use are still often understood as a Ramsar process for protected areas only, and not known outside the conservation network and in non-Ramsar sites;
- Nature is still considered, especially in southern countries, as free capital in development options, and the water component of wetlands captures interest for purposes of irrigation, water supply, tourism, industry, etc.;
- Ramsar focal points are not always visible, not institutionally strong, or they may be less involved in decision-making than EU and OECD focal points. However, considering the small percentage (less than 3%) of the Mediterranean areas covered by wetlands cumulated efforts since 1971 have been bearing fruit. These results are recognized by most wetlands-related stakeholders involved at the policy level: improved awareness; continuous increase of protected wetlands sites and areas; updates and improvements of policy and strategic documents related to wetlands and increased capacity and participation of civil society in wetlands protection.

River Contracts (the basis for the Wetland Contracts) were revealed as innovations in policy, replacing the partial and/or sector-driven sector policies, with the practice

of stipulating contracts between partners on a local scale. These agreements strive to reconcile economic development, social uses and values and the ecological quality of the environment. In France, River Contracts provided the possibility to implement concrete management practices based on integrated management, showing that it is possible and desirable to deeply involve different stakeholders in the design process and in political and management decisions (Bravard 2016).

Therefore, for the purpose of providing a robust, inclusive and credible approach to assessing and strengthening wetland governance, at multiple levels and in diverse contexts, the engagement and involvement of stakeholders are of crucial importance.

### ***11.1.2 Engaging and Involving Stakeholders in Wetland Governance***

Public participation and stakeholders' involvement in environmental decision-making have become an increasingly important aspect over the past few decades (Richardson and Razzaque 2006). The principle of public participation enables the public to be heard and to affect decisions (Kiss and Shelton 2004). One of the first international instruments that proclaimed this principle was the World Charter for Nature, adopted in 1982 (UN 1982). Public participation distinctly gained importance in the UN Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro (UNCED 1992). Its principle 10 establishes that:

Environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. At the national level, each individual shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities, including information on hazardous materials and activities in their communities, and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available. Effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings, including redress and remedy, shall be provided.

Later, the UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters—the Aarhus Convention—underscored this development (UNECE 1998). The Aarhus Convention is actually the only instrument dedicated exclusively to participation. The Convention is a significant example of the legal consolidation of measures to enhance public participation in relation to decision-making (article 6), availability of information (Article 4) and access to justice (Article 9). The negotiating sessions involved an unprecedented level of participation on the part of NGOs, among them a coalition of environmental citizens' organizations established especially for the drafting sessions. The Aarhus Convention signalled the conclusion of public participation reforms made since the 1970s. Significantly, all Member States of the European Union have either signed or ratified the Aarhus Convention (Pimbert and Wakeford 2001).

Several factors have encouraged the increase of participatory processes in decision-making (Richardson and Razzaque 2006), such as (1) increased public

awareness and concern about the relationships between ecological health and human well-being (Barton 2002); (2) the growth of human rights in legal and political systems has elevated people's expectations regarding access to participation in policy-making (Barton 2002); (3) the current concerns of the international community for "good governance" and the empowerment of civil society have also contributed to increasing interest in the participatory processes (Pimbert and Wakeford 2001); and (4) weaknesses in the legitimacy of the state and the lack of trust in government institutions have fed popular demands for more fundamental and direct involvement in decisions (Pimbert and Wakeford 2001).

The consequences of wetland management and mismanagement affect all sectors of society; however, the values which people attribute to wetlands and the impacts of wetland management decisions are sometimes not adequately considered in decision-making processes. Different stakeholders derive different benefits from and attribute different values to wetlands. Therefore, it is critical to explicitly and transparently recognize, assess and integrate these multiple perspectives in policy-making (Kumar et al. 2017).

The improving management of wetlands to assure higher coordination among stakeholders and decision-makers in order to limit and absorb conflicts among different issues—primarily between preservation issues and economic activities, but including preventing the false opposition of cultural heritage valorisation to the protection of natural values—is a huge endeavour that cannot be accomplished without the involvement of relevant stakeholders. Therefore, it is important to conduct a stakeholder mapping to understand who might be impacted, who should be involved, and what concerns they bring to wetland governance. The identification of these viewpoints and interests is essential to creating a fully participatory process

## 11.2 Stakeholder Analysis

"Stakeholder analysis is the identification of individuals, groups or organisations that have a specific interest in the wetland and are likely to affect or be affected by proposed interventions in the wetland" (Gevers and Koopmanschap 2012, p. 35). It is an important step to identify the key stakeholders, where they come from, and what they are looking for in a relationship to the planning process (Morris and Badache 2012). It is a useful approach to assess the stakes of interested participants in a system in more detail (Grimble et al. 1995; Grimble and Wellard 1997). This type of analysis has become increasingly popular in various academic fields such as environmental protection, management and governance, and it is used by policymakers and academics (Friedman and Miles 2006). Its roots are in management theory and in political science, where it has developed into a systematic tool with clearly defined applications and methods (Brugha and Varvasovszky 2000; Raum 2018). Within this research, we have developed a framework for stakeholder mapping in the field of wetlands governance, which includes the following steps: identification of relevant

stakeholders, reaching them out, analysing them with interest-influence matrix and assigning them the roles in a process.

### ***11.2.1 Identification of the Relevant Stakeholders***

Stakeholder identification is the process used to identify relevant stakeholders and assess their interests in the process (Grimble et al. 1995). A careful identification is essential because it is the basis for all further steps, as the chosen stakeholders will be implementing the Wetland Contract idea (Grimble and Wellard 1997). There are many principles involved in identifying stakeholders for the process, which has to be done in a methodical and logical way to ensure that stakeholders are not omitted. This may be done by looking at stakeholders organizationally, geographically or through involvement with various process phases or outcomes (Piscopo 2018). It is important to understand that not all stakeholders have the same influence or are equally affected by or during the process. On the one hand, there are stakeholders who may be directly impacted positively or negatively by the process and on the other hand those who may be indirectly affected by the outcomes of a proposed intervention (Mayers 2005). Examples of directly impacted stakeholders are the project team members or a customer who the process or project is being done for. Those indirectly affected may include an adjacent organization or members of the local community. Directly affected stakeholders usually have greater influence and impact than those indirectly affected (Piscopo 2018).

The identification of stakeholders for developing and implementing a Wetland Contract for Ljubljansko Barje was done through (Bole et al. 2017):

- brainstorming process between project partners,
- studying documents, initiatives and expertise related to wetlands,
- conversations with individuals and representatives of various organizations,
- browsing websites connected to the pilot area and
- field work (questionnaires).

The identification criteria of stakeholders for the Wetland Contract must answer five questions:

1. Who are the public authorities/knowledge institutions/those within the civil society/businesses that are interested in the management of Ljubljansko Barje Nature Park?
2. What is their role (policy provider, knowledge provider, direct consumer, indirect consumer ...) in the process?
3. Who are the potential beneficiaries?
4. Who might be adversely impacted or has constraints regarding the process?
5. Who may impact the process or has influential power?

We have developed a stakeholder list with their characteristics, such as: geographical scope, sector of activity/field of intervention, institution, stakeholder classification, contact person and role. We identified 150 potential stakeholders, which

could be relevant for the development and implementation of a Wetland Contract at Ljubljansko Barje Nature Park. According to the levels of influence, 10.6% of them are working at the national level, 8.0% on the regional level and 81.4% on the local level. 6.0% of the potential stakeholders are also working on the international level. In order to involve a much broader group of stakeholders, we had to assign and formalize a precise role for each stakeholder. For this, we chose the Quadruple Helix approach, which is grounded in the idea that innovation is the outcome of an interactive process involving different stakeholders, each contributing according to its “institutional” function in society (Cavallini et al. 2016). “The Quadruple Helix contextualizes the Triple Helix (public authorities, knowledge providers, economic sector) by adding as the fourth helix “civil society” and the “media-and culture-based public” (Woo Park 2014, p. 14).

“This is the understanding that additional perspectives must be added to comprehend innovation in the unfolding twenty-first century. In fact, democracy frames and changes our conditions of innovation” (Woo Park 2014, p. 204). The Quadruple Helix approach focuses on innovation generated by citizens. Social inclusion, user-centrality and creativity have been encompassed in the knowledge production process as essential elements, and civil society has been added as a fourth helix of the innovation system (Cavallini et al. 2016). 50.6% of the potential stakeholders are public authorities, 6.7% are knowledge providers, 20.7% are civil society, and 22.0% are from the economic sector.

### ***11.2.2 Reaching the Potential Stakeholders***

When the stakeholder identification process was finished, we had a comprehensive list of groups of all the potential stakeholders. Now, we had to reach them. One way to reach them was through online and offline social and professional networks, which enable us to find stakeholders with common or relevant interests. Mapping these relationships and content online helps to identify creative ways to reach stakeholders and earn trust and referral. It can also help to understand social influence, political context and potential risks (Plan your online engagement 2017).

We sent an e-mail to the potential stakeholders introducing the research and explaining the purpose of cooperation. When necessary we phoned them and invited them to take part in the governance process. When possible, we involved leadership (dean/director of the institution) as a co-organizer of the working groups (employees are more inclined to participate when asked by higher management).

In order to gain participants’ interest, the participation process should be facilitated and specifically designed according to the theme, situation or problem. Therefore, raising the right questions and issues could provide manifold results, a common learning process and innovative ideas arising from a collection of ideas. Powerful questions invite inquiry and new potential stakeholders: questions aimed at getting as much information about their connections to the topic are needed (Alfarè and Nared 2014).



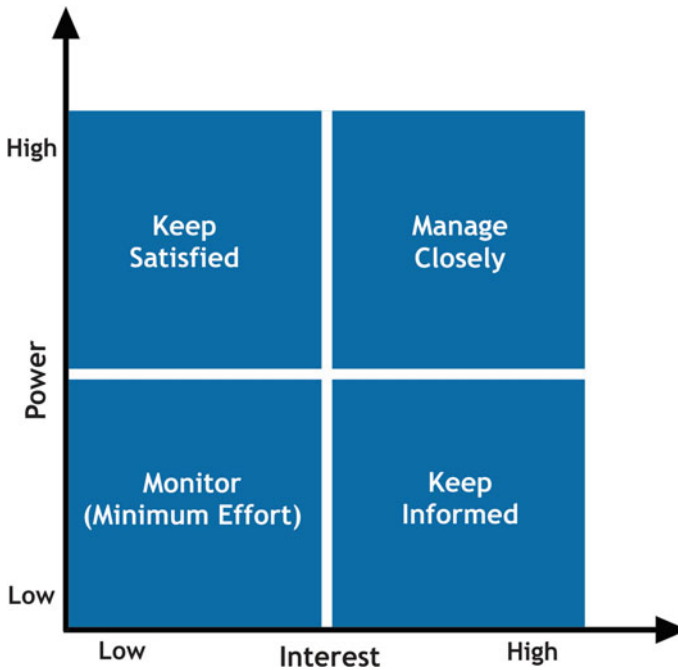
After we contacted the potential stakeholders, we sent them a questionnaire in order to obtain key information for further in-depth analysis of the relevant ones. Based on the questionnaire, we developed a stakeholder list with their characteristics, such as

- type of stakeholder;
- field of activity;
- area of activity;
- main objectives of the organization for the Ljubljansko Barje Nature Park;
- confidence and experience in inclusive governance processes;
- confidence and experience in Wetland Contract processes;
- what aspects of the pilot area management are of interest to the stakeholder;
- interest of engagement in the Wetland Contract process;
- influence of the stakeholder on the Wetland Contract process.

We received 53 responses to the questionnaire. Forty-four of were fully completed and further analysed. From these, we have received 56.8% responses from public authorities, 6.8% responses from knowledge providers, 20.4% responses from civil society and 16.0% from economic entities.

### ***11.2.3 Analysing the Stakeholders***

We grouped the relevant stakeholders for the pilot area based on the interest-influence matrix. This matrix considers the relative interest of the stakeholder in the management of the wetland versus their level of influence, in order to create a stakeholder map (Dearden et al. 2003; Hunjan and Pettit 2011; Maguire et al. 2012). Using this approach, we assessed the stakeholders by taking into account their power and their interest, and we placed them in four quadrants and stakeholder groups: key players, subjects, context setters and the crowd. This approach shows in an understandable way which stakeholder categories demand priority attention. According to the Programme Manual (2017), there should be between five and ten individuals in each quadrant. Each stakeholder group on the matrix (Fig. 11.1) requires a different engagement form. We focused on the stakeholders located in the upper-right quadrant that represents the key players, i.e. stakeholders with high interest and high influence/power. They are the ones that will be involved and consulted regularly. Subjects are stakeholders with high interest but low power. They are affected by the wetland and are keen to influence the process but they do not have power to change decisions. We kept them engaged and involved them on a regular basis. Context setters are stakeholders with low interest but high power. They affect the wetland but they had little interest; therefore, they are informed via general communications, and we try to increase their level of interest. The crowd represents the stakeholders with low interest and low power. They are not very interested in the pilot area and do not have the power to influence decisions—we keep them informed about the development of the Wetland Contract.



**Fig. 11.1** Interest-influence matrix used to identify stakeholders with differing levels of interest and influence over the project

One of the important steps was to discover which stakeholders might help to develop the process and how, to detect their needs and aims and mark the already existing cooperation or networks among them. It is important to mention that the stakeholder list needs to be constantly updated during further steps.

Considering only the stakeholders with both higher interest and influence/power in Ljubljansko Barje Nature Park (Fig. 11.2), we obtained 34.0% of all completed responses to the questionnaire. From these, the majority of the stakeholders (66.7%) are public authorities, 13.3% are knowledge providers, 13.3% correspond to civil society and only 6.7% of the stakeholders come from the economic entities.

#### ***11.2.4 Assigning Stakeholders' Roles***

Following the Quadruple Helix approach, four helices are included in the process of stakeholder mapping for Wetland Contract implementation:

- **Public Authorities:** public authorities with competences or territorial jurisdiction or sectoral jurisdiction in the Ljubljansko Barje Nature Park, local authorities, municipalities, government level institutions;

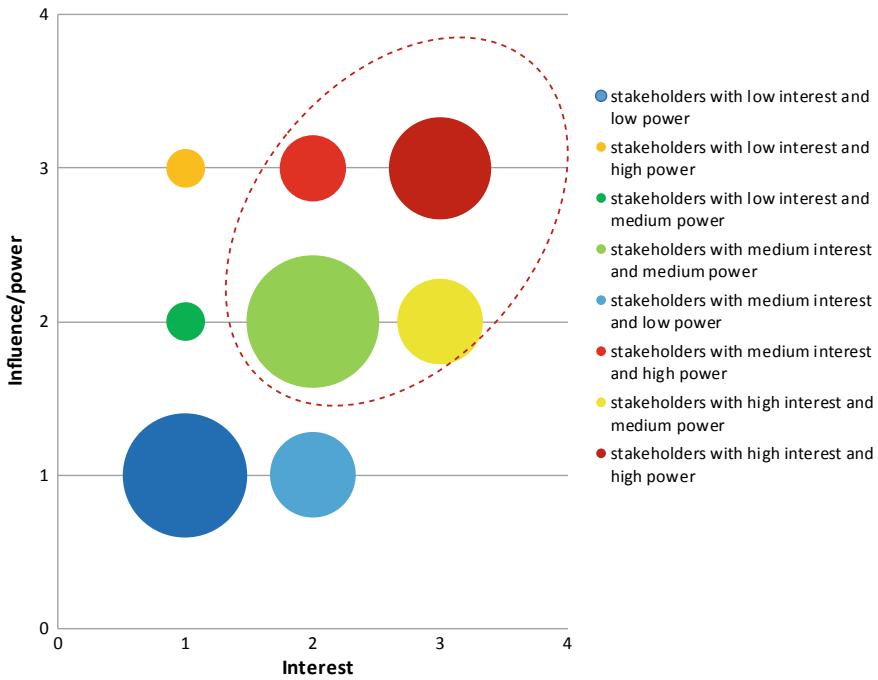


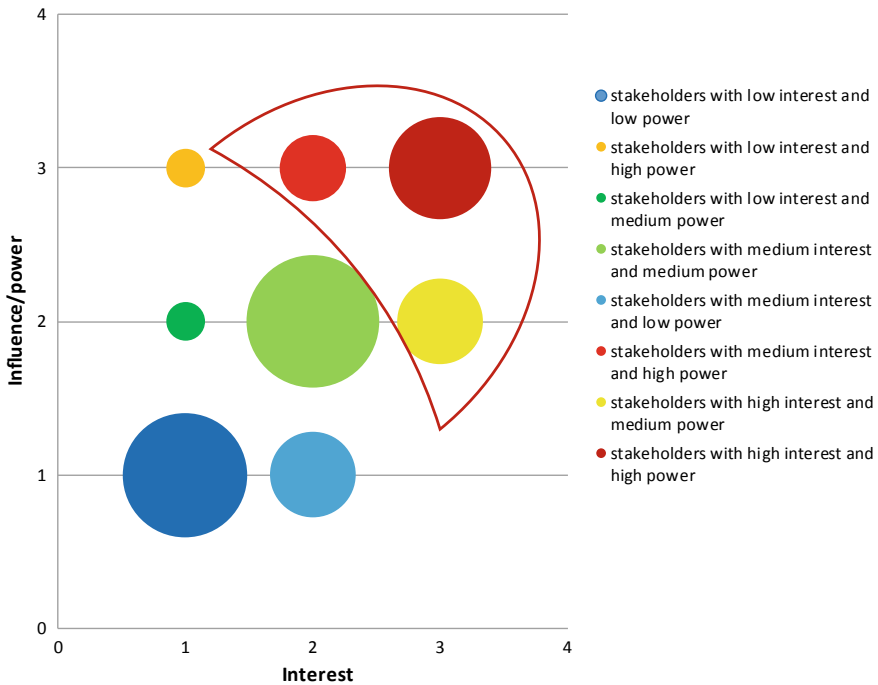
Fig. 11.2 Stakeholders with both higher interest and influence/power in the pilot area

- Knowledge Providers: experts and professionals from universities, research or development centres;
- Civil Society: associations and representative bodies representing the interests of citizens and civil society organizations, individuals, rights-holders;
- Economic Sector: individual or collective private entities of the main activities of the economic sector present in the surrounds of the Ljubljansko Barje Nature Park.

In terms of stakeholders' heterogeneity, the result is not very satisfying, since only one stakeholder is representative of the economic sector.

In order to reach the most interested stakeholders possible, and indeed a heterogeneous group, to further include them into the participatory processes such as workshops and implementation of the Wetland Contract, we included those with a medium interest and influence/power in the process (Fig. 11.3): 27.3% of the stakeholders. From these, 50.0% are from the public authority, 8.4% are from the knowledge providers, 25.0% are from the civil society, and 16.6% are from the economic sector.

From all the responses which were received and fully completed, 61.4% stakeholders were included in the further process of development and implementation of the Wetland Contract; 38.6% of those who completed the questionnaire are not interested in participating further in the process. Among those participating, 59.2%



**Fig. 11.3** Stakeholders showing both medium and high interest and influence/power in the pilot area

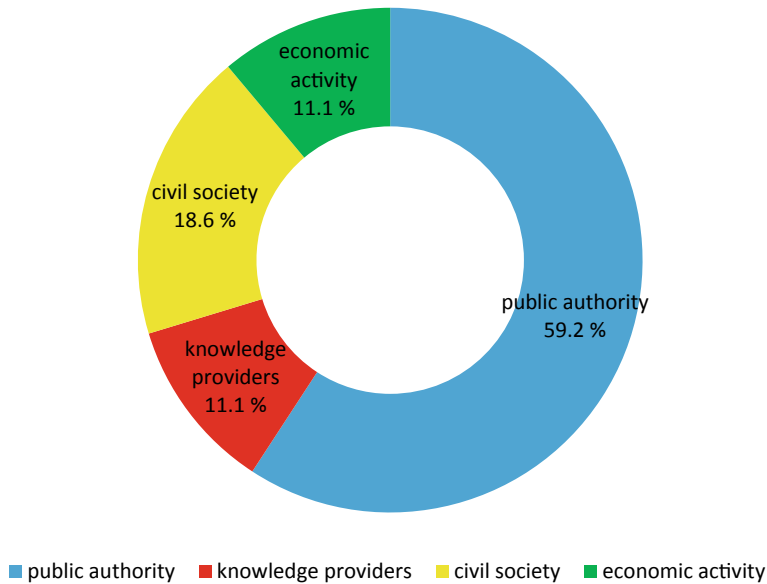
represent the public authorities, 11.1% represent knowledge providers, 18.6% represent civil society, and 11.1% represent the economic entities (Fig. 11.4).

After grouping the stakeholders, the following reflections helped to validate the findings and to prevent forgetting some of the important ones (ODA 1995):

- Have all relevant stakeholders been listed?
- Have all potential supporters and opponents of the project been identified?
- Have the interests of vulnerable groups been identified?
- Are there any new stakeholders likely to emerge as a result of the project?

The final step of the stakeholder mapping is the preparation of the final register of stakeholders. An outcome of this mapping process is the stakeholder register with an emphasis on the interested and influential ones. This is a necessary tool for the development and implementation of the Wetland Contract and provides significant value for the project team to communicate with stakeholders in an organized manner (Piscopo 2018).

Later on, all the stakeholders who were included in the further process of implementation of wetland governance are invited to workshops. The workshops focus on the characteristics and challenges that the pilot area is facing, the opportunities and threats, as well as the role of each stakeholder. The workshops contribute to



**Fig. 11.4** Type of stakeholder, according to the four helices, included in further process of wetland governance

the understanding of different interests involved and to the evaluation of the potential involvement of the main stakeholders. All the organized workshops were very well attended and the participants were very interested in the topic and actively collaborated in the process. One of the reasons for such well-attended and successful workshops was the assiduous following of all the steps in stakeholder mapping process, especially the analysis according to the interest-influence matrix. As we have contacted and included the stakeholders with higher interest and influence, we have brought in those willing to participate. One of the strengths of applying all the aforementioned steps of stakeholder mapping is the retention of most of the interested ones until the end of the process.

### 11.3 Conclusion

Irrespective of the scope and nature of the process, the narrower specialized expert groups are no longer sufficient to develop and formulate final decisions. Even if they are highly qualified professionals, the profession itself has a limited view and range. A participatory communication is necessary, and communication is as important as obtaining information (Cornish and Dunn 2009). The final users, such as civil society, are those who can tell how the process and the final output will prove to be experienced in practice. Too often, it turns out, practice diverges from theory. Different stakeholders look at the process from different perspectives and present

their aspects and variants that responsible partners may overlook. By considering these, the process has wider support and can, in practice, endure. Of course, not everyone will be satisfied with the final decision, but with some effort and mediation we should gain the trust of all participants and prevent differences from interfering with the progress of the process.

Wetlands are important for the people who live around them; thus the values which people attribute to wetlands and the impacts of wetland management strategies are critical for their effective governance. Therefore, it is crucial to include all the relevant stakeholders and to assess all activities that are ongoing at the wetlands and find ways to meet their needs or at least to mediate them. Thus, multi-stakeholder processes represent forms of cross-sector collaboration, which have become common practice over the last decade in the management of wetlands, one of the most vulnerable environments in Europe.

In our study, we found that stakeholder mapping in the involvement process must be prepared exclusively for a specific process, carefully planned, but nevertheless capable of adapting to new situations. We need to know clearly what we want to achieve through the integration process of implementing the Wetland Contract and how it will be managed. Moreover, the invited stakeholders also need to be appropriately pre-informed about the Ljubljansko Barje Nature Park and the development of the Wetland Contract in its regard. The workshops that will follow the stakeholder mapping must be carefully prepared to be effective, but at the same time not overloaded with content. It will be necessary to ensure equal representation and involvement of all relevant stakeholders—all of them should have the opportunity to express their opinions, each opinion is counted, and we all listen to one another.

We played the role of the entity in charge relying on technical and scientific support, particularly while mapping the stakeholders, and knowledge bases, necessary to define actions and interventions to be included in the Wetland Contract. The role of stakeholders of different sectors varies widely; they have very diverse interests and in many cases their stakes are very high. In our study, we found that there is a limited number of stakeholders who have both high power and interest at the same time. An additional challenge is that those are quite homogeneous and do not represent all the relevant stakeholders that are crucial to the process. By including those who have medium interest or power, we included those who are not at first glance the most important stakeholders, yet are necessary for attaining successful management and implementation of the Wetland Contract. With this step, we obtained additional relevant stakeholders that were under-represented, especially knowledge providers who will provide expert opinions and be available for consultancy; civil society, directly or indirectly affected by the process, should be heard and to some extent taken into account, and the economic sector is often economically dependent on the ongoing process in the pilot area.

It is encouraging that actions towards the fundamental principles of stakeholder mapping and their participation are increasingly being enforced. However, in spite of several good practices, this approach is not always used. These actions are mainly used when the stakeholder rejects involvement in the process due to lack of appropriate involvement in the beginning of the process. In order to avoid bad practices,

the necessary involvement of the all four stakeholders pillars in the governance of wetlands is of crucial importance.

**Acknowledgements** The authors acknowledge the financial support from the Slovenian Research Agency research core funding Geography of Slovenia (P6-0101) and from the European Development Fund funding WETNET (Interreg MED Programme).

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