✓ Preparation Mapping & Planning ★ Towards Excellence

MEDITERRANEAN COASTAL WETLANDS

Governance Handbook

PAP/RAC MedWet IUCN MedPAN Global Water Partnership Mediterranean MAVA FONDATION POUR LA NATURE

OFF YOUR MAP
Life begins in wetlands

The Governance of Coastal Wetlands in the Mediterranean - a Handbook

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"...of all the world's continents only the Mediterranean is liquid."

Jean Cocteau

The list of roles assigned to the coastal wetlands of the Mediterranean grows ever longer - from cleaning the water that flows through them, mitigating floods and weather extremes, recharging aquifers, providing fisheries for local communities and rich habitats for wildlife. More recently, wetlands have become ecotourism destinations; providing spaces for inspiration, education, or simply recreation. All this must take place against a background of increasing coastal urbanisation and reclamation for agriculture and aquaculture, and of course the more frequent recurrence of droughts, floods and other extreme climate events.

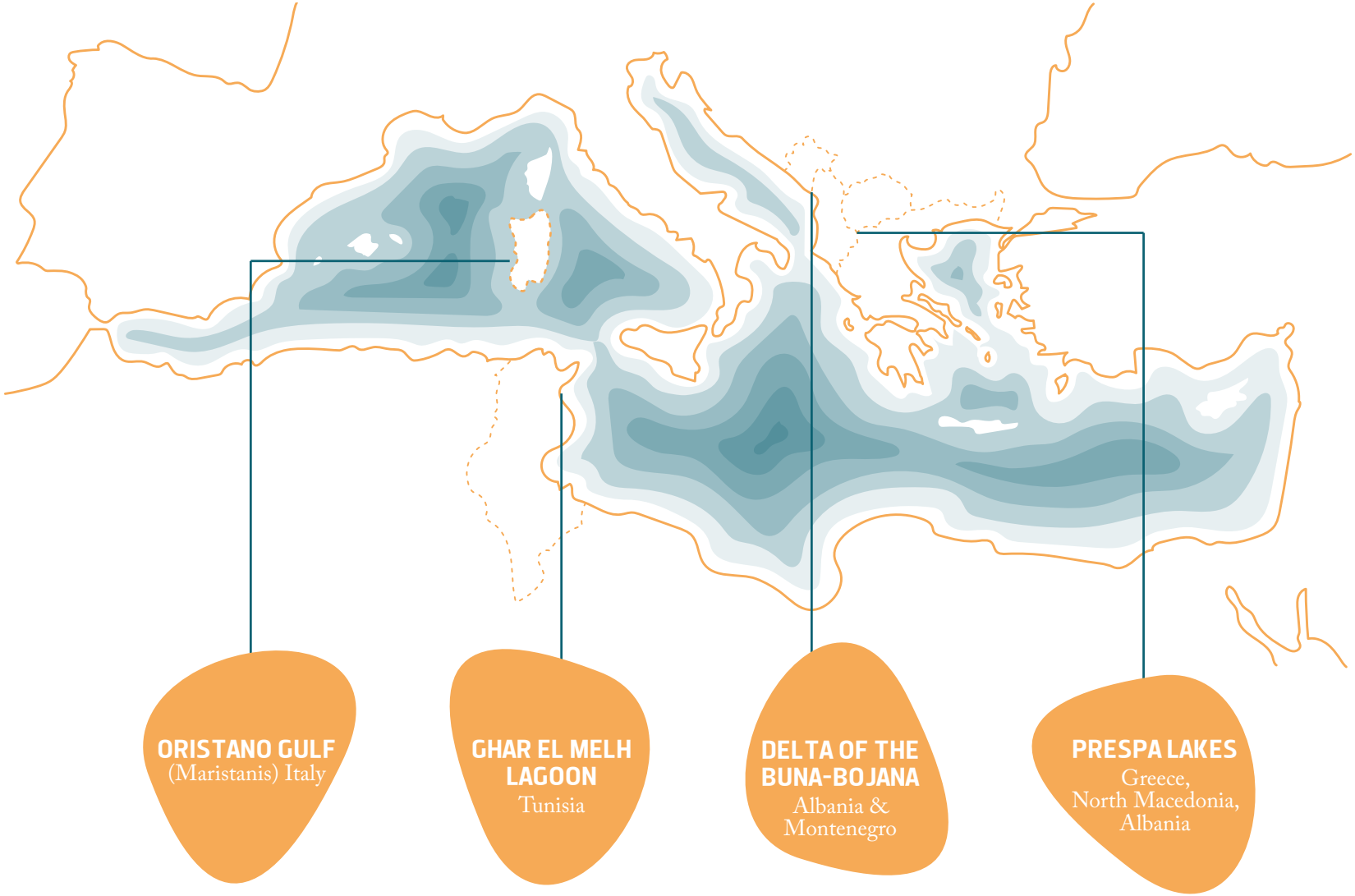
The world recognises the importance and sensitivity of these special areas, many being included in the Ramsar Convention international network of wetlands, or by a plethora of national or local designations. Designations and labels do not however provide in themselves the all-important protection and sustainable management that these sites need and deserve - that task falls to a complex mix of national and local politicians, officials, community groups and organisations, NGOs, advocacy groups, volunteers and, not least, increasingly well-educated and demanding citizens. In a connected world, the media has an increasingly inquisitive and critical role.

If reconciling all these interests were not enough, coastal wetlands have become the focus of intense Mediterranean policy attention with the attention for example on the land-sea interactions (LSIs) expressed through the Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) Protocol, the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development, and others. The management of the coastal wetland must now be integrated with its neighbouring coast, marine waters, along with its wider catchment. All this requires skilful and sustained governance - an endeavour often outside the comfort zone of the traditional manager of protected areas.

In a sceptical world however, governance is often seen as an arcane and self-serving process, and may be treated with world-weary resignation or even suspicion. Certainly, it will involve that most ubiquitous of institutions - the committee in one form or another. The committee has in fact a long and honourable tradition when it comes to protected areas. During the late nineteenth century committees of prominent individuals dedicated to creating what we now call protected areas were formed in North America and Europe. They pursued their aims through elite "gentlemen's" committees. In 1904 plans to drain the Naardermeer, a wetland area on the outskirts of the Amsterdam led to the formation of a committee of prominent citizens, with the goal of saving and managing it. Now a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance, Naardermeer saw probably the first example of a committee dedicated specifically to the conservation of a wetland.[i]

The latter half of the twentieth century saw a growing democratisation of committees into the ubiquitous, representational model we see today. Now, governance is about inclusiveness, bringing increasingly diverse interests and sectors from society together around the same real or virtual table - whether as a committee or partnership by any other label - to achieve a common vision.

Like a cookbook this Handbook provides concise guidance on how to achieve that elusive common vision for a coastal wetland, and how to move forward effectively as a partnership.



The four Mediterranean wetlands that have provided valuable insights and reflections for the preparation of this Handbook.

Although there is no single model, no 'one-size-fits-all' solution, the basic recipe of bringing people together in a common purpose described here is universal. The cycle of governance is condensed in the pages that follow into a simple, universally applicable roadmap, one that allows the user to measure, shape and report progress over time. The process described is designed for use both on coastal wetlands with a long history of collaborative governance or by newly designated sites. It can be used to test and review existing arrangements or to design new ones.

Rather than an oppressive, mechanical process, governance is seen as a creative and innovative one. This Handbook challenges the user to apply important intangibles that add spice to an otherwise mechanistic process - those of vitality and adaptivity.

The Handbook has been developed as a component as part of the overarching initiative of the MAVA Foundation 'Coastal Wetland Action Plan'.

The basic premise of the MAVA initiative is that:

'In order to achieve preservation of the coastal and island wetlands of high ecological values in the Mediterranean, a set of supporting actions needs to be delivered, ensuring enabling environment for the sustainable conditions and uses of coastal ecosystems. These are to be done through the mechanisms of good, effective and equitable governance'.

Acknowledgements

The authors of this Handbook are grateful to the management of four Mediterranean wetlands in particular for providing valuable insights and reflections for the preparation of this Handbook:

- Oristano Gulf (Maristanis project), on the western Sardinian coast, Italy
- Ghar el Melh Lagoon, 30 km southeast of the town of Bizerte in Tunisia
- Lower Delta of the Bojana-Buna River, with pilots in Ulcinj Salina, Montenegro and the Buna River-Velipoje Protected Landscape, Albania
- The Transboundary 'Prespa Park', a protected area including the Prespa Lakes and their surroundings extending over the boundaries of Greece, Albania, and the Republic of North Macedonia

This Handbook on Coastal Wetlands Governance is designed as a practical guide for the governance of coastal wetlands around the Mediterranean, whether they are formally protected as Ramsar sites, those designated under national or local legislation and those lacking any formal protection.

There is a growing body of literature on the governance of protected areas and other important natural sites, but practical, user-friendly tools to help deliver better site governance are missing. There is no secure 'end-point' in governance, the political, economic, cultural and natural environment climate is constantly changing. Inevitably the process is a never-ending cycle. Governance can never be complacent.

The process is designed to build effective and robust governance arrangements and can include:

- Self- assessment, prioritising and planning
- Training of partners, staff and key stakeholders
- Reporting on progress
- Building a shared vision
- Compare alternative ways forward
- Developing best practice

This Handbook provides a self-build governance process comprising of 3-stages:

I. Preparation

II. Mapping and Planning

III. Towards Excellence

How to use this Handbook

The Handbook can be used as a quick, self-assessment tool by a site management team, for training, for reporting, or by anyone tasked with the care and management of these vital sites whether on the ground or at government level. The Handbook is best used therefore as part of a wider process involving stakeholders looking to achieve, effective, fit-for-purpose governance of the Mediterranean coastal wetland for which they have an important duty of care.

Although primarily targeted at wetlands in the Mediterranean, the methodology set out in the Handbook transcends this habitat and is transferable to the governance of other important natural sites around the world.

Who should use this Handbook?

This Handbook is designed for all those with responsibility for coastal wetlands, at different levels, be it the site level, the inter-sectoral committee, the government (local, regional or national), etc. This Handbook could also be used by different stakeholders that are interested in good governance; from local communities, *via* civil society organisations (CSOs) to government agencies and international organisations.

Good governance is not easy to conceptualise or measure, so this Handbook is designed to provide decision-makers with a practical tool of how to approach and achieve the complexities of good governance.

Government agencies, site managers and NGOs in particular can use this Handbook to improve the existing, or design new governance structures and, together with interested stakeholders they could use it as a lobbying tool for better governance of these important areas.

How this Handbook works

Following the introduction to the challenges faced by wetlands in the Mediterranean and the fundamentals of governance, the Handbook guides users through a **simple three-stage** process. Linked Excel files allow this self-assessment to be recorded and reported in a familiar dashboard format, and for the priority areas for future action to be identified and listed.

An innovative **'Vitality and Adaptivity Scorecard'** is also provided for those seeking to address and measure more rarified dimensions of governance.

Practical tips to make your governance effective are provided based on the real-world governance experience to help users design the way forward for the governance of their wetland.

Why use this Handbook?

As described later, distinguishing the governance of protected areas such as wetlands from their management is relatively new - with the consequent relative paucity of guidance. In summary, there are likely to be three main reasons why those responsible for coastal wetlands in the Mediterranean may need to use this Handbook in order to:

- Meet the growing range of international legal obligations and responsibilities for the protection of wetlands, their hydrological functions, and their associated ecosystem services. (These are summarised in the following section).
- Meet national legal obligations which may derive from those above, but also may reflect purely national priorities. These are too many and complex to be listed in this publication, but they are part of the growing recognition amongst all governments of the importance of wetlands in water management, food, energy and climate change adaptation policies.
- Ensure that there is a shared, common vision at all levels of society, along with a mechanism to secure the future sustainability and resilience of the coastal wetland, particularly in response to climate change. There is a need to reach out to stakeholders of other sectors of government, civil society and the community, including 'up-stream' and conjoining coastal and marine interests, in addition to the 'usual suspects' of nature conservation in order to promote an integrated approach to future challenges.
- Not all coastal wetlands in the Mediterranean fall into those categories protected and supported by international conventions such as Ramsar, or even national legal systems - for these 'undesignated' sites the latter reason 'why' – developing and delivering that shared vision - is even more important.

Wetlands cover approximately 20 million hectares of 27 Mediterranean countries. Nearly 19% of this area is made up of marine wetlands (sea areas less than 6m deep at low tide – excluding estuaries, tidal flats). The majority (81%) including estuaries and tidal flats (but not oases) are defined as terrestrial wetlands.

Most importantly, coastal wetlands in the Mediterranean play an integral and pivotal role in what the Global Water Partnership (GWP) have described as the 'Nexus' of water, food, energy and ecosystems. *'Water is needed to provide humanity with food and energy, and it must be managed properly to ensure the survival of the earth's ecosystem.'* [ii] That nexus makes an integrated approach to the governance of coastal wetlands indispensable. This Handbook is designed to help its user achieve this.

Five Benefits of Successful Governance

Much has been written about the management of wetlands, but relatively little on governance. However, without good, effective and equitable governance, the best

management efforts may be in vain, successes may be short-lived, and progress slow or even negative.

The following five benefits adapted from the *'IUCN Principles of Good Governance'* [iii] highlight what good governance can create – whether the coastal wetland is a protected area or not:

1 **Gaining legitimacy and giving voice**

Enjoying broad acceptance and appreciation in society; ensuring rights of access to information, participation and justice; fostering engagement and diversity; preventing discrimination; fostering subsidiarity, mutual respect, dialogue, consensus and agreed rules

2 **Providing direction**

Following an inspiring and consistent strategic vision grounded on agreed values; ensuring consistency with policy and practice at various levels; ensuring clear answers to contentious questions; ensuring proper adaptive management and favouring the emergence of champions and tested innovations

3 **Optimizing performance**

Achieving conservation and other objectives as planned; promoting a culture of learning; engaging in advocacy and outreach; being responsive to the needs of rightsholders and stakeholders; ensuring resources and capacities and their efficient use; promoting sustainability and resilience

4 **Being accountable**

Upholding integrity and commitment; ensuring appropriate access to information and transparency, including lines of responsibility, allocation of resources, and evaluation of performances; establishing communication avenues and encouraging feedback and independent overseeing

5 **Sharing the benefits, minimizing the costs**

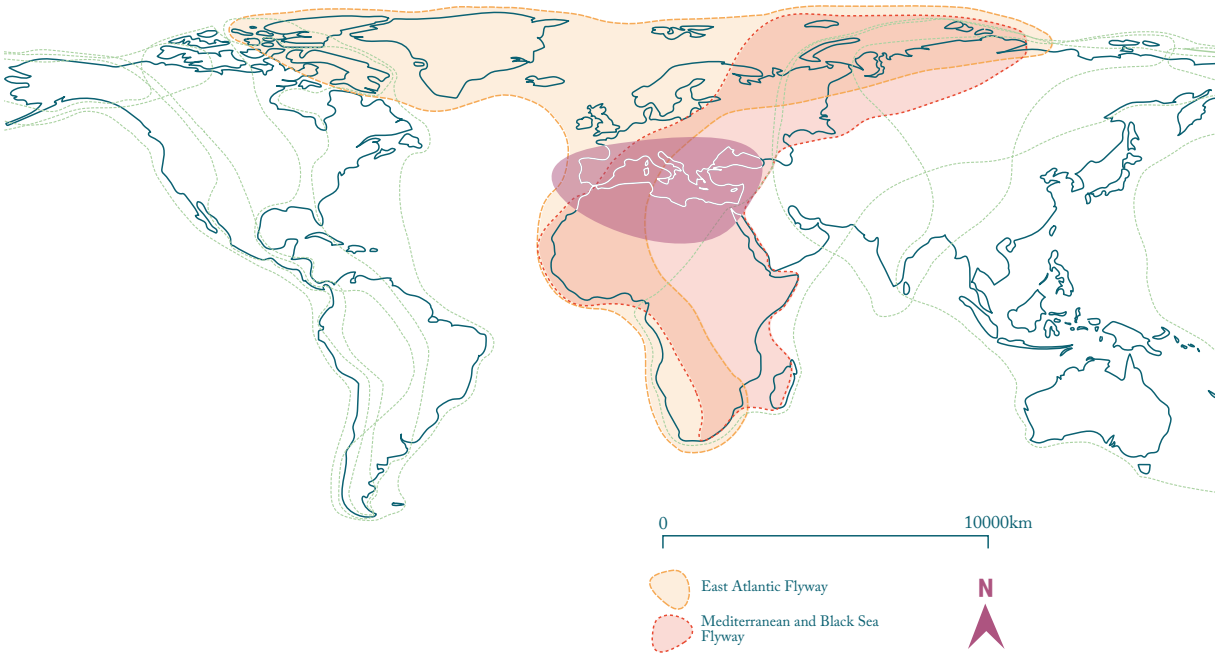
Equitably sharing costs and benefits, without adverse impact for vulnerable people and communities; upholding decency and the dignity of all; being fair, impartial, consistent, non-discriminatory, respectful of procedural rights as well as substantive rights, individual and collective human rights, gender equity and traditional rights, including free, prior and informed consent; promoting local empowerment

To which we might add another:

6 **Keeping all parties happy, inspiring their continued support, not as a duty but as a sincerely held desire.**

Wetlands are one of the most fragile and threatened ecosystems and are among the fastest declining ones worldwide[v].

THE MEDITERRANEAN AND MIGRATORY BIRD FLYWAYS



In the Mediterranean region, the most familiar wet places are temporary marshes, deltas and lagoons. Most wetlands in the Mediterranean Basin are at low altitudes and are predominantly coastal. The most prominent coastal wetland formations in the Mediterranean are river deltas, such as the Rhône in France, Po in Italy, Neretva in Croatia and the Nile in Egypt, along with regions of a salty coastal lagoons and marshes such as the Languedoc-Roussillon region in southern France. There are few inter-tidal mud banks of the kind found in northern Europe as the almost entirely enclosed Mediterranean Sea is virtually tideless.[iv]

Most of the coastal deltas and lagoons form because of the accumulation in tideless coastal waters of sand and silt, brought down by rivers. In arid North Africa, there are huge, salty depressions known as *chotts* and *sebkhets* that fill with water from flash floods.

A number of large river deltas are well known in the Mediterranean. They include the Camargue at the mouth of the Rhône in France, the Po delta in Italy, the Neretva delta in Croatia, the Ebro delta in Spain, the combined delta of rivers Axios-Aliakmon-Loudias near Thessaloniki, the Nestos delta in Northwest Greece, the Evros delta on the border between Greece and Turkey, the Menderes delta in Western Turkey, the Medjerda delta in Tunisia, and, of course, the enormous Nile delta in Egypt [v].

Wetlands are one of the most fragile and threatened ecosystems and are among the fastest declining ones worldwide[vi]. The Mediterranean wetlands in particular have always been a critical source for biodiversity and human wellbeing. Twice a year, billions of birds migrate along well-established routes known as flyways (see map below adapted from Bird Life International, 2010) from their breeding grounds in arctic and temperate regions to winter in temperate and tropical areas (e.g. sub-Saharan Africa). During such long journeys, birds can find refuge in wetlands - very important habitats for refuelling and accomplishing their life cycle.

The freshwater wetlands provide the rich alluvial plains on which agricultural practices have long been carried out, the traditional fishing activities, salt production and the protection against floods.[vii] People directly harvest wetland-dependent plants and animals through fishing and hunting, and use wetlands for grazing animals. Wetlands in increasingly dry regions such as the Mediterranean are particularly crucial for the sustainable management of water resources, in terms of both quality and quantity. They help to provide and purify the water upon which

Mediterranean people depend, for drinking, for industry, for energy production and for irrigated agriculture.[viii]

Mediterranean wetlands, particularly coastal wetlands, are important for helping to mitigate climate change as they help to manage extreme weather events through buffering floods and coastal storm-surges and providing water in droughts. Vegetated and healthy wetlands are among the most effective sinks for carbon on the planet. Conversely, draining of wetlands or reducing their water resources can result in the release of large amounts of stored carbon.[ix]

Wetlands are among the ecosystems that are most strongly impacted by even small changes in climate and resulting changes in hydrologic regimes, in particular through sea level rise and decreased surface and ground water levels.[x]

Ecosystem services from wetlands also entail cultural values, such as place attachment, traditional recipes and handicrafts, which could be an added value for local sustainable development.[xi] Wetlands are also increasingly important to Mediterranean people for their aesthetics and beauty, and more and more people are visiting wetlands for education and tourism.

The diverse benefits delivered by wetlands are of huge economic value. Inland and coastal natural wetlands provide a major contribution to this value, estimated to be at least US$51 trillion per year globally. Much of the value of wetlands lies in their delivery of multiple water-related benefits – managing water quantity and quality and buffering extreme weather events. However, conversion of natural ecosystems, including wetlands, to other land-uses is progressively reducing the value of the benefits they provide, at a global rate of US$4.3–20.2 trillion per year. Yet, this great range of benefits to people and its great value, is still not well recognised, and Mediterranean wetlands continue to be converted and lost. [xii]

A Hotspot for Biodiversity

The Mediterranean region has been identified as one of the 34 world hotspots for biological diversity. Mediterranean wetlands have a disproportionate importance for biodiversity:

51% of wetland habitats may have been lost between 1970 and 2013. The decline in the Mediterranean region is higher than those of the three surrounding regions; 42% in Africa, 32% in Asia, and 35% in Europe.

30% of vertebrate species found in the Mediterranean hotspot are supported by wetland - despite the fact that wetlands only represent 2-3% of the terrestrial surface area of the region [xiii].

1.1-1.5% of the global wetland area (that's an est. 0.15-0.22 million km2) of natural and human-made wetlands are in the Mediterranean Basin

23% are human-made (rice fields, reservoirs, saltpans and oases) – the Mediterranean has a much higher percentage than the global average of approximately 12% [xiv].

36% of wetland dependent species are globally threatened with extinction. The Mediterranean region is remarkable for its high number of species threatened with extinction. The causes – increasing populations, our way of consumption, climate change, and not least weak governance [xv].

300% increase in the rate of urbanisation of wetlands between 1975 and 2005 and to farmland by 42%. Urbanisation has been most rapid in southern and eastern Mediterranean countries [xvi].

2/3s of the largest areas of wetlands in the Mediterranean are in Egypt, France, Turkey and Algeria

Despite the national commitments the Ramsar Convention and other international agreements, wetlands have continued to disappear at a rapid rate and their biodiversity is highly threatened. The human 'ecological footprint' in the Mediterranean Basin is now nearly twice as large as the world average, with particularly high pressure on water resources.

Furthermore, the impacts of climate change will be particularly significant in the Mediterranean region and will decrease ecosystem resilience in the region. The ongoing loss and degradation of wetlands impacts directly on human well-being and deprives future generations of the multiple benefits that they provide.[xvii] In the Mediterranean Basin, the pressure on wetlands is likely to intensify in the coming decades due to increased demand for land and water and to climate change impacts.[xviii]

The challenge now lies with decision-makers, from the regional to the local level, to make a positive difference and to ensure that wetlands are used wisely to deliver a sustainable future for people and biodiversity in the Mediterranean.

Coastal Wetlands in the Mediterranean – International Policy and Challenges

International Policy

Various international conventions and programmes concerned with the natural environment provide a strong basis for international cooperation in the protection of wetlands, and in many cases involve the identification and designation of sites especially worthy of protection. Such designation usually guarantees the site in question a considerable measure of legal protection.

International Policies Relevant to Mediterranean Wetlands

The importance on wetlands as natural habitats, as providers of ecosystem services and as working environments is underlined by the range of relevant international legislation summarised below:

International level

- Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Convention)
- Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
- UN Water Conventions (Helsinki, 1992, New York, 1997)
- World Heritage Convention (WHC) with its World Heritage List
- Man and Biosphere Program (MAB) with the World Network of Biosphere Reserves

Regional Level

Barcelona Convention and its most relevant protocols:

- ICZM Protocol
- SPA and Biodiversity Protocol
- LBS Protocol
- Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD)
- African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
- Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention) with the Emerald Network of Areas of Special Conservation Interest
- Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS or Bonn Convention) with its most relevant agreement
- Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA)

European Union Level

- EU 'Nature' Directives (Birds and Habitats)
- EU Water Framework Directive
- EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive
- EU Maritime Spatial Planning Directive
- EU Renewable Energy Directive
- EU Common Agriculture Policy (CAP)

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Adopted by the United Nations in 2015. There are four SDGs that are especially relevant for Mediterranean Wetlands:

SDG 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

SDG 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

SDG 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources

SDG 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.[xix]

Conventions and Protocols

The Ramsar Convention

The Ramsar Convention[xx] of 1971 on the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources defines wetlands as *'areas of marsh, fen, peatland 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'* (Article 1). The Ramsar Convention is the only global Convention focused specifically on wetland biodiversity and ecosystems. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) has established Ramsar as its 'lead implementation partner' on wetlands; and the two Conventions collaborate through a succession of Joint Work Plans.

Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention are required to designate suitable wetlands for inclusion in a List of Wetlands of International Importance. In the case of coastal wetlands, they 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, especially where these have importance as waterfowl habitat.'* (Article 2). The Contracting Parties are required to take appropriate action so as to promote the conservation and the wise use of wetlands in their territory (Article 3).

Contracting Parties are also obliged to consult with each other in the case of a wetland extending over adjacent territories, i.e. transboundary wetlands, and to 'coordinate and support' policies and regulations concerning the conservation of wetlands and their flora and fauna (Article 5).

The Convention for the Protection of Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (the Barcelona Convention)

This is the Regional Sea Convention signed by 22 Contracting Parties of the Mediterranean. Joint interests related to the conservation of the sea and marine environment are defined in the seven protocols which represent the legal framework for the implementation of joint activities related to conservation of the sea and marine environment. The two most relevant protocols are presented below.

1. The Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management in the Mediterranean[xxi] (the 'ICZM Protocol' – seventh Protocol to the Barcelona Convention obliges Contracting Parties to take measures to protect the characteristics of coastal wetlands with a view to preventing their disappearance (Article 10). These include measures to protect the environmental, economic and social function of wetlands and estuaries; to regulate or, prohibit activities that may have adverse effects,

and to undertake 'the restoration of degraded coastal wetlands with a view to reactivating their positive role in coastal environmental processes'.

2. The Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean (the SPA/BD Protocol) – the fifth Protocol to the Barcelona Convention is the Mediterranean's main tool for implementing the CBD, as regards the in situ sustainable management of coastal and marine biodiversity. The Protocol envisages three main elements in order to ensure the safeguard of biodiversity in the Mediterranean; firstly, the creation, protection and management of Specially Protected Areas (SPAs); secondly, the establishment of a list of Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMIs); and thirdly the protection and conservation of species.

The Challenges We Face

Contracts and Measures

One of the well-known mechanisms to protect Mediterranean wetlands is to designate the most important ones as **protected areas**. The Convention on Biological Diversity has defined a global target of the planet's surface area to become protected. For 2020, the CBD targets a protection of 17% of terrestrial and inland water and 10% of coastal and marine areas.[xxii]

Based on a small sample of the total Mediterranean wetlands[xxiii], it has been shown that approximately one-third of the wetland surface falls inside protected areas, i.e. benefiting from a national protection status. Overall, marine/coastal wetlands are much more protected than inland wetlands. This fact is related to the stronger conservation strategies applying to coastal zones, due to their higher vulnerability (e.g. economic interest, climate change…). [xxiv]

In the European Union, in member countries and countries preparing for EU accession, wetlands are benefiting from the legal requirement to transcribe into the national legislation and apply the EU Directives, in particular the Water Framework Directive, the Habitats and Birds Directives, the Floods Directive, and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.[xxv] The European Commission Birds and Habitats Directives places considerable obligation on EU Member States to identify, designate and safeguard Special Protection Areas for birds and Special Areas of Conservation for species other than birds, and for habitat types, which jointly form the **Natura 2000 ecological network** of nature protection areas. The rest of the Mediterranean countries are not subjected to any supranational legislation of compulsory application.

Besides public protected areas, outright purchase of land is another option for conservation. The French *Conservatoire du Littoral*, for instance, owns and manages large areas of wetlands, including several on the Mediterranean coastline. International conservation organisations, such as WWF (World Wildlife Fund) do similar work, buying up small areas or relict riverine woodland for instance in Italy.

There are also other types of contractual measures intended to influence land use practices on private land so as to promote improved wetland management including the **EU Agri-environment Measures** that provide payments to farmers who subscribe, on a voluntary basis, to environmental commitments related to the preservation of the environment and maintaining the countryside.

The measures subject to national control may be supported by **international agreements** (treaties and conventions) to which countries sign up (with indirect regulatory powers). Once ratified or approved they are transposed into the national legal structure and take on an authority superior to that of national law. The government is then obliged to implement the agreed actions and to take the necessary measures, which are not necessarily directly regulatory in scope, in order to ensure that the agreements are put into effect.

Ramsar in the Mediterranean - Progress

- The **Ramsar Convention** has been signed by all states in the Mediterranean region.
- Since its ratification in 1971, the Ramsar convention has led to the designation of 344 sites in Mediterranean countries [xxvi].
- Since 1971, 6.7 million hectares have been designated as Ramsar sites of which approximately only 38% of the area consists of wetland habitats. Ramsar sites cover 185.000 km2 in the Mediterranean region, around 1 to 2% of wetlands in the world [xxvii].
- The numbers and area of Mediterranean Ramsar sites have increased by 16% and 11% respectively since 2010.
- The countries that have designated the most sites are Tunisia with 21 sites, France 8 and Spain 7. Of these 55 sites, 14 are coastal.
- Albania, Algeria, Greece, Morocco and Tunisia have listed more than half of their wetland areas as Ramsar sites.
- Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Libya, Palestinian Authority, and Syria – have designated very few sites, representing less than 5% of their national wetlands area.
- Other countries, such as Italy and Turkey, which have substantial wetlands, also appear to be lagging behind in the Ramsar site designation process.
- One-third of Ramsar sites do not benefit from any real protection status [xxix].
- Most of the Ramsar sites or protected areas throughout the Mediterranean are not yet included in territorial planning (e.g. local development plans), which limits their integrated management [xxx].

Implementing the Ramsar Convention Requires Effective Governance

An important share of emblematic wetlands sites, notably for bird species, have not yet been designated as Ramsar sites.[xxxi] Furthermore, in 2017, only 44% of all the Mediterranean Ramsar sites had developed a management plan, and only 30% had implemented their plan. The protection of a site only has a real impact if it is effective and accompanied by concrete conservation measures. Too often, when the institutional and financial capacities required to put in force the regulations are not mobilised, illegal fishing, hunting, and grazing activities can be observed in protected areas.

A study conducted on the Ramsar sites in Mediterranean countries has shown that the presence of a national protection status does not influence waterbird population trends. On the other hand, sites at which a management plan is being implemented host waterbird populations that are increasing more than at sites where there is no management plan. **Protection status alone does not therefore guarantee an improvement in the ecological state of a site - it must be accompanied by the application of management measures.**[xxxii] In other words, the conservation of natural habitats requires not only the designation as a Ramsar site, but also the development and implementation of effective governance.

Climate change

Current models predict that the Mediterranean will be especially affected by:

- Greater warming than the global average
- Greater variability in rainfall and temperature
- Heat peaks in summer
- Higher frequency of extreme events such as droughts, floods, as can already be seen in the more frequent storm surges that affect the coastline leading to increased erosion
- Many Mediterranean wetlands will run dry or become temporary[xxxiii]

Understanding the critical importance of wetlands for mitigating the effects of climate change and adaptation to it is crucial, in particular for its impacts on areas such as the Mediterranean region.

Water Quantity

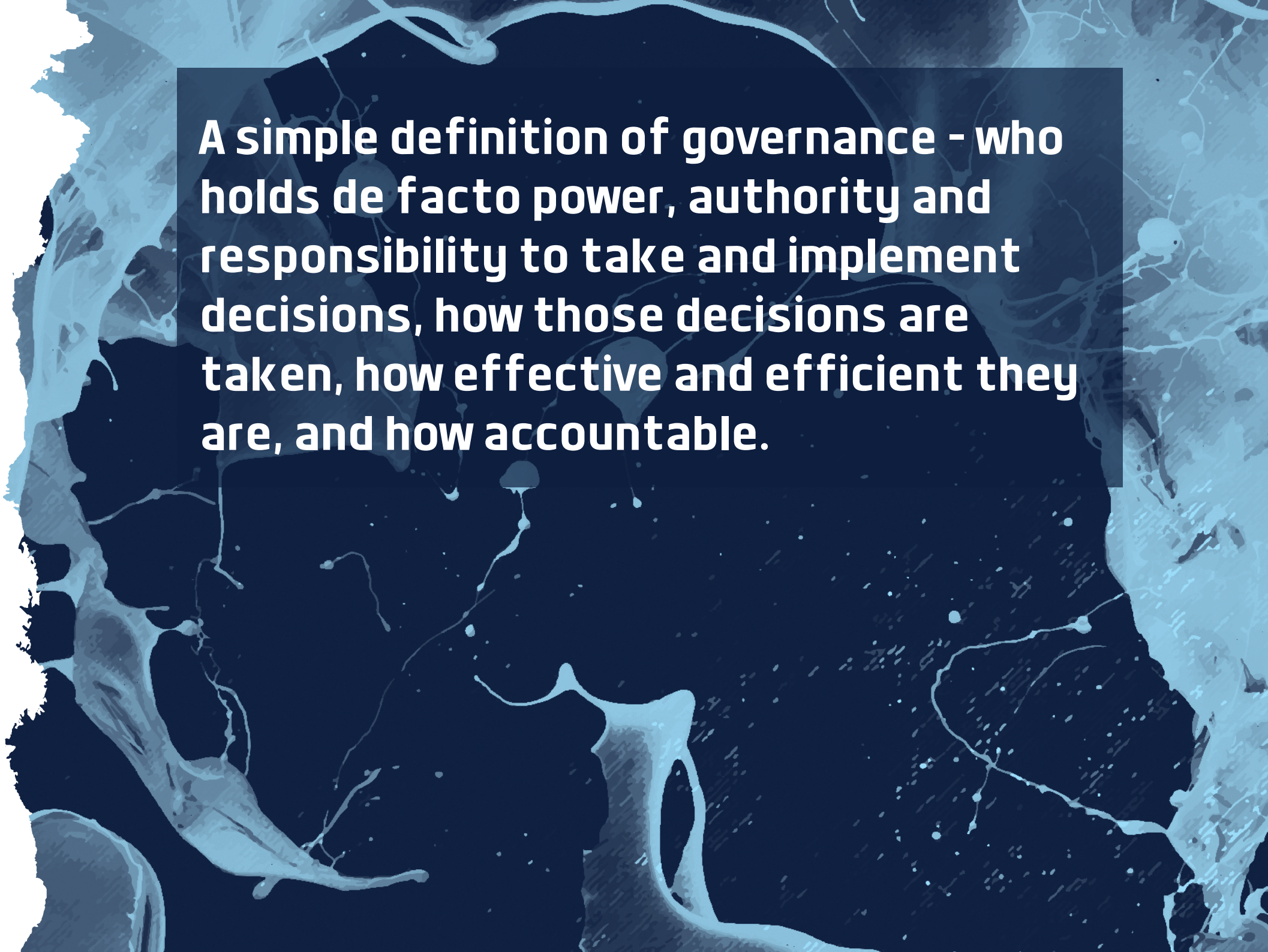
The quantity of fresh water available for wetlands is decreasing. Stream flows have been significantly affected by the water drawn from rivers and the dams built on them. The overexploitation of surface water and ground water also represents a serious danger. With 92% of its renewable water currently being used, North Africa has already greatly exceeded its water sustainability threshold. River flows in the Mediterranean region are declining overall as well, except for the Rhône and the Po, due largely to water abstraction and dams built along their courses, and to a lesser extent to climate change.[xxxiv]

Water Quality

While water quality in terms of nutrients and heavy metals has generally improved since the 1980s in Europe, not enough knowledge is available concerning the rest of the region and other potential pollutants to draw accurate conclusions.

Summary of the main challenges for the future of the Mediterranean wetlands are:

- Preventing, stopping and reversing the loss and degradation of wetlands.
- Understanding the critical importance of wetlands for mitigating the effects of climate change and adaptation to climate change.
- Integration of the services, benefits, values, functions, goods and products that wetlands provide into the national and regional development plans.
- Recognition of the role of wetlands for the full exercise to the human right to water and poverty reduction.
- Mainstreaming of wetland values within water, soil and biodiversity management.
- Ensuring ecological functions are maintained.
- Acting to limit and eradicate invasive species in wetlands [xxxv].



A simple definition of governance - who holds de facto power, authority and responsibility to take and implement decisions, how those decisions are taken, how effective and efficient they are, and how accountable.

Governance is not just about ticking boxes, it is also about the less tangible aspects of how well that governance is delivered. At its simplest, governance - the action of governing - can be seen simply in terms of formal structures and processes; committees, directives etc.

However, the *manner* and the *quality* of that governance is more nebulous, more difficult to measure - but just as important in ensuring a sustainable future.

Whilst, coastal wetlands in the Mediterranean share many common threats, pressures and challenges with wetlands around the world - from climate change, to development pollution, they are also subject to the volatile politics, cultures and economies of an ocean at the nexus of Africa, Europe and Asia. For millennia the civilisations of the Mediterranean have inhabited, fought over, transformed and fiercely exploited the sea's rich coastal rim, and not least its potentially fertile and strategically important wetlands.

Modern-day governance of the Mediterranean's coastal wetlands reflects the governance of the states within which they lie - which may have variously experienced recent turmoil, change and revolution. Long-term stability of governance over many decades is the exception rather than the rule. Some Mediterranean coastal wetlands extend across national borders, adding a whole new level of complexity.

Since the 1970s, international conventions including the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (adopted in (1971) and the Barcelona Convention (adopted 1976), along with accession or membership of the European Union, have brought a degree of international consistency of approach to the governance of Mediterranean wetlands.

However, wide differences still apply. There is therefore no single governance template, no single, one-size-fits-all model that can be applied to all coastal wetlands – whether Ramsar designated or not - around the Mediterranean. Rarely will the governance of a Mediterranean wetland begin with a blank sheet. The final line of a well-known joke of a tourist asking a local farmer for directions, who is given the advice *'…well, I wouldn't start from here,'* encompasses a widely recognized truth - that where you start from makes all the difference to your subsequent journey. Starting in the wrong place can make it difficult or even impossible to get to your intended destination. Unfortunately, those of us responsible for coastal wetlands rarely have the luxury of starting in the *'right place'* and must work with what we are given. This Handbook recognises this simple truth and is designed to apply across the wide spectrum of given situations and scenarios.

What Governance is

A simple definition of governance - who holds de facto power, authority and responsibility to take and implement decisions, how those decisions are taken, how effective and efficient they are, and how accountable.

Governance has to do with policy (stated intentions backed up by authority) and with **practice** (the direct acts of humans affecting nature). In theory policy and practice should work in harmony; policy guiding practice

and practice in turn informing policy. But the reality of governance is also about the complex web of local conditions, of understandings and misunderstandings, of communication and miscommunication, along with the allocation (or misallocation) of power and resources - all of which combine to create both matches and mismatches between policy and practice. The aim must be to maximise the former and minimise the latter. As a useful example, the Global Water Partnership (GWP) defines water governance as *'the range of political, social, economic and administrative systems that are in place to develop and manage water resources, and the delivery of water services, at different levels of society.'* [xxxvii] .

Water governance, according to an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) study, encompasses administrative systems, formal institutions (including laws and policies) as well as informal institutions such as power relationships and practices, including at the political level. The OECD study cites the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI), which has stated that water governance *'determines who gets what water, when and how.'* (OECD, 2011)[xxxviii] Similarly, the governance of a wetland is also about those same relationships within its wider coastal zone and river basin.

Governance is therefore, not just a government-led process. Stakeholders are not simply 'users' or 'interests'; some are major elements of local economies and societies, as in the case of agricultural interests, fisheries, coastal industries or urban developers and spatial planners, and as such are part of the wetland governance picture.

What governance is not…

Governance is not a short-term project. Governance is all about the long-term; building relationships, community support, and delivering action programmes. Some of these foundations may be established within the short, typically three to five year timeframe of a project, but unless the means are available in the long-term their loss with the end of the project can lead to a damaging loss of trust and credibility.

Secondly, the **process of governance is not the same as that of the preparation of a plan.** Typically plan preparation follows a broadly familiar, linear process - starting with plan inception through to adoption, implementation followed by review. Governance on the other hand will already exist in some form on all sites, albeit at very different stages, at different levels of maturity, and at different levels of effectiveness – reminding us again of the maxim quoted earlier, *'I wouldn't start from here'* – although we have to.

'Practicing ecosystem governance is difficult. It's easy to lose your way. As in medicine, broadly applicable principles and good practices will take you some distance, but in places where the problems are both multiple and significant, a thorough diagnosis followed by the skilful execution of a plan of action over the long term are necessary.

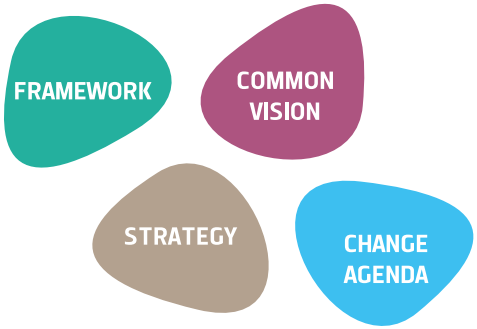
Rarely is the practice (of governance) a 'paint by the numbers' rote process.' [xxxix]

The Difference Between Governance and Management

Management and governance are closely related but distinct phenomena. Until the beginning of the new millennium however, when describing decisions and action meant to conserve nature, only the term 'management' was used. This implied a tendency to focus on the technical rather than the political. The interrelationship between management and governance is summarised in the diagram.

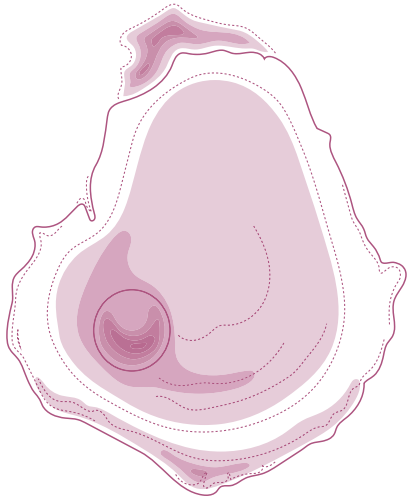
In practice the boundaries between the two activities are less clearly defined, often overlapping, but the key point is that it is governance that drives - or should drive - the ongoing management of the site. But in turn, management informs the governance in a continuous learning process as the management delivered outcomes and outputs, science (through research and technology), along with awareness and education at site-level feed back into decision-making.

Three complimentary 'ingredients' of governance below have been combined and synergised to develop this Handbook. The three main ingredients are:



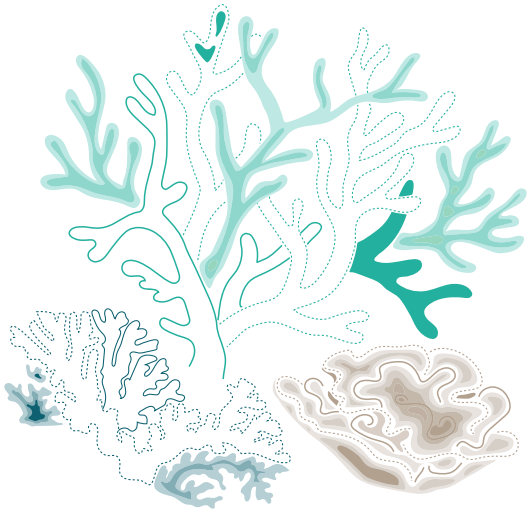
The Four Pillars

Provide a simple 'architecture' for creating the conditions for future work, and for prioritising decisions when time is pressing and when limitless resources and deep thought are an unaffordable luxury.



Wise Governance

Based on the tried and tested multi-disciplinary approach to ecosystem management developed in and for the Mediterranean context, stressing in particular the 'wise' integration of institutions, tools and processes.



Vitality and Adaptivity

Governance that is able to learn, evolve and meet its role and responsibilities in ways that are timely, intelligent, appropriate and satisfactory for everyone concerned.

These perspectives have been synthesised into a single coherent approach - a practical roadmap. It is designed for application across the Mediterranean with limited specialist knowledge and with relatively limited resources.

The Four Pillars

The **Four Pillars** of governance provide a relatively simple heuristic (self-learning) framework to help us 'lift our eyes' from the day-to-day technical management of a site - which may be doing a fine job of meeting the immediate conservation objectives, but may not be creating the conditions for a site's long-term sustainability within its local context.

Of the four pillars described below, no one pillar takes precedence over the others, and their objectives can be delivered in a sequence or order appropriate to the local context. They draw heavily on the Four Orders of Outcome approach for coastal management originally developed by Stephen Olsen[xl], subsequently evolved for use in ICZM in the Mediterranean.[xli]

i) Framework

The **preconditions** required to successfully implement the plan of action for a site or area. Generally, these will be governance objectives e.g., whether the governance structures are in place, whether user groups affected by the program's actions understand and support its goals, management measures, and targets.

ii) Strategy

Leads to **changes in behaviour** that occur during implementation: changes in the behaviour of target user groups, changes in the behaviour of key institutions and changes in how and where financial investments are made. These will be primarily about building capacity and developing a programme of action.

iii) Change Agenda

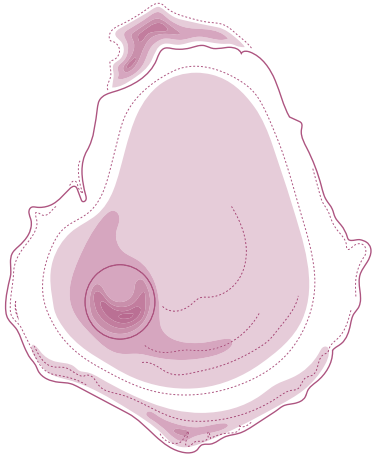
Measures **practical results and benefits** through delivering the action plan e.g., improved water quality, financial investments and motivating the stakeholders and institutions to make the changes in their behaviour that sustained success requires.

iv) Common Vision

The **appropriate balance** between environment and human society – sustainable development to achieve the agreed common vision. These are likely to be more long-term, high level in nature, embedding the outputs of the preceding as outcomes.

Wise Governance

Recent work in the Mediterranean region on the governance of coasts, river basins and aquifers identifies the importance of 'wise governance'. Over the last few decades, several management approaches have been developed to respond to anthropogenic impacts on the terrestrial, freshwater and marine environments, including; Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM), Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), and, more recently coastal aquifer and groundwater management. Within a joint initiative, key players in the Mediterranean[xlii] combined these approaches into a single operational methodology - the Integrative Methodological Framework (IMF) - for the sustainable management of the continuum of the coastal zone, river basin and the coastal aquifer. The methodology of the IMF is universal and therefore easily transferable and adaptable for use at local level and to coastal wetlands.



The IMF recognises that to achieve this sustainable management the role of 'wise' governance is fundamental to achieving optimal integration. At its most basic three elements should be considered:

1. 'Institutions in their widest sense, international, regional, national, local and all legal and regulatory instruments (laws, etc.) as well as the enforcement mechanisms, (administrations, monitoring, policing, justice etc.).

2. The scientific and technological tools, methods and infrastructure, along with innovation, which enables the technical expansion of the carrying capacity of our systems. Scientific and technological tools help natural mechanisms cope with anthropogenic pressures (e.g. sewage treatment plants, composting and recycling plants, etc.).

3. The widest information/education, consultation and participation processes that deal with cultural behavioural changes of individuals, groups and the society at large.'

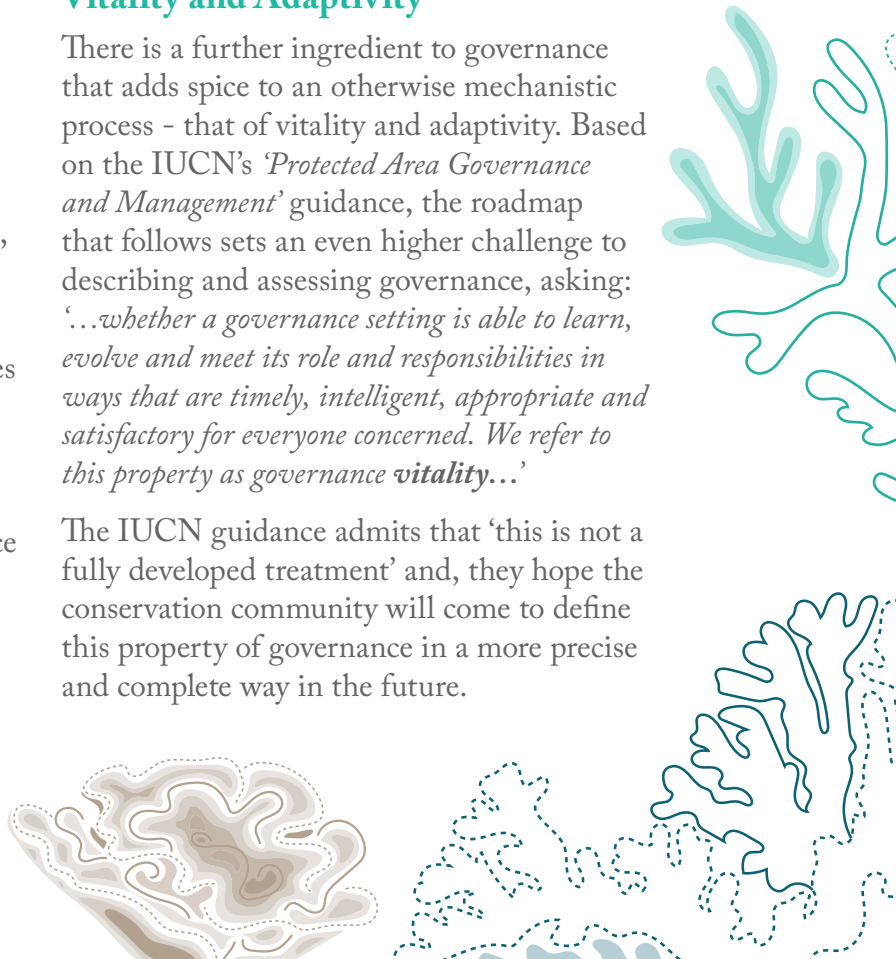
Importantly, 'wise' governance is the interface between the sustainable development goals and objectives and the tools to obtain them.

The self-assessment process that follows therefore combines a mix of individual governance objectives or criteria under the Four Pillars. These broadly correspond to the needs for sustainable development of the specific wetland case. The appropriate governance 'mix' combines in the most suitable and 'wise' way regulatory legal/administrative tools with technological ones, along with the information, participatory and cultural processes to deliver them. Wise governance delivers the appropriate, socially equitable and economically viable use of natural resources and ecological services, the maintenance of biodiversity and proper functioning of ecosystems within ambitious but realistic operational frameworks.

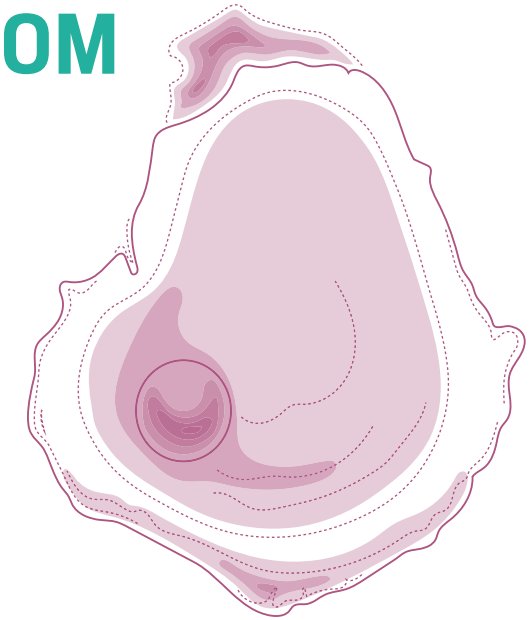
Vitality and Adaptivity

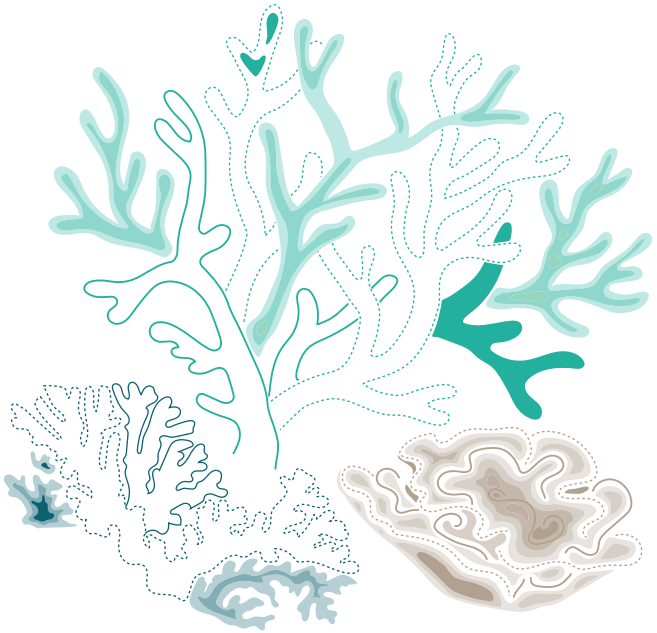
There is a further ingredient to governance that adds spice to an otherwise mechanistic process - that of vitality and adaptivity. Based on the IUCN's *'Protected Area Governance and Management'* guidance, the roadmap that follows sets an even higher challenge to describing and assessing governance, asking: *'…whether a governance setting is able to learn, evolve and meet its role and responsibilities in ways that are timely, intelligent, appropriate and satisfactory for everyone concerned. We refer to this property as governance* ***vitality…****'*

The IUCN guidance admits that 'this is not a fully developed treatment' and, they hope the conservation community will come to define this property of governance in a more precise and complete way in the future.



WISDOM





VITALITY
ADAPTIVITY

FRAMEWORK

STRATEGY

COMMON VISION

CHANGE AGENDA

THE FOUR PILLARS

Absolute precision is not necessary, but the concept of governance vitality and adaptivity is here narrowed down to the five simple, but highly qualitative questions set out below.

Is it empowered?

Is governance self-conscious and self-directed, capable of demonstrating leadership responsive to emerging environmental conditions, problems and opportunities; self-disciplined and self-critical, and able to take on responsibilities in effective and dependable ways?

Is it wise?

Does governance take decisions of meaningful scope; being motivated by the common good and solidarity; fostering the engagement of as many relevant actors in society as possible?

Is it adaptive?

Is governance flexible, reflective, and engaged in knowledge exchange, dialogue and debate, capable of learning from experience, capable of weighing options and taking prompt and meaningful decisions?

Is it creative, innovative and lively?

Is governance open to new ideas, able to reinvent and renew itself as a living system does, providing innovative solutions, supporting the emergence of new rules and norms, responding positively to change and continuing to develop?

Is it representative and integrated?

Are there abundant, meaningful and systemic interactions with a variety of actors at various levels in society and across sectors (including those actors who render decisions effective through political, social and financial support)?

The operational guidelines – the recipe - that follows will therefore challenge the user to not only undertake a 'tick-box' approach to assessing governance, but also to ask whether key aspects of that governance – existing or proposed – meets the test of vitality and adaptivity set out above, adding a highly qualitative and challenging layer to the assessment.

Gediz Delta. © Helio and Van Ingen, Doğa Derneği Archive

The previous section introduced the ingredients of governance. From this point on the Handbook turns to a set of instructions - the recipe - to help the user identify where they are, and then prepare a plan for effective and sustainable governance. The recipe takes the ingredients described earlier and combines them into a three-stage assessment and planning cycle.

✓ Stage 1:

Preparation

Identifies the broad foundations of a governance body for coastal wetlands in the Mediterranean. It sets out the fundamental preparations that should underpin the future process of governance.

Stage 2:

Mapping & Planning

Tools based on the common methodology of self-assessment traffic lights to assess progress.

- A rapid assessment tool to map the governance status quo that can be completed by an individual manager or a group of partners or stakeholders and;
- A planning tool based on user-friendly spreadsheets to identify actions and priorities to further improve or to rectify any weaknesses.

★ Stage 3:

Towards excellence

A scorecard to measure that elusive adaptive and vital governance - one that responds to evolving conditions in the ecosystems of the site and its wider cultural context.

NB: The recipe is designed primarily to track progress and to identify future actions. It is not intended as a way of comparing governance between different sites.

Users may be already familiar with the work of WWF and the World Bank regarding the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT)[xliii]. Whilst the process set out in this Handbook draws on the METT tool and has some comparisons, governance does not always lend itself to equally quantifiable measurement and this relative subjectivity is reflected in the design of this tool.

Who should complete the assessment?

There is no prescriptive list of who should carry out this assessment. It is likely that it will consist of representatives from the following:

- Local and national political and administrative representatives
- Site managers
- Donors, national & supra-national organisations

Others, such as key stakeholders, community representatives, researchers and experts can be added as necessary or useful. It is important however that the process is well-managed, with discussions clearly recorded and reported. If time allows the assessment should be tested with a core group before taking to a wider audience.

How long will it take?

The roadmap recognises that decision-makers do not always possess superhuman powers of reason, limitless knowledge, and all of eternity in which to ponder choices. Stage one is a largely political exercise and it is not possible to identify an appropriate timescale. However, stages two and three at their simplest can be substantially completed in one to two days, or slightly longer if wider consultation is undertaken. Subsequent repeat exercises may be a little quicker.

Getting Ready Checklist

Create a plan for the process

Is it adapted to local circumstances?

- ☐ Review the process and assess the information available to complete it. **Include the time needed** and whether any training is required. **(Some questions may not be possible to answer fully. Interim, subjective responses may be acceptable).**
- ☐ Include a follow-up stage to verify the results if required (by peer review, external assessment etc.).

Repeat the assessment at least annually or more frequently as required, particularly for newly established bodies or designated areas.

Invite assessors to verify the results
Implement the recommendations

This is a generic tool designed for use across the Mediterranean. Adaptation to local circumstances may be necessary by adding to or qualifying relevant questions.

Although designed as a self-assessment tool the assessment should ideally involve verification processes; by external assessors, these may include a wider stakeholder group or peers, or by donors, or by relevant local, regional or national administrations.

The assessment process is designed to lead automatically to a plan of action to implement results.

Caution - this stage is arguably the most difficult unless national legislation or precedents are available for an off the shelf solution. Political and community soundings will be required to establish the limits of the possible - and the *'I wouldn't start from here'* response to be expected.

Who Should Govern, and How?

The time and effort spent on preparation is fundamental and underpins the whole of the following process. Unfortunately, there is no single, universally applicable model: each Mediterranean state has its own unique administrative system and culture. Some systems are long established, some newly evolving, while others are in the process of modernisation. Some states are highly centralised, others highly decentralised. Scale also varies - from small rural communes, through to large urban municipalities, regions or governorates. Even the terminology of local administration varies from state to state. Local administration also differs in its remit – some operating under powers delegated to them by the centre, others operating by central directive.

Subsidiarity and Competence – Ensuring Local Ownership

Governance, consistent with national and international obligations for the protection of the wetland should take place at the closest feasible level to the community, and within structures that have democratic legitimacy and transparency. This will vary around the various states of the Mediterranean, but the appropriate level should also reflect the *competence* of the administration to deliver as set out in Article 3 "Geographical Coverage" of the ICZM Protocol[xliv]. Such governance should be supported technically and financially.

Wherever possible governance should therefore be embedded at a level that is:

- Owned politically by an accepted a form of public administration at the lowest competent tier within the state and;
- Supported by national government, agencies and NGOs who have the capability to oversee the governance of the wetland and;
- Competent and empowered.

In the absence of these criteria being met, the governance structure should be developed as a transitional model with a longer-term intention of meeting the above test of local ownership and capability.

Subsidiarity in action Ghar el Melh Lagoon, Tunisia

The 2018 Law of Governance is a very significant piece of legislation – decentralising long-centralised powers in Tunisia and duties to the new municipalities, providing new powers (but no additional technical capacity) to the local level. This national decentralisation agenda is raising important questions for the governance of the Ghar el Melh Lagoon. Asking what is the best mechanisms to engage the municipality in its governance to guarantee their ownership on the process?

In discussions with the municipality and other stakeholders the central role of the municipality was accepted, but also that the current use of the project-based term 'Steering Committee/Comité du pilotage' should be replaced by a name that better reflects the long-term continuity beyond the project timescale such as 'Management Committee/Comité de gestion' or 'Governance Committee/Comité de gouvernance'. The committee's role is to make the link between stakeholders and civil society, local and regional (Governorate) government, and vertically with the institutions and national and international agencies.

Ghar El Melh Gattaya. © Mediterranean Cconsortium for Nature and Culture

Governance Models

Based on the experience from sites around the Mediterranean, there are three very broad models that typify how the design of local governance might be approached. These models are simplifications for illustrative purposes – the reality on the ground may be a combination of two or even all three:

Form follows context

1

Establish by state directive

Governance body established by the state with powers, duties and membership identified and enshrined in legal code or directive.

2

A local initiative

A governance body established under the auspices of a local or regional administration or group of administrations, its remit developed under delegated authority and voluntary cooperation. This is more typical for non-designated sites. NGOs that manage sites, with or without government support commonly establish governance committees or similar bodies to engage local stakeholders.

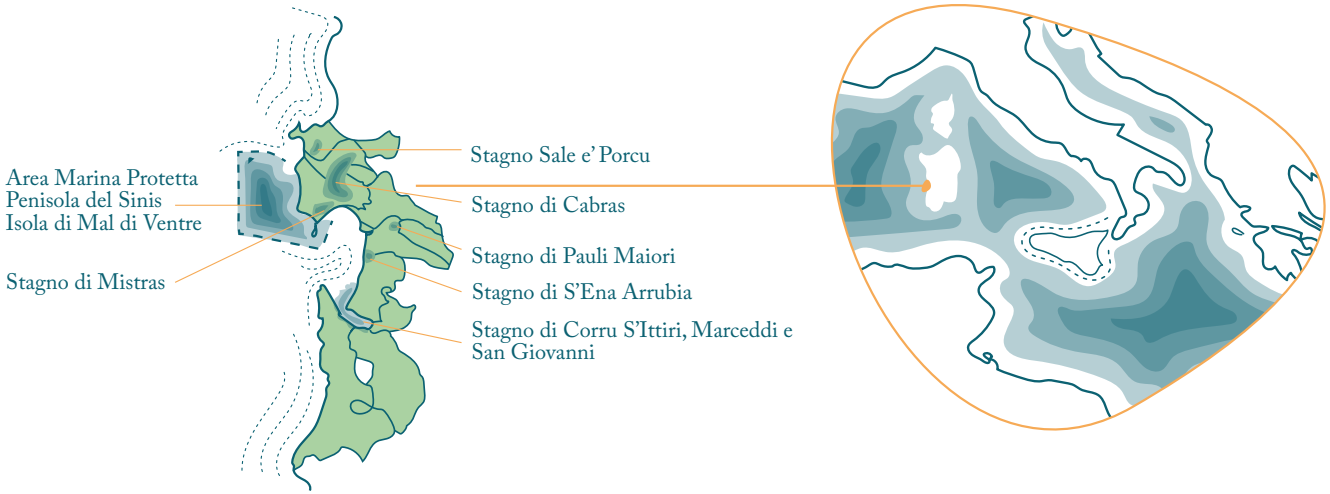
3

The contract approach

A model based on the *'Contrat'* or contract model developed primarily in France as the *'contrat de baie'* (literally 'bay contract') applicable to a coastal bay or estuary (*'rade'*). A bay contract is a contractual program of environmental actions at the scale of a bay or estuary based on a constant consultation of local actors and encouraging their shared commitment. The main partners are usually state agencies and ministries, the Conservatoire du littoral, local authorities, Consular Chambers, environmental protection associations, representatives of users etc.

Oristano - Maristanis. © MedSea Foundation

Maristanis - An Informal 'Contrat' Approach



MEDSEA is an NGO most active in the Maristanis project in Sardinia, an area comprised of 6 Ramsar wetland sites of 77km2, and 25 Natura 2000 sites consisting primarily of coastal lagoons and marshes around the 200km coast of the Gulf of Oristano. The administration of the area is complex with 13 municipalities. Fisheries in the area are notably self-governing with deep traditional roots.

MEDSEA are working as an 'honest broker' to develop the "Coastal Contract – Maristanis" (CCM), working with the grain rather than imposing new hierarchical structures into a delicately balanced situation, the long-term objective being to enhance protection of coastal wetlands by creating a superior governance body putting together municipalities, regional institutions, and other stakeholders. This body could consist in a new Regional Park.

MEDSEA's description of this approach:

- CCM is a tool based on the voluntary agreement between local authorities and private people as a form of negotiated and shared planning procedure and implementation of coastal resources management
- The CCM is an open and voluntary agreement in which all the parties that wish to participate can join freely
- It aims at coordinating and integrating the existing planning tools, trying to solve the environmental issue emerging in a specific area.

The Governance Body – shaping the committee

The governance of an area will be shaped by history, culture and the complex interplay between local powers, national and international statute. The resulting governance institutions can be simple or complex, formal or informal. Establishing an effective governance system for a wetland means finding a good working balance between multiple levels of power whilst encompassing local history and culture, ensuring those powers are positively exercised, and remain flexible, adaptable and capable of responding to the ever changing needs of in situ conservation. No easy task.

The variety of administrative and political cultures within which wetlands are sited would preclude pointing to any one organisational approach as being better than others. However, a common and fundamental task should be to establish a representative governance body or committee. The underlying principle is set out in Article 7 of the ICZM Protocol.[xlv] Without being prescriptive of the precise nature of that body, it is considered that internationally important coastal wetlands in the Mediterranean should, where possible be:

- Governed by a committee that represents key partners and stakeholders. Such a body should be clearly defined as a governance body in the meaning of the term
- The governance committee may operate individually, or it may overlap, or even double as the management body. However, it is recommended that the governance body is named, mandated and resourced to operate as such
- The governance structure should be proportionate to the scale and complexity of the wetland and the social, economic and political context in which it lies.
- The governance committee should function. It is simply not enough to have a structure and names on paper, the governance body should have the administrative infrastructure i.e. a secretariat to enable it to hold regular meetings, be accountable and to take and implement decisions.

Membership – who to invite to the table?

Governance bodies, or committees usually have an equal or slightly smaller number of individuals than the management committee responsible for operational issues. The size of the governance body also depends on the size and scope of the wetland area concerned. So, for example a wetland including or bordering several local and/or regional administrations will have multiple representations from elected officials or their nominees. A designated protected area will require membership from the appropriate state department or agencies. The membership, name and remit of the governance body may already be laid down in statute. Different rights holders and stakeholders are or should be involved in governing coastal wetlands areas for a variety of reasons, including both state and non-state actors.

✓ **Importantly, while the membership should be both representative of those organisations with a decisive decision-making role, it should also be proportionate to the scale and nature of the area and the resources available to support it.**

State actors may include:

- National or sub-national agencies responsible for protected and important areas
- Focal points in each country, and in particular the focal point for environment or nature protection
- Agencies and staff from various government sectors concerning natural resources (e.g. agriculture, forestry, fisheries, research)
- Relevant enforcement agencies (e.g. fisheries, ports, hunting)
- State commercial enterprises (e.g. water, energy)
- Local appointed authorities (e.g. prefects or governors)
- Local elected authorities.

Non-State actors may include:

- Users of areas in and around the wetland, including those who directly depend on natural resources (e.g. farmers and fishermen)
- Civil society groups and organisations concerned with conservation and sustainable development (e.g. local, national and international NGOs)
- Faith and cultural organisations with buildings, historic or sacred sites within or adjoining the wetland
- Business sectors with a direct interest, such as ecotourism or tourism, water companies, agricultural companies or companies that own or manage land within the wetland area
- Owners or legally recognized user rights to the concerned land or resources (e.g. for hunting, fisheries, water extraction, grazing or cutting)
- Customary rights to the land and resources as above (even if they are not legally recognized).

✓ **The challenge will be to design a governance body that is of a size to operate efficiently yet encompassing all those with a legitimate interest in the governance of the area.**

Buna-Bojana – a formal structure

The Buna-Bojana in Albania is an example of a more formalised, state-driven governance structure. The structure of site governance is still evolving within a relatively recent legislative framework. A ministerial decision in 2018 enabled the creation of a Management Committee for Environmental Protected Areas (EPA). The decision however stipulates that the Management Committee – in effect the governance body - plays only a supervising role with no executive powers ("managing activity").

The nominated Head of the Management Committee for the BRVPL is the Prefect of the Shkodra region. Other representatives and members include the Ministry of Tourism and Environment, the National Agency of Protected Areas (NAPA), the prefecture of Shkodra Region and the Shkodra municipality, Regional Agency of Protected Areas (RAPA) who provide the technical secretariat and administration to the committee. Membership also includes representatives from the fields of agriculture, tourism, infrastructure & energy, waters, science and education, cultural heritage, plus cultural heritage, from civil society, landowners and NGOs who have experience in the development of the natural areas.

Transboundary collaboration with neighbouring Montenegro has been agreed between the two parties. However, Albania's Parliament is due to ratify the agreement for the formation of a Joint Committee with Montenegro for the Management of the Buna/Bojana Delta area as a whole. Furthermore, the Buna Bojana is an integral part of the overall Drin basin on which there has been a successful multilateral agreement (since 2012).

Buna. © Marko Prem, PAP/RAC

✓ The Governance Foundation Document – the Rule Book

Regardless of the model used, each structure should have, as a minimum, **a foundation document** that may be referred to as the 'Constitution' or 'Terms of Reference' as locally appropriate that:

- Sets out vision, goals and objectives
- Establishes the decision-making process
- Confirms the commitment of partners (defines their responsibilities)
- Functional aspects such as the secretariat (e.g. frequency of meetings)

Nested Governance

The governing body of a coastal wetland will only be responsible for a part of a wider catchment and coastal zone. The catchment may extend deep inland even crossing one or more national boundaries. The adjoining coastal zone may include major tourist development, ports, industrial or urban areas. Coastal wetland governance bodies will find it difficult to affect the health of their source rivers and catchment, the development or use of the adjoining coast and marine waters without structured governance connections. These connections may include the sharing of responsibilities, mutual consultations, trade-offs on cross-cutting responsibilities, missing or overlapping responsibilities and rights. In particular, the interconnections should enable the recognition of the ecosystem services provided by the coastal wetland.

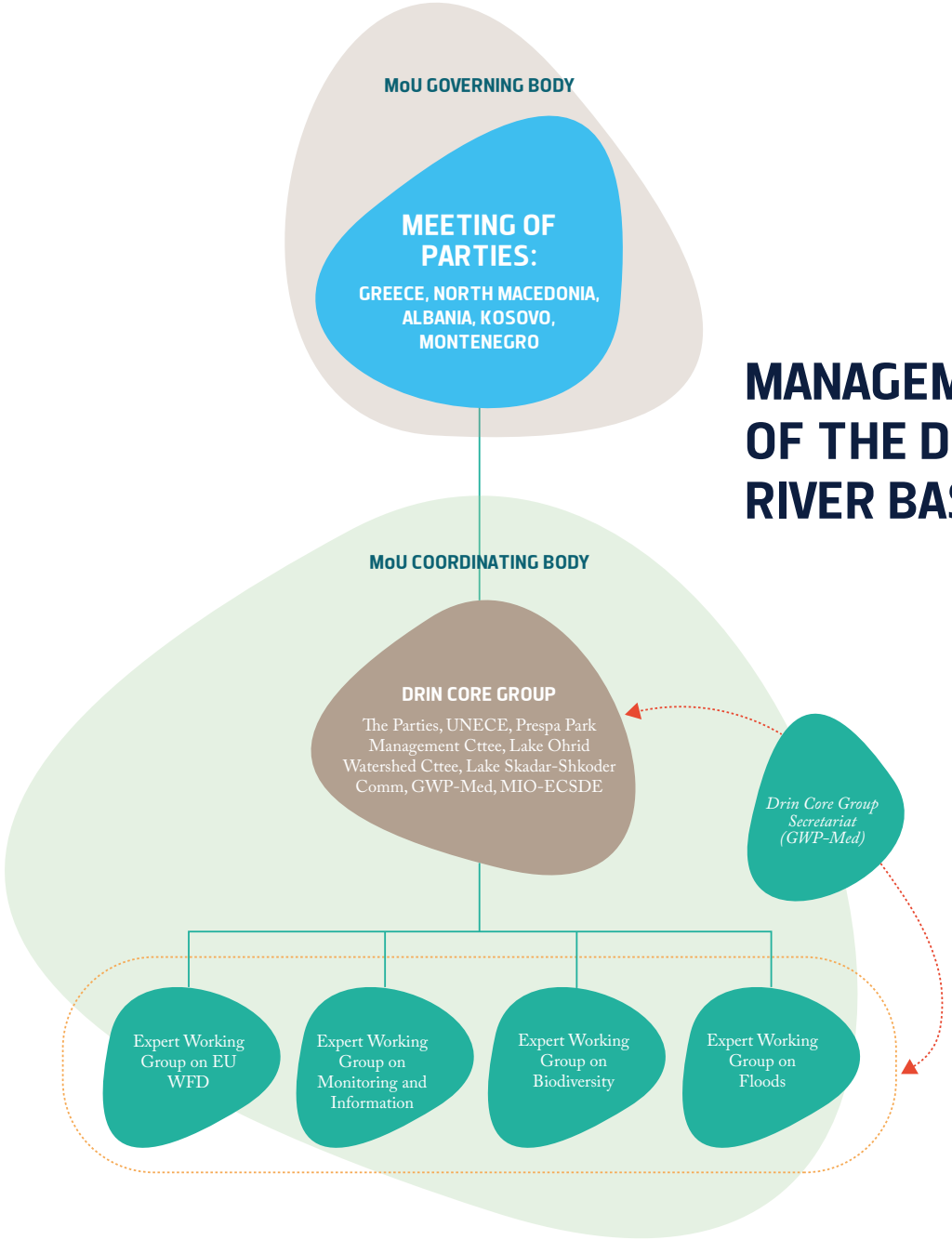
Such neighbouring governance bodies could be very varied, including for example a river basin, marine protected area or coastal zone management partnership. In these cases, the interconnection of governance could be recognised in the first instance through something as simple as mutual representation on partnership structures.

'Although it is normal and expected that major changes in policies and government schemes may affect management priorities in a given area, governance structures must be established in such a way that they are as robust as possible and are not abolished or lose their mandates by eventual changes in government, in partners' participation, or through replacement of leadership. It is always an asset if in the governance structure committed partners and a 'champion' leadership exists, ensuring coordination, continuity and smooth working relationships, to keep the integration efforts moving forward and to monitor progress.' [xlvi]

It is therefore important that the governance of the coastal wetland is 'nested' within relevant neighbouring governance structures through mutual recognition and representation within the wider catchment or coastal zone where they exist.

The most well-known such agreement, refers to the extended Drin basin, which included also the Delta Area of Buna Bojana. The governance of this Basin, includes the *Meeting of Parties*, starting from the source to the sea: Greece, North Macedonia, Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, the *Drin Core Group*, where also the management bodies of the three non-coastal wetlands connected to the system (Prespa, Ohrid, Shkodra), participate together with UN bodies, IGOs and NGOs, as it is shown in the figure below.

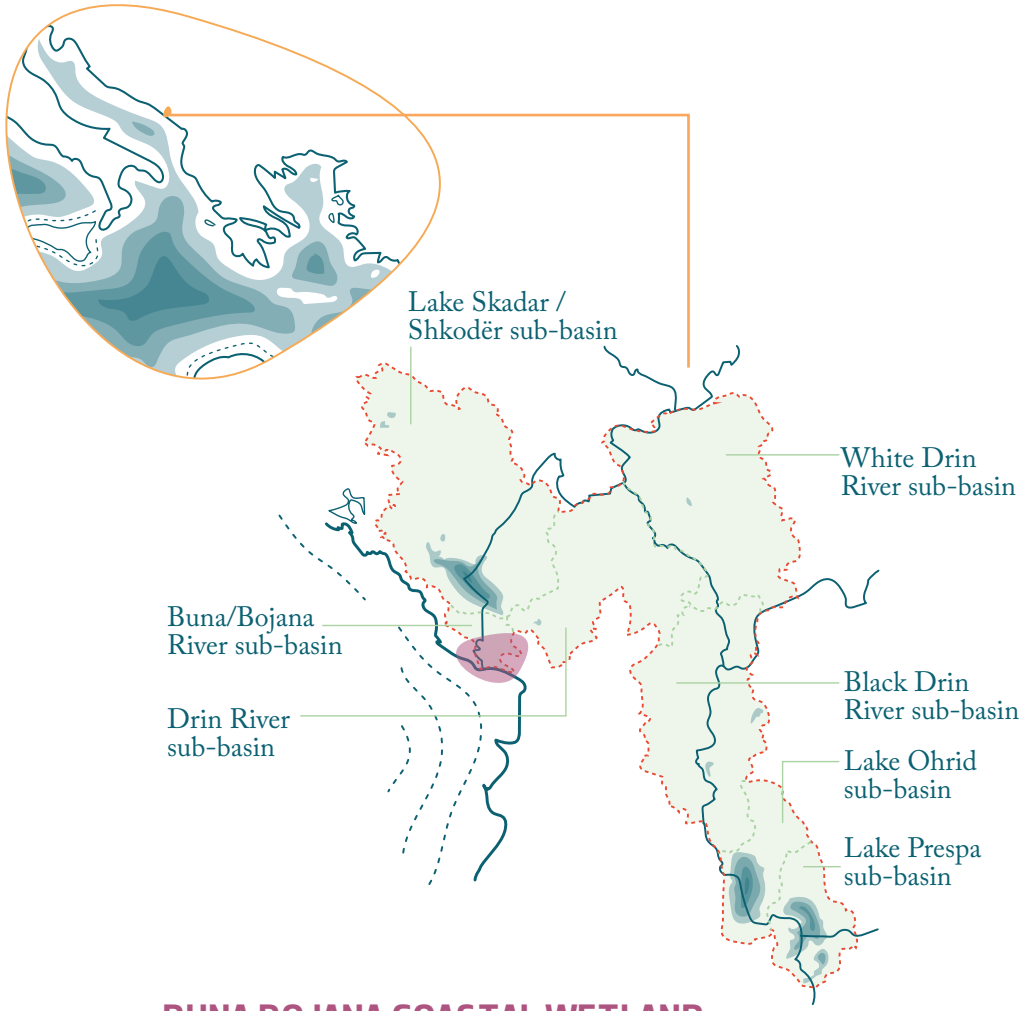
However, it could also include mutual cooperation agreements with the adjoining municipalities or port management bodies. At a basic level, these adjoining bodies would be included as stakeholders in governance of the coastal wetland but, where possible, there should be reciprocal agreements for representation at the political or corporate level *within* those bodies. In such cases the legitimacy of cooperation and the terms of compliance may require formalised agreements and structures.



MANAGEMENT OF THE DRIN RIVER BASIN

The red line in the map below represents the hydrological borders of the Extended Drin. The green line represents the sub basins. It is noteworthy that the red line extends seaward to represent the marine part of the Buna Bojana wetland.

The 'Man and the Biosphere' (UNESCO) approach and programme for the Management of 'Biosphere Reserves', first established by UNESCO in 1971 and sharing many perspectives, objectives and tools with the Ecosystem Approach [xlvii] puts forward a three-zone approach: *the core, a buffer zone, and a flexible transition area*. The whole concept of zoning in Biosphere Reserves integrates a dimension of flexibility and can be used creatively in order to facilitate the 'mosaic' integration of specially designated areas into the wider bio-regional landscape.



BUNA BOJANA COASTAL WETLAND

Man and the Biosphere 3-Zone Approach

The Man and the Biosphere Programme zoning system of differentiated intensity of management is now widely used in designated areas where the needs and aspirations of the local population have to be considered. Ideally, each Biosphere Reserve should contain three zones that have to be implemented in site-specific patterns to meet local needs and geographic conditions.

- First, there must be one or more **core areas** of intensive management. These are usually securely protected areas for conserving biological diversity, monitoring minimally disturbed ecosystems, and undertaking non-destructive research and other low-impact uses.
- Next is a clearly identified **buffer zone**, which usually surrounds or adjoins the core areas and is used for co-operative activities compatible with sound ecological practices.
- Lastly, there is a **flexible transition area**, which may contain a variety of agricultural activities, settlements and other uses, in which local communities, management agencies, scientists, non-governmental organizations, cultural groups, economic interests and other stakeholders work together to manage and sustainably develop the area's resources (Hadley, 2002).

Cross-Border/Trans-Boundary Cooperation – Reaching Out Across Borders

Wetlands that traverse national boundaries are a special case, if only for simple logistical issues that arise at the meeting point of different administrative systems. Only a few coastal wetlands in the Mediterranean traverse states within their boundaries, but the existence of two or more states in their upstream catchment is common. In these cases, transboundary cooperation is essential. Language, political and cultural differences complicate matters further. The governance of transboundary or cross-border wetlands involves at least the environmental agencies of two or more governments. Depending upon the scale and the inclusion of both protected areas and intervening lands and marine environments, however, governance can also involve the Foreign affairs, Agriculture, Fishery, Minerals and Forestry ministries of those governments; several state, provincial, district or local authorities; indigenous peoples and local communities; private landowners; and international NGOs. Often there are multiple legal systems.

Benefits and Challenges of Transboundary Protected Areas [xlviii]

The establishment of TBPAs by two or more countries or other jurisdictions creates opportunities for enhanced transboundary cooperation in their management. It also helps to encourage friendship and reduce tension in border regions. TBPAs present unique governance challenges, as they typically involve and affect many parties. Often there are multiple legal systems at play, and the laws of various national or sub-national political units may confer different sets of rights and obligations upon institutions and individuals. The pros and cons of TBPAs are demonstrated in the table to the right:

Pros	Cons
Promoting international peaceful cooperation, at different levels	The need to reconcile different (sometimes conflicting) laws and policies, which can reduce the effectiveness of cooperation
Enhancing environmental protection across ecosystems	Language barriers, cultural and/or religious differences and even different scales of basic maps that can cause misunderstanding (but can also bring a greater diversity of capacities and resources)
Facilitating more effective research	Different capacities, resources, commitment or authority of protected area institutions and staff on either side xof the border can lead to dominant/weak relationships
Bringing investment and economic benefits to local and national economies	Lack of parity with regard to ratification of international protocols or conventions, which can prevent using those for transboundary cooperation
Ensuring better cross-border control of problems such as fire, pests, poaching, marine pollution and smuggling.	Armed conflict, hostility or political tension between countries that can make cooperation difficult, or even impossible.

Two of the pilot areas involved in this project are transboundary; the **Lower Delta of the Bojana-Buna River** on the border of Albania and Montenegro, and the **Transboundary 'Prespa Park'**, a protected area including the Prespa Lakes and their surroundings extending over the boundaries of Greece, Albania, and the Republic of North Macedonia. These areas illustrate that shared governance settings are usually dynamic and evolving. Typically, the evolution of the transboundary governance happens at different pace in the participant states.

The willingness of the partners to engage also varies over time '*one step forward, two steps back*' can be a common scenario as political priorities change and evolve. Legislation may be inconsistent between states, inadequate or even absent. In particular there may be a lack of clarity regarding interagency authority and responsibility between states. Of particular concern are national inequalities in terms of power, finance and human and technical capacity, resulting in inequitable decisions and benefit-sharing, inadequate, short-lived, or unreliable government commitments, and inadequate finances. And, more importantly inadequate long-term financial security for the transboundary partnership.

The role of donors and supra-national organisations such as the EU has been shown to be critical in transboundary governance. International foundations such as MAVA and GWP, UN programmes including UN Environment Programme (e.g. MedPartnership and Mediterranean Action Plan) and the UNDP, the EU's environmental (LIFE), neighbourhood and the Territorial Cooperation Programmes and others can provide the essential support to 'kick start' transboundary cooperation, but its continuation beyond the initial funding period depends on the robustness of the transboundary institutions created, the long term resources and political commitment.

Importantly, those international donors can play a role in lobbying national governments to maintain and support transboundary governance at a level inaccessible to local institutions (e.g. minister and prime ministerial). Further, they have an obligation not to 'cut loose' transboundary governance structures once the funding period is over, the secretariats of management bodies need long-term support to embed local governance.

✓ **Formal funding programmes have a unique strength in this respect in being able to oblige national recipients to maintain support over a prescribed period after the completion of the initial project.**

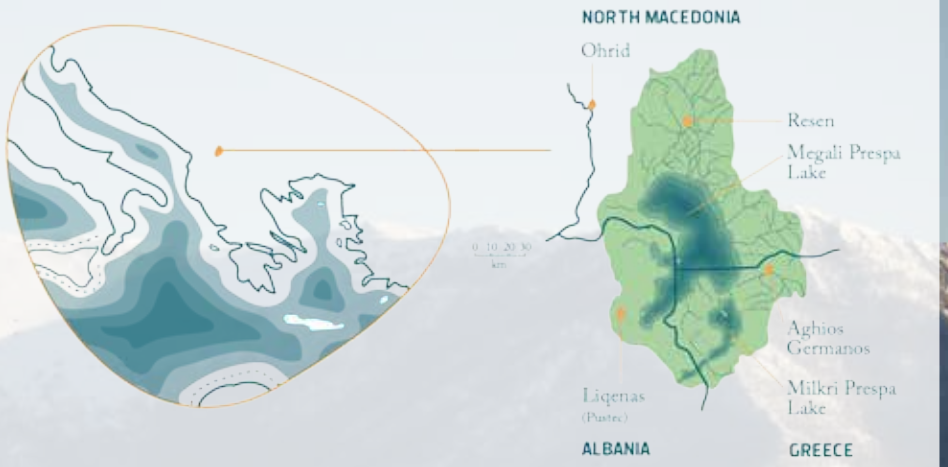
Prespa Lakes Transboundary Park

The area of Prespa is shared by three countries, Greece, Albania and North Macedonia. The Greek part is located in the region of Western Macedonia. Prespa consists of the two lakes as well as their wider lake basin which extends to the tops of the mountains which surround them. In 2000 a joint Declaration by the Prime Ministers of the three countries created the Transboundary Prespa Park - the first transboundary protected area in the Balkans.

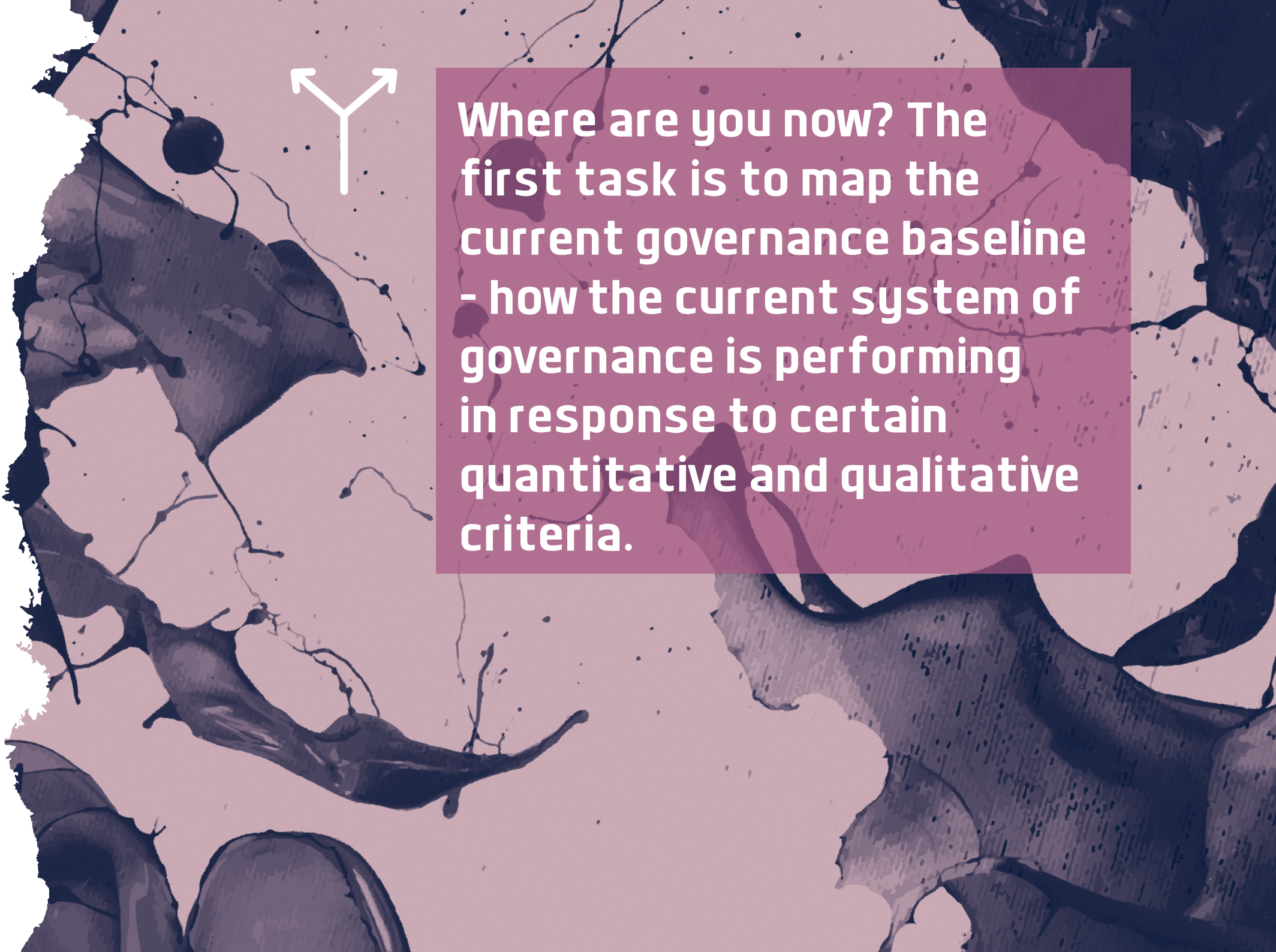
Informal transboundary collaboration took place in the 2000s with the Greek Society for the Protection of Prespa (SPP) acting as secretariat. In 2013 the collaboration was launched as PRESPANET with a dedicated implementation trust fund. There is however an imbalance between the three relevant NGOs in the three countries with respect to resources and capacity, the SPP in Greece being the substantially better resourced of the three, with a strong local presence. This lack of capacity hinders the ability to mobilise funds across the whole transboundary area. There is still no management plan for the Transboundary Park as a whole.

A Tripartite Agreement was signed by the three countries and the EU in 2010 with the status of an international agreement. Once the Agreement is operational it is envisaged that there will be:

- A bi-annual meeting of Ministers - taking high-level decisions
- A Prespa Park Management Committee – discussing transboundary issues including water quality
- A Secretariat – with an international head responsible for collaboration (initially based in Greece for four years)



Prespa Lakes. © Jean Jalbert, Tour du Valat



Where are you now? The first task is to map the current governance baseline - how the current system of governance is performing in response to certain quantitative and qualitative criteria.

The Self-Assessment Process Begins Here

The major questions to be addressed at this stage when analysing the governance of wetlands include the following:

- What are the features of the existing governance system, and what are its strengths and weaknesses?
- How should the governance of the site and its plan of action address the long-term trajectory of ecosystem? (Both its societal and environmental dimensions)
- How can planning and policy formulation encourage the participation and win trust and collaboration among stakeholders?
- Is the system of governance effective in implementing plans of action?
- Is the governance system adaptive – can it incorporate new knowledge and adapt to changing social and environmental circumstances?
- Are the resources, financial and human, adequate to delivering effective governance?
- Is the governance of the coastal wetland integrated with planning and management of the area within which it lies?

This may seem a daunting list of questions to answer, but they are broken down into simple practical steps in the tools that follow.

The Mapping & Planning stage is based on the two easy to use self-assessment tools:

The Rapid Assessment Tool

- Simple 'tick box' forms that can be easily copied and distributed
- Assessment is easy and quick - based on a simple traffic light' system

The Rapid Assessment Tool is designed to facilitate discussion and to identify the status quo – the starting point for future planning. this can be completed by using the tables in the pages that follow or by the downloadable Excel workbook (see link below).

A downloadable Excel Planning Tool

An downloadable Excel workbook allows the user to carry out a more detailed analysis and prepare the action plan. The workbook enables the user to:

- Input text to identify potential indicators of progress, barriers to progress and actions
- Allocate scores to indicate the priorities for action
- Generate results in graphic form

The assessment is designed to provide a baseline - to set the stage for the planning of future governance. It will help the user identify the strengths and weaknesses of the existing system and the reforms that are needed if desired future conditions are to be achieved. There are no 'right' scores to this grid; just indicators of the priorities for future action.

The tools are available for on-line use and downloadable at:
https://medwet.org/publications/handbook-on-governance-of-mediterranean-coastal-wetlands/

The Rapid Assessment Tool

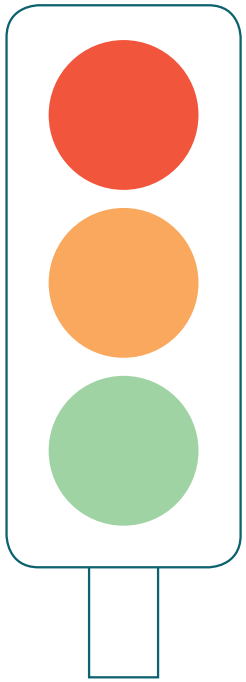
The Governance *status quo* traffic light grids are used for the baseline assessment. It is based on a simple three category traffic light system:

- **Red** for governance activities not yet initiated
- **Amber** for activities already underway or partially complete
- **Green** for criteria already completed.

How to Use

Manually - simply tick the box below the appropriate traffic light colour on the pages that follow.

Download - use the drop-down menu to enter a cross in the desired box in the downloaded online planning tool.



Not initiated/No Activity

Underway/Partially Complete

Completed

The tools are available for on-line use and downloadable at:
https://medwet.org/publications/handbook-on-governance-of-mediterranean-coastal-wetlands/

Framework

- the preconditions required to successfully implement the plan of action

Not initiated/
No Activity

Underway/
Partially Complete

Completed

Institutional design			
Major stakeholders mapped and their interests and influence identified			
Governance structure designed and established			
The key issues governance will focus on are selected			
Governance body constitution, goals and terms of reference agreed			
Core support funding secured			
Users and the local community understand and support the goals of the site designation			
The active engagement of social actors, upholding diversity and gender equity in all aspects of the management of the site			
Stakeholders are actively involved in the assessment and goal setting process			
Institutions responsible for the site understand and support its objectives, and collaborate in their delivery			
Governance is 'nested' through mutual recognition and representation within the governance structures for the wider catchment or coastal zone			
Transboundary and Cross-border only Effective shared governance regimes are in place for new transboundary coastal wetland			
Transboundary and Cross-border only Enabling policies are in place in relevant jurisdictions to allow for shared governance of transboundary areas			
Transboundary and Cross-border only Core funding is in place in relevant jurisdictions to enable long-term shared governance of transboundary areas			

Strategy

- leading to changes in behaviour during implementation of target user groups, key institutions and changes in how and where financial investments are made

Not initiated/
No Activity

Underway/
Partially Complete

Completed

Preparation of the programme of action			
Principal environmental, social and institutional issues and risks identified, and their implications assessed			
Scientific research on selected management questions planned or conducted			
Likely future scenarios identified			
Baseline conditions documented			
Monitoring protocol and programme agreed and resourced			
SMART [xlix] management objectives identified			
Action plan and the institutional and financial means by which it will be implemented defined			
Institutional capacity for implementation developed			
Stakeholders actively involved in planning and pilot project activities			

Change Agenda

- measures results and benefits through delivering the action plan

Formal adoption and funding Implementation & conformity			
Management and action plan formally endorsed			
Funding for action program implementation obtained			
Implementation of the management/action plan in accordance with the set priorities			
Implementation of pilot actions to test capacity, promote partnership working and help secure public support and awareness			
External national, regional and local policies, catchment and spatial plans conform to the needs and goals of the site			
Regular monitoring of management effectiveness implemented			
Adaptive management approach used			
Behavioural change of key stakeholders accomplished			
Favourable conservation status of the coastal wetlands achieved			

Common Vision

- the appropriate balance between environment and human society - sustainable development - to achieve the agreed common vision

Not initiated/
No Activity

Underway/
Partially Complete

Completed

Self-assessment and external evaluation			
Behaviours of key partners conforms to the management and action plans			
Societal/ecosystem trends monitored and interpreted			
Investments in necessary physical infrastructure made			
Progress and attainment of goals documented			
Major stakeholder groups sustain participation in the management of the site			
Long-term funding support sustained			
Management plan outcomes documented			
Management issues reassessed			
Priorities and policies adjusted to reflect experience and changing social/ environmental conditions			
New issues or areas identified for inclusion in the revised management plan			

The Online Planning Tool

For each of the activities listed in the rapid assessment grid, the online Excel version grids provides space for the user to identify:

- Indicators of progress
- Barriers to progress
- Actions & next steps
- Priorities for action scored 1-3

The grids provide drop down menus to enter the traffic light 'score' from the rapid assessment stage. The grids allow the user to carry out a more detailed analysis and prepare and action plan.

The tools are available for on-line use and downloadable at:
https://medwet.org/publications/handbook-on-governance-of-mediterranean-coastal-wetlands/

Framework: the preconditions required to successfully implement the plan of action

Example of completed grid

Institutional Design				Indicators of Progress	Barriers to Progress	Actions / Next Steps	Priority 1 - 3
Major stakeholders mapped and their interests and influence identified		X		1 TOR for mapping	1 Funding and staff expertise	1 Source funding	1
				2 Consultant selected	2	2 Draft TORs and select consultant	2
				3 Report and action plan	3	3 Prepare report	3
Governance structure designed and established			X	1 Regular meetings of Governance Committee and delivery of management plan	1 No secure long-term funding and political committment	1 Prepare and agree programme of work	2
				2	2	2 Brief politicians and prepare briefing material	2
				3	3	3	
The key issues governance will focus on are selected	X			1 Governance programme of work yet to be agreed	1 None	1 Prepare and agree key issues and programme of work	2
				2	2	2	
				3	3	3	
Governance body constitution. goals and terms of reference agreed		X		1 Constitution, goals and terms of referece agreed	1 Institutional inertia amongst partners	1 Follow up with all partners to encourage response	1
				2	2	2	
				3	3	3	
Core support funding secured	X			1 Secure annual core funding agreed with partners	1 Reliance on short-term project funding to fund core activities	1 Prepare and present funding case for all partners	1
				2	2 Lack of authority committment to match national support	2	
				3	3	3	
Users and the local community understand and support the goals of the site designation		X		1 Reduction in complaints	1 Traditional and long-held attitudes	1 Annual public events programme	1
				2 Reduction in damaging activities by users and local community	2 Conflict of economic interests vs conservation	2 Seek and engage local champions	3
				3 Increased voluntary activity	3	3 Local information campaign	1
The active engagement of social actors, upholding diversity and gender equity	X			1 Diverse membership of governance committee	1 Traditional attitudes and conventions	1 Awareness campaign to address gender and excluded social groups	2
				2 Diverse engagements at events and consultations	2 Lack of awareness	2 Review and modify access and facilities	1
				3	3 Unsuitable access and facilities	3	
Stakeholders are actively involved in the assessment and goal setting process			X	1 Existing high level of support maintained	1 None	1	
				2	2	2	
				3	3	3	
Institutions responsible for the site understand and support its agenda, and collaborate in its delivery		X		1 Insitutional support for the support is high and consistent	1 Political cycles	1 Information pack and days for support institutions	2
				2	2	2 Annual progress report published	1
				3	3	3	
Governance is 'nested' through mutual recognition and representation within the governance structures for the wider catchment or coastal zone	X			1 Reciprocal membership on governance bodies for the neighbouring catchment and coastal zone	1 Time and resources	1 Establish dialogue and develop MoU with ICZM and catchment bodies	1
				2 Consultant selected	2 Administrative boundaries	2	
				3 Report and action plan	3 Political conflict	3	
Totals	4	4	2				

Indicators - consider how progress would be monitored, i.e. what indicator (or indicators) could be used. These may be simple statements, for example: 'stakeholder mapping complete, inaugural meeting of governance meeting held, action plan prepared and approved', or quantitative, for example; 'annual financial support or expenditure, number of events, number of people attending events, number of illegal constructions removed, etc.' Up to three indicators may be used - but one will suffice.

Barriers - in parallel with the assessment for those criteria marked as 'Underway/partial' or 'not completed' consider also the barriers to achieving the desired indicator of completion. Barriers could be internal or external. The idea is to come up with ideas how to transform the barriers into opportunities to improve the governance where necessary.

Actions &Next Steps

Identify the actions required

Priority - allocate a priority to each action using a 1 - 3 scale (1 is high)

The fully-developed Excel version will self-total and generate:

1) the graphic display of progress
2) a table of governance priority actions

Example of completed grid (available in online workbook)

Stage 3 is all about identifying the ultimate destination using the *Vitality and Adaptivity Scorecard* provided - setting sights on governance, governance that responds to evolving conditions in the ecosystems of the site and its wider social, economic and cultural context - governance that is robust, and well on the road to long-term sustainability.

It would be disingenuous to pretend that qualitative criteria of vitality and adaptivity are easy to measure in any precise or scientific way. This does not however relieve us of the responsibility to consider and assess them in relation to present practice and future ambitions. The purpose of the grid is not intended as a way of comparing governance between different sites - this is not a beauty contest. Criteria can only be properly assessed in their local context, thus the term 'empowered' for example will have a very different meaning in a strongly centralised state compared to an area with a high degree of subsidiarity.

Governance is also about the art of the possible as well as the desirable.

This grid below has been kept simple and concise - partly to avoid assessment fatigue, but also to focus the mind on the essential perceived quality of governance.

A numerical score of 1-4 is used.

The cumulative score total has a maximum of 100.

The tools are available for on-line use and downloadable at:
https://medwet.org/publications/handbook-on-governance-of-mediterranean-coastal-wetlands/

The Vitality and Adaptivity Scorecard

SCORING NOT AT ALL/VERY LOW 1 LOW/INITIALISING 2 DEVELOPING/IMPROVING 3 HIGH/COMPLETE 4	EMPOWERED	WISE	ADAPTIVE	CREATIVE & INNOVATIVE	REPRESENTATIVE & INTEGRATED
Is the formal governance structure and its membership…?					
Are site management staff…?					
Are key stakeholders…?					
Are partner institutions….?					
Is the management plan for the site…?					
TOTAL (maximum 100)					

KEY

The Criteria - the ultimate objective should be to achieve aspects of governance that are:

EMPOWERED - self-conscious and self-directed, capable of demonstrating leadership responsive to emerging environmental conditions, problems and opportunities; self-disciplined and self-critical, and able to take on responsibilities in effective and dependable ways.

WISE - take decisions of meaningful scope; being motivated by the common good and solidarity; fostering the engagement of as many relevant actors in society as possible.

ADAPTIVE - flexible, reflective, engaged in knowledge exchange, dialogue and debate, capable of learning from experience, capable of weighing options and taking prompt and meaningful decisions.

CREATIVE, INNOVATIVE AND LIVELY - open to new ideas, able to reinvent and renew itself as a living system does, providing innovative solutions, supporting the emergence of new rules and norms, responding positively to change and continuing to develop.

REPRESENTATIVE AND INTEGRATED - having abundant, meaningful and systemic interactions with a variety of actors at various levels in society and across sectors (including those actors who render decisions effective through political, social and financial support).

The results, and what to do with them

The maximum score for this assessment is 100. It is unlikely that any site will achieve this score by even the most optimistic assessors. The grid should however identify clearly the key areas in which there is a need for improvement.

There are no simple ways of improving scores other than to dedicate a period of time in order to **Pause, Reflect, and then Adapt**.

Pause - make time to reflect and take time to regroup and recalibrate – consider who has the power and the motivation to make the necessary changes to 'improve' the score?

Reflect - on the past year for example, its challenges, successes and failures. Contact those players who can make a real difference, discuss with key stakeholders. Begin to strategically plan the next 12 months to create an environment that allows candid conversations. Reflection is the bridge between learning, decision-making and action.

Adapt - reflection is a waste of time if it's not turned into action. However, this is often the greatest challenge of adaptive management. Change is hard. Here are three key tips for orienting Pause & Reflect practices toward Adaptation:

Schedule time for reflection either monthly or annually, or programme in as an event for selected stakeholders and/or partners.

Ask the right questions and find the right people: if reflection is the bridge between learning, decision-making and action, what learning needs to be digested in order to make better decisions later? Do stakeholders share your assessment?

Link questions to strategy. What is expected, what is the reality, what do you do well, what not so well, and what should be changed in the future?

Asking such questions can be politically sensitive and it may be advisable to seek a mutually respected facilitator or the assistance of an external body with no direct vested interest in the area. Individuals, either through their personality or position can emerge as **champions of change**, generating or supporting new ideas and the testing of innovations.

Results and follow up

Recommendations for improvement should ideally translate into specific action items with clear roles, responsibilities, and timelines, engendering tangible changes rather than just discussion. These may be fundamental changes in the status quo, but more likely pilot style actions to test innovations and creative ideas that are different from the norm.

Success Indicators

- ✔ A fruitful discussion that results in reflection, learning, and recommendations for improvement
- ✔ The next similar project, activity, or phase integrates and reflects upon what was learned
- ✔ Improved scores on repeat assessments

The following provides tips and guidance on how to deliver the elusive vitality of governance, and thereby the aid long-term sustainability of the process.

Making Governance Effective, Adaptive and Vital

The following provides tips and guidance on how to deliver the elusive vitality of governance, and thereby to aid long-term sustainability of the process.

What's in a name?

Name the governance body to distinguish it from the more operational management committee or Comité du pilotage. Typically, this might be the 'Steering' or 'Governance' Committee or Board.

Agree clear and simple Terms of Reference (ToR) for the governance body

Terms of reference (ToR) define the purpose and structures of the governance body - the ToR should be kept simple and clear, identifying the shared goal or vision, the remit of the group for making decisions, expressing an independent view, or advising action by others.
The ToR should also outline practical matters including the title, membership and organisational structure of the body, the frequency of meetings and other practical issues.

Manage the meetings

Here are some simple tips for improving the productivity of meetings:

- ✔ **Ensure** decisions are accurately recorded along with the responsibility for implementing them
- ✔ Engage a **moderator** to lead the meeting and to give equal opportunity to everyone to express opinion
- ✔ **Ensure meetings keep to time** (you don't want to miss an important agenda item because the time ran out)
- ✔ **Allow adequate time for each agenda item.** This is very important. Some flexibility is always required in meetings, and prioritising agenda items will help ensure that important issues are addressed
- ✔ **Clearly indicate whether agenda items require a decision.** Make sure this is clear in your agenda so that attendees know whether they will be part of the decision-making process
- ✔ **Share the agenda** with partners well in advance. This not only lets them know what to expect during the meeting but can also describe any preparation needed
- ✔ **List who is responsible for presenting a topic.** Meeting attendees should have clear roles and responsibilities to keep the process running smoothly
- ✔ **Minutes including the recommendations** should be circulated following the meeting and agreed by all partners

Take the meetings to the community

Don't hide meetings away in civic or government buildings – at least once in an annual cycle take them out to venues in the community close to the wetland and combine with a public event.

Ensure that governance is action-orientated

Discussions should be focused on **deliverables**, either by the governance committee as a whole or by the partners. These deliverables can include specific projects, reports, or the influencing of other agencies. Most importantly, there should be measurable progress between meetings.

Be inclusive

Ensure your meetings are **inclusive** – governance should reach out to groups and sectors in the community who may not be represented by formal associations – but may have a significant impact on your wetland. Participation is a fundamental principle of the governance.

'Wetland management, and particularly the planning process, should be as inclusive as possible. Legitimate stakeholders, particularly local communities and indigenous people should be strongly encouraged to take an active role in planning and in the joint management of sites. It is highly desirable that positive steps be taken to ensure that gender issues, including women and their interests, are fully taken into account at all stages in the process. If necessary, appropriate incentives to ensure full stakeholder participation should be identified and applied.' [1]

In particular, women's lack of participation in important decision-making is recognised as an obstacle to sustainable development, and it is not enough just to get more women in meetings; it is also about making space for meaningful contributions.

Integrity

Discussion of governance can often attract a weary cynicism from the public. Upholding the integrity and commitment of all in charge of specific responsibilities for the area can be vitally important in building trust with the local community.

Be transparent

Establish communication means through which committee records, agendas, minutes and reports are easily accessible (for example, through the websites and social media). Welcome your audience to meetings. Ensuring transparency, providing timely, real-time access to information about decision-making, which institutions can exert influence; who is responsible for what; and how they are accountable?

Ensure a clear line of responsibility and reporting/answerability

Clearly define who reports to whom, how often and in what format, particularly if and how the site manager reports to the governance committee. As a minimum, the annual report of the governance body should be made publicly accessible and in a user-friendly, layman's format in

order to clearly recognise that the governance of the site is made in the name of the public and for the public.

Encourage participation and feedback from civil society and the media

Pro-actively seek participation and feedback from the public. This can include traditional routes such as press releases, public meetings and events. Also develop a social media strategy to reach a wider audience.

Unleash creativity and innovation

The governance of valuable areas such as wetlands should not be a dry, technical exercise. These areas provide many exciting opportunities to engage both the public and partners through the arts and media. Achieving this means making links with new partners in the creative sectors, an effort that will be richly rewarded.

Build trust and capacity through pilot projects

Pilot projects can be one of the most effective ways of reinforcing the partnership, engaging the community and engendering political support. Whilst their short-term impact may be limited, their cumulative, long-term impact in terms of building trust and credibility can be enormous. They need not be expensive and they may rely heavily on voluntary support.

Identify alternative funding sources

A preliminary identification of key potential funding sources for the subsequent implementation is essential. The identification of potential major funding sources will help create the favourable preconditions for the delivery of a plan or programme for the wetland by linking them with the results of the scenario and vision. The identification of potential funding sources is important to:

- Ensure that the proposed actions are realistic and deliverable
- Reduce the time gap between plan and actions – thereby maintaining momentum, stakeholder confidence and support.

Think 'out of the box' and scope a wide range of funding sources outside the conventional range of environmental funding. Coastal wetlands in particular offer a wide range of environmental services that can be used to support the case for economic development, flood mitigation, climate change adaptation funding.

One area often overlooked may be local and regional economic development plans and programmes as wetlands are considered 'environmental' and therefore outside their remit. Challenge this view - coastal wetlands offer direct economic benefits through tourism or the sustainable exploitation of their natural resources, or indirectly through valuable ecosystem services.

Target the plans and programmes of others

The governance committee should ensure that it is a contributor and a consultee to relevant local, regional and national plans and programmes. This can include spatial plans both terrestrial and marine, river basin and coastal plans, along with others for infrastructure development.

Keep it simple, and proportionate

Don't overcomplicate matters. Resist the temptation to enter into detailed, technical discussions at the governance level. Insist that technical reports are reported or summarised in a manner suitable for a non-technical audience.

Governance should also be proportionate to the scale and complexity of the wetland and the social, economic and political context in which it lies. In relatively simple areas with relatively few issues, the governance should be proportionately simple.

Demand only 'fit for purpose' information

There will always be pressure to collect more and more information and data, particularly from the scientific community. However, the prime need of governance is to ensure that information collected is only of sufficient quality and timely to meet the purpose for which it is intended – namely to monitor the health of the site and changes over time, and to report to external bodies.

Champions

Consider the emergence of a champion(s) for the coastal wetland, generating new ideas and promoting the testing of innovations, including governance and management innovations for the coastal wetland. Most importantly, a figure who is widely respected and who has a voice within the political structure.

Use scenarios to build consensus

Scenarios - alternative, 'what if?' visions of the future – and the process of generating them can be used as a key part of the management process. Scenarios can be used to:

Provoke debate about common futures
Expand the range of options
Expose contradictions and conflicts
Clarify and communicate the technical analysis
Expose uncertainties for future developments
Evaluate policies in the face of an uncertain future.

Scenarios and the process of scenario development should engage the imagination of both the planners and the stakeholders. Their value should be in widening the participants' perception of possible future events and possibilities and encourage 'thinking the unthinkable'

Agree the long-term vision

Develop a single 'Vision Statement' along with supporting interpretive material and reports of the participation process provided alongside the statement.

A common vision can be both rational and inventive:

'*Prospective is above all an attitude of mind … and a way of behaving…. If it has no future direction the present is empty of meaning.... The rational and the inventive trends of strategic planning are complementary, only prima facie they seem opposite*.' Michel Godet [li]

From the scenarios setting the vision engages the stakeholders in the identification of the key problems and issues for the wetland, and to set the course for the eventual 'shape' of the strategy, plan or programme and its implementation.

Use adaptive management approach

Adaptive management approach is vital in order to ensure that you close the full circle of conceptualise, plan, implement, evaluate, learn and adapt - the only way that you can improve and learn from your mistakes. It is important to monitor progress and the achievement of the objectives in order to be able to be sure what is going well or not so well and why.

Adaptive management approach can and should be applied both to management and governance.

Don't reinvent the wheel

There is a considerable body of governance experience around the world, some of this is referenced in this Handbook. Learn from others, develop partnerships, and consult regional bodies.

Governance can never be complacent

There is no secure 'end-point' in governance, the political, and economic cultural and natural environment climate is constantly changing. Inevitably the process is a never-ending cyclical one.

Endnotes

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[xliv] ICZM Protocol, Article 3
1. The area to which the Protocol applies shall be the Mediterranean Sea area as defined in Article 1 of the Convention. The area is also defined by: (a) the seaward limit of the coastal zone, which shall be the external limit of the territorial sea of Parties; and (b) the landward limit of the coastal zone, which shall be the limit of the competent coastal units as defined by the Parties."

[xlv] ICZM Protocol Article 7: Article 7 Coordination 1. For the purposes of integrated coastal zone management, the Parties shall: (a) ensure institutional coordination, where necessary through appropriate bodies or mechanisms, in order to avoid sectoral approaches and facilitate comprehensive approaches; (b) organise appropriate coordination between the various authorities competent for both the marine and the land parts of coastal zones in the different administrative services, at the national, regional and local levels; (c) organise close coordination between national authorities and regional and local bodies in the field of coastal strategies, plans and programmes and in relation to the various authorisations for activities that may be achieved through joint consultative bodies or joint decision-making procedures.

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"In a sceptical world governance is often seen as an arcane and self-serving process and may be treated with world-weary resignation or even suspicion." – **Brian Shipman**

Guardians of the world's most important natural areas like the Mediterranean's coastal wetlands have to manage complex ecosystems while reconciling a bewildering array of social, economic and political agendas, from the global to the local. This is governance.

Concise and based on real-world expertise, this unique guide is designed to support hard-pressed managers, officials and advisors. This is the first governance "recipe book" with linked, easy to use, on-line planning tools to help design efficient governance models that reduce conflict and save time.

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