



Terraba Sierpe Wetland's Management plan: struggling for policy change and its implementation



Ecoticos picture: <http://picasaweb.google.com/ecoticos/FotosAereas#5479481716520221922>

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Resource Management by: Mónica Uribe

Supervised by: Dave Huitema and Jetske Bouma

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Terraba Sierpe National Wetland is a protected wild area located in the Osa Conservation Area on the Southern Pacific coast of Costa Rica. Due to its ecological characteristics and the ecosystem services that it provides, it was declared a Ramsar Site in 1995¹. Despite its importance, the legal and institutional framework in the wetland has not been clear. The activities that can be carried out in the area and its surroundings are not known and the local community does not have somebody to talk to or bargain for. These conditions have established a paradigm where the protected area and the people depending on it for their livelihoods have become vulnerable.

Until recently, governmental organizations have ignored the wetland's management, but why was this the case if its importance is highly recognized? If the organization which is supposed to guard the area is not really protecting it (1 guard for 16.700 hectares) is there someone who actually cares more about the wetland?

Interestingly, several organizations indeed took up the challenge of changing the policies regarding the wetland. They worked to get a policy change adopted in the form of a new management plan. This plan was adopted on April 2010 and it regulates the activities that are allowed and forbidden and sets the ideal institutional framework needed to make actions work properly. This policy, if it is correctly implemented, will bring balance between people's welfare and biodiversity protection inside the wetland.

This thesis tells the story of how the plan came about and how it came to be the official policy for the wetland. My specific research question is: Who was involved in instigating this policy change, and what strategies did the different actors who were involved use to influence decision making in the Terraba Sierpe National Wetland? In order to answer this question, I investigated where the ideas on the management originated and how different actors strategically maneuvered to make the plan reflect their goals. In my analysis, I am considering five strategies that can be used to promote or block policy change: development of new ideas, building coalitions, networking, venue shopping and exploiting windows of opportunity (see Huiteima and Meijerink, 2009).

¹ Informative card about Ramsar wetlands. In http://www.wetlands.org/RSIS/_COP9Directory/Directory/ris/6CR004sp.pdf. Accessed on July, 2010.

Policy change needs the development of an idea to transform the status quo. In this case, the idea is the management plan, and I am interested in finding out how the idea arrived to the case study area. Answering this requires a look at the following issues: was the idea of the management plan a requirement explicitly established in regulations? Or was it brought from international practices? Who was interested in changing the paradigm in the wetland and why? Who pushed the idea of the management plan forward, and how did they counter the resistance from those that objected to the plan?

The development of an idea can be just one part of a change in policy. Parties with ideas need partners. Therefore, coalition building is another useful strategy to push the idea forward in order to get it accepted. However, it could also be used to block a change. In the course of my research I found several of such coalitions. For instance, the Osa's Conservation area collaborated with an environmental NGO and an international foundation to promote the management plan. Opponents to conservation measures, including the management plan, also came together in a coalition led by Osa's mayor.

Coalition building plays an important role in the way the management plan was finally approved three years after its completion. During this time, which I refer to as an incubation period, two opposing coalitions worked to affect decision making about the management plan. My analysis demonstrates the existence of an environmental and a development coalition, respectively. It also reveals the importance of framing focusing events to support ideas and interests of such coalitions. How did these coalitions influence the management plan approval? What strategies were used by the members of the coalitions to gain attention and attract supporters? What is the relation of an international airport, a dam and tourism development with these coalitions and with the decisions about the management plan?

Networking activities by various actors took place over the course in the decision process and these mattered a great deal for the approval of the management plan. In this study, I explain who were networking and what were they aiming to achieve. I also address how exactly the creation of networks influenced the management plan approval.

Idea development, coalition building, framing focusing events and networking prepared the situation for approval of the management plan. However, the management plan was not endorsed until the conditions were appropriate and before the plan was presented in the right forum. I analyze which 'windows of opportunity' helped to get the plan accepted, and how proponents of the idea used the correct venue to advance the plan. The environmental coalition took advantage of the convergence of the appropriate conditions to push for the management plan

endorsement. Who exactly were promoting the approval in the environmental coalition? How did they succeed?

Policy change was finally achieved. However, great an accomplishment this has been, this constitutes no more than a paper change. It is important to also consider the prospects of actual implementation of the plan. Here I observe several threats in relation to diverging interests of various actors in the region. This makes the question of how implementation can successfully be achieved salient. To address this question, I refer to the strategies used to obtain policy change on paper in order to promote its realization.

This study aims to solve the puzzle presented above. The document is divided into chapters that describe the application of the different strategies according to the timeline of the management plan. Before this, the methodology and some theory concerning policy change are given in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, respectively. Then, Chapter 4 analyzes the case study area starting with the description of the situation before the management plan arrived to the wetland. Next, I explain how the idea of the management plan came into reality followed by the description of the incubation period. This chapter finalizes with the description of the circumstances in which the management plan was approved. Finally, Chapter 5 analyzes the future of the management plan according to the strategies used to assess policy change on paper.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Governance

Over the last decades a new term in policy sciences has started to get the attention of ever more researchers. Set against the backdrop of cuts in government spending and deregulation, government tasks in the sphere of protecting the public interest, increasingly moved to other sectors in society. In the 1990s, scholars seized on the term 'governance' to refer to this new situation (Jordan et al., 2010).

In the past, the ideal governance system was determined by jurisdictions at a restricted number of hierarchical government levels (national, regional and local) without overlapping in responsibilities. This system is now seen as unfeasible, ineffective and inefficient (Bouma & Huitema, 2009: 24). The exclusivity between jurisdictions operating at the same level, and the rational hierarchical ordering of jurisdictions at different spatial levels, has been abandoned (Hooghe and Marks, 2003).

The governance concept is attractive due to its ability to "cover the whole range of institutions and relationships involved in the process of governing" (Pierre and Peters 2000: 1). Nowadays, words like public private partnerships, privatization, civic society, stakeholders, public participation, institutions and networks, are appealing not only to researchers, but to governments and companies all over the world.

As a consequence, governing is no longer exclusively about governmental institutions that steer decisions in their desired direction. It has become patently clear that governments are often not best suited to handle the increasingly complex issues that societies face. Other actors, including civil society, have become increasingly active in politics and decision making. Anne Mette Kjaer succinctly said, "if democratic inclusion of citizens is not ensured, their cooperation in achieving social and economic outcomes will probably not be obtained" (Kjaer, 2005: 12).

Consequently, governance is different from government; while the latter centers on the institutions and actions of the state, the former includes non-state actors such as businesses and civil society into the analysis of societal steering (Bouma & Huitema, 2009). Therefore, government and central steering have been replaced, or complemented, by state-society interactions. In governance, the boundaries that existed between government, civil society, international organizations and institutions have been blurring over time.

Similarly, multi-level governance refers not to a hierarchical territorial system limited to formal institutions, but rather to *“non-hierarchical, functionally oriented processes of interaction operating within a certain context of problems and decisions – processes which are constituted, and may at any moment dissolve, through partnerships, networks and agreements among public and private institutions as well as individuals”* (Braun, 2008: 475).

The concepts of governance and multi-level governance imply that hierarchical political patterns have been replaced more and more by mutually supporting policy networks, which engage a multitude of actors without a central hierarchy (Braun, 2008).

Although governance addresses responses to the emergence of networks, governance processes cannot rely entirely on networks; they have to draw upon hierarchical structures as well. All in all, it is about coordinating the plurality and complexity of hierarchies, markets and networks (Kjaer, 2005).

Thus, governance can be defined as *“managing the rules by which public policy is formulated and implemented. It is not restricted to managing networks but covers the whole range of institutional set-ups that may characterize public policy making”*. (Kjaer, 2005: 57).

2.2 Networks

Because governance involve multiple actors in decision making, network management becomes important. Therefore, the analysis of their degree of closure, the type of actors within them, and how they may be managed are important aspects to be considered in a governance system.

Policy networks are conceived as non-hierarchical self-coordination form of interaction that provides a new form of political steering or governance (Braun, 2008). They are defined as *“webs of relatively stable and ongoing relationships which mobilize and pool dispersed resources so that collective (or parallel) action can be orchestrated toward the solution of a common policy”* (Kenis & Schneider, 1991: 36). They are especially important *“where the capacity for decision-making, program formulation and implementation is widely distributed or dispersed among private and public actors”* (Kenis & Schneider, 1991: 41).

Therefore, governance is about managing and steering networks. It is also about construction of networks thus creating new actors by providing incentives to form

associations. Here, governments play an important role, since they can strengthen the weakest parties in situations, where some are more resourceful than others (Kjaer, 2005).

Policy analyses of implementation have shown that government ignores networks at its own peril, because policy implementation is often heavily influenced by relations between government staff and others. A key challenge for government is to enable these networks and to seek out new forms of co-cooperation. Moreover, public managers need new skills like game playing, joint action, mutual adjustments and networking (Rhodes, 1996).

A useful typology of networks is the one between policy communities and issue networks (Carter, 2007). In a policy community, government actors share an ideology with other actors engaged in the field. The issue network, on the other hand, develops ad hoc and is related to a specific and usually temporary policy issue. Issue networks deal with many competing groups with fluctuating membership and less regular interaction. Bargaining and consulting take a different form in these two types of networks. In policy communities, bargaining of resources (financial, personnel, technical installations or expert knowledge) is allowed, whereas on the latter the government tends to consult rather than bargain (Carter, 2007).

The existence of networks could present advantages and disadvantages. One of the advantages is that they could be used as means of policy implementation when negotiation among stakeholders is required. Moreover, they are beneficial to the actors that are embedded in them, since they are good in conceiving new ideas and achieving the common objectives.

However, when cooperation is needed as a requirement for policy implementation, networks could act as an obstacle. Networks are not beneficial to the actors that are excluded. Therefore, it is important to recognize which individuals and groups are part of the network, and which are included or excluded from them. Networks may also impede democratic process, since they only serve some interest and not the aggregated interests: the common will (Kjaer, 2005).

In sum, the increasingly involvement of actors outside the government in policy making, stress the importance of network management in cases where decisions need to be made and actions require to be implemented.

2.3 Policy stability

I have referred to governance and networks as important concepts that are related to policy and policy making, but what exactly do we understand to be the relation between these concepts? Policy is an outcome of multilayered complex process in which many actors are present: politicians, pressure groups, civil servants, publicly employee's professionals; and even sometimes those who see themselves as the passive recipients of policy process (Hill, 2005).

Policy is not a concrete and specific phenomenon. Policy is expressed in terms of series of decisions that take place over a long period of time representing a dynamic process rather than a static one. It is important to mention that the study of policy is not only related to made decisions; non-decisions are also important in policy contexts (Hill, 2005).

Policy-making is a process involving a multitude of individual or collective public and private actors, *"which join together in order to reach a collectively binding agreement on a certain problem within a certain policy field in a predominantly informal way and on a central, non-hierarchical level"* (Börzel, 1997: 4).

According to Hall (1993), the process of policy-making pertains to three levels of policy: the overarching goals guiding policy in a particular field, the techniques or instruments tackling those goals, and the specific settings of these techniques. When policy remains unchanged, the latter variables, among others, are well-positioned and policymakers, as well as interest groups, either feel comfortable with them or do not have the ability to change them.

Therefore, policy paradigm states policy track providing a set of criteria for resisting some societal demands and accepting others. When policy-makers are embedded with a coherent policy paradigm, they are more likely to oppose to outside interests. If this is not the case, policymakers might be more vulnerable to societal pressure. In domains where policy is technically complex, policy paradigms can characterized policy-making processes (Hall, 1993).

Policy stability can be understood as an unchanged system that has been established for a certain period of time because there are groups of actors who share an interest in maintaining the status quo, resisting attempts to change prevailing policies and policy programmes (Huitema & Meijerink, 2009). In this way, when a change in policy may have a direct impact on organizations, they could use resources to build barriers against possible alternations.

Insiders, who are important organizations with political power that can influence the overall economy, play an important role in policy stability. Because the overall performance of the economy is likely to influence politicians' popularity, and hence its chances of re-election, governments sometimes create the conditions under which insiders can improve their situation (Carter, 2007).

Another factor that could influence decision making in favor of insiders is the state's institutional structure. Important companies that perform activities under specific ministries' control, most of the time are supported by the correspondent ministry (Carter, 2007). This constitutes venues in which organizations can influence decision making. For example, energy companies are supported by the energy ministry that could defend the sector by influencing the decisions that the ministry of environment may make.

Powerful groups that want to keep new issues off the agenda, to maintain policy stability, have strategies to do so. They maintain images and symbols that help keep people's eyes on the dominant policy paradigm or on the contrary put people's attention to other issues trying to hide new developments (Birkland, 2001). They could also simply remain invisible, hidden and unquestioned so that no one will doubt, or even think about, the regime or possible new issues to change it.

Unlike insiders, outsiders are groups that do not form part of the corridors of power. They are hardly consulted by the government and have difficulty raising issues to the agenda. In most cases, the environmentalists have played the role of outsiders rather than insiders (Carter, 2007). Local people are often positioned on the same side, especially when they are not organized into a strong and visible collective.

Besides the actions of insiders and outsiders, non-decision making could act as a mechanism to maintain the status quo, keeping certain issues off the agenda (Carter, 2007). Sometimes paradigms are maintained because actors in society know how to deal with them and they take the stability as a fact without being questioned. A new decision could break this stability in which most actors feel comfortable with. In these cases, for instance, non decision is a strategy that policy makers can use to avoid the risk of introducing ideas that they are not sure how they will develop among society.

Finally, policy paradigms could be maintained using some of the strategies commonly employed to obtain policy change (described in the next section) like dissemination of ideas, building coalitions and controlling the various decision-making forums. Nevertheless, it has been found that they also question scientists,

destroy evidence of culpability or do not provide the appropriate budget for public participation processes (Huitema & Meijerink, 2009).

Even though actors in power have resources to keep issues off the agenda, some changes could break the barrier to bring policy change. This does not mean that power actors have lost the battle, since they can still block policy implementation (Huitema & Meijerink, 2009).

2.4 Policy change

Although groups in power have strategies to maintain issues on the agenda and others off the agenda, changes in policy are still possible. It is important to note that policy change does not only refer to the substance of policy. New approaches to the policy process such as involving more stakeholders and seeking collaborative forms of policy making can also be part of a policy change.

Policy change can be obtained as a result of policy learning defined as a deliberate attempt to adjust the goals or techniques of policy in the light of past experiences and new information. In other words, changes in policy at time-1 are sometimes a response to policy at time-0 (Hall, 1993).

There are different types of policy learning that vary according to the magnitude of the policy change involved. The levels range from a simple change entailing continuous adjustments over time in incremental steps, to discontinuous change involving more radical transformations in the basic instruments of policy or its goals.

As was mentioned in Section 2.3, there are three different levels of policy; therefore Hall (1993) identified three different forms to achieve policy change. The first-order learning has the features of incrementalism, referring to the change in instrument settings due to acquired experience and new knowledge. The second-order learning moves one step beyond developing new policy instruments or altering the existing ones. These two forms maintain the overall policy goals without challenging the terms of a given policy paradigm or pursuing a paradigm shift. In these cases, policy is a response to societal pressure where non state experts are mostly responsible for policy innovation and most of the learning process takes place inside the state itself.

Alternatively, the third-order learning refers to a paradigm shift changing the instruments and their settings, and the hierarchy of goals behind policy. It reflects a more radical change in the overarching terms of policy discourse. In this level,

experts are not essential in bringing change; rather politicians play an important role as well as the forces outside the state like media, outside interests, and contending political parties. Furthermore, anomalies in the development of the policy paradigm are also important; if the paradigm is not able to deal with them, policy can failure undermining its authority (Hall, 1993).

Changes in policies, regardless of the level of alteration, do not arise by themselves; instead they need to be influenced by actors who deliberately want to break the status quo. These persons or groups are capable of maneuvering strategies that could bring new issues on the agenda. For example, frame events and take advantage of disasters are strategies that could be used to obtain policy change. The ones who motivate an idea to obtain change are called policy entrepreneurs.

2.4.1 Policy Entrepreneurship

Changes in policy are driven by human intervention. Policy entrepreneurs are a form of human agency that promotes policy change. Policy entrepreneurs are people who have the desire to significantly change current ways of doing things in their area of interest. They are willing to invest time, energy and money in order to achieve policy change. Furthermore, they make connections across disparate groups and engage with policymakers to achieve their objectives (Mintrom & Norman, 2009).

Policy entrepreneurs have the capabilities to present their arguments in the most appealing way catching policy makers' attention and willingness to make change. They demonstrate security, commitment and confidence in their own ideas, showing the strength that new issues need to be considered. Moreover, they are aware of contextual factors and actions surrounding them and how these actions are shaped by the context (Mintrom & Norman, 2009).

Policy entrepreneurs that want to promote new issues will have to fight for space on the policy agenda. In this case, political power is important, but sometimes is not enough. They need to take advantage of crisis that could prepare the ground for their issues to occupy a more prominent space on the agenda. Furthermore, they could successfully describe a problem and define the solutions to prevail in the policy debate (Birkland, 2001).

Individual policy entrepreneurs are recognized as persons who invest time, reputation and knowledge resources in a particular proposal for policy change. In addition, these policy agents have good networking skills and demonstrate perseverance. They can be found anywhere including governmental bureaucracies, political parties, NGOs, or expert communities (Huitema & Meijerink, 2009).

On the other hand, collective policy entrepreneurs are networks of individuals consisting of government agencies that create connections with NGOs, research groups and different levels and scales of decision-making. These networks are recognized for successfully challenging the status quo (Huitema & Meijerink, 2009).

The advantage of these networks is that members have different capacities and skills that help create different strategies to promote policy change. *“Where experts working at either governmental research institutes or universities have excellent possibilities to develop and test new ideas and approaches, senior policy advisors or politicians generally are in a better position to help to achieve the adoption of new policies”* (Huitema & Meijerink, 2009: 376).

Four characteristics of policy entrepreneurs are recognized by Mintrom & Norman (2009):

1. Displaying social acuity: policy entrepreneurs understand the ideas, motives, and concerns of others in their local policy context, exhibiting high levels of perceptiveness. Entrepreneurs communicate well with people involved in the same issues and are well connected in the policy context of concern. They also engage in networks that can span different jurisdictions, increasing the likelihood of achieving success.
2. Defining problems: awareness and attention for some issues depend, to a certain extent, on how problems are described, contextualized and presented. Policy agents take advantage of opportunities to present evidence in ways that suggest a crisis is at hand. They also manage to emphasize failures of existing policy and to find support from actors that are not necessarily involved in the scope of the problem.
3. Building teams: entrepreneurs operate with groups of people with different knowledge and abilities. They recognize the importance of developing and working with coalitions to promote policy change. Agents are also in contact with networks that can complement each other in terms of knowledge and skills so as to support their initiatives.
4. Leading by example: policy agents not only have ideas and strategies to achieve policy change, but also execute it. Therefore, they engage with others to clearly demonstrate the feasibility of a policy proposal. Furthermore, they also make decisions that intend to reduce risk perception among decision makers. Finally, an important tactic is to make legislators focus on the consequences of inaction rather than consequences of actions.

Even though policy entrepreneurs seem to be easy to recognize, sometimes it can be difficult, especially when the transition is perceived as successful. In these cases, individuals and powerful organizations could claim responsibility for the success. This is especially true when they have promotional skills like playing the media. Therefore, those who do not display these skills would be perceived as less important to a particular transition (Huitema & Meijerink, 2009).

In sum, as Huitema & Meijerink (2009: 385) pointed out:

“Successful entrepreneurs are good networkers, boundary-spanners or brokers who aim to create institutions for experimenting and social learning using a large arsenal of strategies. As agents of change, policy entrepreneurs use tactics designed to gain access to decision-making, manipulate venues, frame crises, build strategic alliances to pool resources and frame narratives to attract support. To effect change in policies and institutions, entrepreneurs need also to be able to play a political power game. Transition management is not only creative and cooperative, but also adversarial and political.”

2.4.2 Strategies for affecting multilevel governance processes

In this section, the strategies that individuals and groups can use to influence public policy in multilevel decision processes are presented. This list of strategies was developed by Huitema and Meijerink (2009) and has proven to be an effective heuristic to study the way actors influence policy processes related to natural resource management. These strategies described below are often not practiced in an isolated way, but in combination, and they are not necessarily used in the order that is presented below.

2.4.2.1 The development of ideas

This strategy refers to the development of an idea that can lead to successive action. Policy change or policy block requires an idea to provide the direction in which the situation needs to evolve. Such ideas will coalesce around certain ‘frames’, ‘images’, ‘long term visions’ or ‘story lines’ (Schön & Rein, 1994; Baumgartner & Jones, 2002; Loorbach & Rotmans, 2004; Van der Brugge et al., 2005; Hajer, 1995).

It is important to distinguish between ideas and interests. Ideas can be in opposition to interests. Furthermore, ideas could shape interests, and interests could be a motivating factor behind the entertainment and development of ideas. The link between these two may vary according to the scene in which they are

presented. For example, market and political forums tolerate open expression of interests; conversely, science forums are embedded in ideas rather than interest-based arguments. Therefore, it is important to recognize whether a proposal is an idea or is a representation of interests (Bouma & Huitema, 2009).

Because governmental organizations usually constrain the actions of their employees, the individuals and organizations that promote innovative ideas and extreme visions of alternative futures are often not part of the government or may be on its fringes. Therefore, the ones outside the government are the ones who usually think up more radical changes (Huitema & Meijerink, 2009).

In multilevel governance systems, sometimes ideas are born in developed countries and start scaling up and down to different governance levels. They become embedded in international institutions (donor organizations) where they are promoted and sometimes required or demanded to developing countries, as conditions of funding (Bouma & Huitema, 2009). These conditions usually demand deep changes in governance regimes, including privatization, decentralization and participatory governance (Huitema & Meijerink, 2009).

Huitema & Meijerink (2009) have found, in several case studies, that when top-down transitions occur, the barrier would not be changing policy on paper, but rather the implementation of such innovative ideas. Therefore, the effectiveness or appropriateness of these enforced forms is doubtful, since they could be resisted or hijacked.

Like with donor organizations, individual and collective policy entrepreneurs promote a particular set of ideas and undertake efforts to realize these ideas. However, they possess different resources to influence decision-making. For instance, individual or collective entrepreneurs need to bring attention and attract supporters to their ideas using small scale pilot projects to demonstrate the feasibility and benefits of their new ideas. These bottom-up induced transitions use the media to disseminate their ideas and to change people's perceptions (Huitema & Meijerink, 2009).

Finally, most transitions occur in combination of bottom-up and top-down strategies demonstrating that most of the times hierarchy does play a role in realizing policy change. Their importance depends mostly on the particular institutional context or opportunity structure (Huitema & Meijerink, 2009).

2.4.2.2 Building coalitions

For a successful realization of ideas, sometimes communities need organization and collaboration to form coalitions and alliances for gaining support and increasing power. Coalition-building is about agreements on how to use the resources of the actors involved to achieve common goals (Sabatier, 1993). Coalition building is often a delicate task as it entails sensitive issues such as differences of opinion and power asymmetries among actors (Bouma & Huitema, 2009).

There are three potential bases for coalition building. First, advocacy coalitions can be formed by those who share similarities in belief system, shared ideological meanings or value preferences known, as 'ways of knowing'. These could be a common disciplinary background or convictions unrelated to any particular discipline (Ingram & Lejano, 2009). Another type of coalition is strategic alliances between parties who share policy objectives and interests instead of sharing the same beliefs, values or meanings. Finally, resource dependence creates the third coalition type where the members are merely dependent on each other for realizing their diverging objectives. In this last case, policy transition results from the successful achievement of the separate goals of the coalition members (Huitema & Meijerink, 2009).

Storylines or narratives are also very important in attracting new actors that feel affinity to new ways of understanding (Hajer, 1995). Discursive strategies may also be used strategically by both advocates of change and those who try to block it. Adherence to such discursive strategies or standard narratives creates an important strategy for individuals aiming for policy changes. Therefore, policy entrepreneurs would try to fit new policy ideas into existing narratives or, conversely, appeal to such narratives to oppose change (Lebel et al, 2009).

When value priorities and policy objectives differ among coalition-building parties, negotiation and compromise processes are needed. Therefore, policy entrepreneurs must be good advocates of specific concepts and be able to communicate their ideas in an appealing and convincing way. Furthermore, they need to negotiate and cooperate within networks who have different ideas, or interests, but who possess crucial resources (Huitema & Meijerink, 2009).

2.4.2.3 Recognize and exploit windows of opportunity

Coalitions need opportunities to launch their ideas. Kingdon's concept of 'window of opportunity' helps to explain why sometimes coalitions and new ideas are not enough to achieve policy change. Windows of opportunity refer to the convergence of well defined problems, viable solutions and appropriate political

conditions. This intersection creates the perfect conditions for realizing effective policy change.

Those who successfully influence governance processes must anticipate, recognize, and exploit windows (Huitema & Meijerink, 2009). In fact, they often prepare their ideas and solutions before the windows open, and once such windows open, they will present their solutions as fitting with the problem that was recognized. Those promoting specific solutions need to be proactive in approaching the media (Bouma & Huitema, 2009).

There are different types of windows in governance process; however, the most common distinction is between problem windows and political windows. The former emerge when much attention from the public and media is given to a certain issue (focusing events). The latter occurs basically in political context, such as elections and changes in political leadership (Bouma & Huitema, 2009).

Regarding problem windows, an adequate social construction of problems could be decisive in bringing policy change. Symbols and images that provoke media are means to build the problem in a specific way. Furthermore, revealed change in indicators could call the attention to new problems or pay greater attention to existing ones. This strategy focuses on showing that the situation is becoming worse or could become worse if no action is taken. Hence, interested groups must cleverly define the problem and should seek to convince others that it is real and severe impacts could be produced (Birkland, 2001).

In the same line, policy entrepreneurs have to successfully exploit crises. Here, framing of crises and events is a crucial strategy for achieving policy change (Birkland, 1997; Boin et al., 2009). In addition, media coverage of environmental emergencies and special events raises public awareness, thus increasing political attention. *“Both public and political attention to an issue offers opportunities for policy entrepreneurs to gain support for new insights, policy proposals and policy directions”* (Huitema & Meijerink, 2009:381).

Finally, political windows are opportunities offered by political changes to gain attention for new ideas and to secure a place for new concerns on the political agenda. Such windows range from regime change to the change of an elected government or a single minister. Additionally, traditional party politics, general elections and changes of national governments could be important factors (Huitema & Meijerink, 2009).

2.4.2.4 Recognize, exploit, create and/or manipulate the multiple venues in modern societies

The expression 'venue shopping' refers to the different scenes and settings in which organizations or individuals can find an opportunity to influence decision making processes. Government levels including litigating bodies, courts, local, regional, national and even international level, are examples of venues. Therefore, local initiatives could be linked to policy arenas on a higher level, if they would want to be scaled up (Huitema & Meijerink, 2009). Another venue that can be exploited to influence decision processes is media, through which events and crisis can be highlighted in order to catch attention of policy makers.

Furthermore, international organizations form venues where entrepreneurs find space to persuade national government's decisions by idea development (like the case of donor organizations). In addition, international treaties or agreements offer forums for the presentation of ideas, including courts that oversee the implementation of those treaties (Huitema & Meijerink, 2009).

Venue manipulation refers to the maneuvering of decision-making rules or the composition of its forum. Policy actors who engage in venue manipulation aim to have their own ideas or their coalition represented, where policy-relevant issues are discussed and to bypass those who resist the change proposed (Huitema & Meijerink, 2009).

For achieving this goal, they must identify the best venue in which they can raise their issues, paying attention to the participants that are also involved in that particular topic. In this route, the individual strategies of change agents and the institutional structures within which policies are prepared, are crucial (Baumgartner & Jones, 1991).

Examples of venue manipulation are: NGO gaining a seat on an influential national task forces, moving a specific department from one ministry to another, and installing an interdisciplinary advisory commission to break up policy monopoly (Huitema & Meijerink, 2009).

Actors can also try to exploit multiple venues analyzing which could be the most favorable one. It is important to be opened to present issues in venues that were not originally intended, because sometimes a change in the nature of the venue is a good opportunity for the adoption of new ideas (Bouma & Huitema, 2009).

In sum, there are strategies that actors aiming to influence governance processes could use. Some of them are exploitation of multiple venues, directed use of various levels of governance as multiple venues, and use venues outside

government like media and research. Finally, the manipulation of composition and of decision-making rules and the creation of new venues are also well recognized strategies (Bouma & Huitema, 2009).

2.4.2.5 Orchestrate and manage networks

Networks differ from coalitions in that they are a much broader set of actors engaged in a certain policy domain. Recalling networks in Section 3.2, community networks can be strong and well positioned in a certain policy regime. If policy change ought to be achieved, it will be necessary to manipulate, alter and even break up this network. For this, actions such as encouraging discussions and activities should be taken within the networks so as to change the members' viewpoint. Alternatively, stimulation of the influx of new members sometimes will be necessary to alter the networks (Kickert, Klijn & Koppenjan, 1997; Meier & O'Toole, 2001; Klijn, 1996; 2005).

Two characteristics of networks are recognized. When members of a network present a sense of community, thus sharing views and feeling strongly linked, they are described as 'bonding' capital networks. On the other hand, when networks form 'nodes' in a web of relations and are capable of connecting to the decision process at other geographical scales or jurisdictional levels, they are known as 'bridging' capital networks (Putnam, 1994; Rydin & Falleth, 2006).

Bonding capital is useful in situations where coordinated action is needed to build trust to overcome collective action dilemmas (Rydin & Falleth, 2006). However, sometimes they can become particularly narrow-minded in their viewpoint, refusing to think about issues from another perspective. Consequently, they resist interactions with other networks.

Effective bridging actions require bonding networks. In this case, the network representative must consolidate a concrete knowledge of the network's views and speak on behalf of all members to representatives of other networks. All members need to trust the representative so that the decisions made by him/her will be accepted and followed up (Bouma & Huitema, 2009).

The construction of these networks requires engagement with other networks thus developing common problem frames and a sense of mutuality between them. This could be used to develop new ideas to promote policy change. Networks should also invest time, human and financial resources in contacts to develop a bridging capability that helps them interact in multilevel governance settings (Rydin & Falleth, 2006).

Finally, there is another type of network named Shadow networks. They operate outside the formal circuits of power and are considered key for carrying out policy change. They are more important in the phase of idea development since their 'shadow position' gives them greater flexibility in advancing their ideas and in showing the applicability of them through pilot projects. These innovations require the translation to a new policy; therefore, the interaction with formal policy network and politicians, former politicians, and high-ranked bureaucrats is crucial (Huitema & Meijerink, 2009).

2.5 Summary

Governance refers to the replacement of hierarchical central steering in one specific direction to a more participatory way of decision making. In this recent process, non state actors become essential, not only to participate and promote new ideas to policies, but also to facilitate their implementation. In this approach, since decision making is distributed and disperse, networks of state and non-state actors become important. They can facilitate or obstruct a change in rules depending if the policy issue affects or benefits the members of the network.

Because the power now is distributed among different actors, policy may enter in a stage of stability that could be difficult to break. If the policy context benefits powerful networks, obstacles will have to be overcome in order to bring change. Therefore, policy stability occurs when there is a group or network of actors that are interested in maintaining the status quo and uses their shared resources to keep new issues off the agenda.

However, policy stability can be interrupted when people or organizations smartly exploit windows of opportunity. These policy entrepreneurs are sensitive to foresee possible opportunities to bring change. They are able to frame special events and disasters, to exploit changes in politics, to adequately sell their ideas and to coalesce with the ones that could help them achieve their objectives.

Five strategies have been identified to bring policy change. Developing new ideas and networking with actors involve in the policy context of interest, are strategies that policy entrepreneurs could use to attain change. Moreover, building coalitions to become a powerful group and recognizing venues that could be exploited or manipulated are other strategies that could be employed. Finally, policy entrepreneurs should be able to recognize and exploit windows of opportunity that set the ideal conditions to pursue a change in policy.

In the next chapter I will identify the terms and strategies mentioned above in the case study area. Therefore, I will analyze the policy stability in the Terraba Sierpe

National Wetland. Then, I will refer to the decision that could bring policy change and who is promoting it. Finally, while telling the process of policy transition in the wetland, the strategies to achieve policy change will be described and analyzed.

3 METHODOLOGY

The reconstruction of the decision process about the management plan that I present here is largely based on interviews. I conducted thirty-one interviews to people and organizations from the national, regional and local level. Important international NGOs that have worked in the area were also interviewed. The list of interviewees can be found in Annex II.

I have undertaken every effort to get a complete picture of all actors involved in the decision process. Using the snowball method, I started my set of interviews by approaching two well-known actors in the area, Alvaro Ugalde and Azur Moulaert. They both maintain close relations with multiple players that were important for my study. Therefore, they gave me more contacts and recommendations that helped me to communicate with the next interviewees. In addition, I also identified key players on the basis of the formal records that were kept in relation to the management plan (ELAP-UCI, 2005) which listed the people they interviewed with their contact information.

During the interviews, I used a document that briefly described my background, the project's context, the research questions I was seeking to answer and the interview questions (see Annex I). The questions were divided in five main topics that are components of the policy change theory: development of new ideas, coalition building, networking, venues creation and exploitation and recognition of windows of opportunity.

At the National level, I interviewed people that worked for the Conservation Area of Osa, the National System of Conservation Areas, international and NGOs (TNC, Marviva, Conservation International, Neotropica Foundation) and people that were part of the facilitator group of the management plan. I also planned some meetings with people from the public environmental organizations and NGOs in order to complement and clarify my background information.

At the regional level, I met with people working for organizations that are present in Osa. I interviewed the director of Acosa, the director of the Osa's protected Areas and the Osa's mayor, among others. At the local level, I talked mostly to people living or working inside and in the surroundings of the wetland, like fishermen, piangüeros and rice farmers.

All interviews were recorded and notes from the field were taken during the interviews. I have transcribed and analyzed all interviews on the same day that

they were taken and used my work on that to think of other useful and clarifying questions for next interviewees.

Besides the interviews, I conducted a literature research concerning the wetland's legal and institutional framework. Additionally, I compiled all studies that have been done on the wetland. The most important source of my findings was the wetland's management plan itself, with its complementary studies.

4 ANALYSIS OF THE CASE STUDY AREA

4.1 Terraba Sierpe National Wetland- a supposedly protected area.

The Terraba Sierpe National Wetland is a protected wild area that represents the biggest mangrove zone in Costa Rica and on the Pacific line of Central America, accounting for 43% of the 39.000 Ha of mangrove in Costa Rica (Cordero Pérez & Solano Castro, 2000). It is located in the Osa Conservation Area on the South Pacific coast of Costa Rica. The wetland is formed by the Sierpe and Terraba rivers and it is delimited by the Fila Costeña area and the mountainous region of Osa.

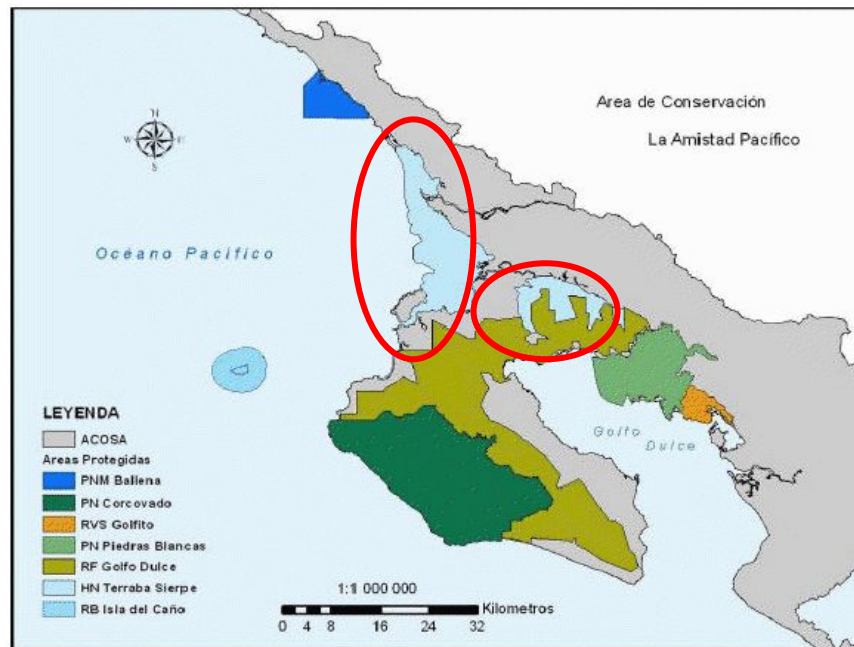


Figure 1: Osa's protected areas (ELAP-UCI, 2008)

This wetland is characterized by its great variety of mangrove forest. Different fish species, migratory birds, and reptiles like boas, crocodiles, caimans and turtles, are the most representative fauna found in the wetland. Although the mammals are not living in the area permanently, it is possible to see monkeys, tiger cats and raccoons, among others (ELAP-UCI, 2007).

Moreover, the wetland provides important ecosystem services such as water provider, sediment and nutrient retention, recreation, tourism, water quality maintenance, flood protection and research and education (Cordero Pérez & Solano Castro, 2000).

The wetland has always been inhabited by people that benefit from these ecosystem services. The human activities that take place are mostly small scale subsistence and commercial fishing, agriculture, cattle farming and shell extraction (piangüa). The wetland canals are also used as means of transportation to other protected areas like Corcovado and Isla del Caño. Therefore, tourism is an activity that has been on the rise over the last decades.

The threats of the wetland come from the overuse of natural resources from the people that live from mangrove, mollusks and fish. Another source of resource exploitation comes from the private sector like shrimp farming, rice crops and cattle farming specially those in the surrounding area of the wetland. All these threats produce area losses, deforestation, agrochemical pollution and soil erosion, among others (Oduber, 2010).

Due to its ecological importance and the threats that have been taking place in this area, it was important to protect it by means of regulations. Therefore, this area has been protected by legislation since 1977 when it was first declared a forest reserve². Later, in 1994 the Terraba Sierpe Forest Reserve changed its classification to National Wetland³. One year after, with the fundamental environmental law⁴, the wetland became part of the seven management categories⁵ created for the wild protected areas. Finally, in 1995 due to its important ecological features, the national wetland was declared a Ramsar site.

The activities that are allowed in the wetland are those that the legal framework explicitly established. In this sense, the forestry law⁶ for example, established that logging and use of forest like mangroves is forbidden in forest reserves. Furthermore, since 2005 the fishing and aquaculture law⁷ prohibited the commercial and recreational fishing with all types of techniques in the river opening and estuaries.

However, despite of having some National regulations, there is an inefficient mechanism for implementing and enforcing them in the wetland. Additionally, it is not entirely clear in one law, decree or document all the uses and activities that users can or cannot carry out in the national wetland. Only a few are regulated and they are spread in the National legal framework and jurisprudence. Unfortunately, it is not like the case of other protected areas, like national parks

² Executive Decree No. 7210-A of 1977.

³ Executive Decree No. 22993 of 1994- MINEREM

⁴ Fundamental environmental law N° 7554 of 1995

⁵ Together with forest reserves, protected zones, National Parks, biological reserves, wild life National refuges and Natural monuments

⁶ Forestry law No. 7575 Article 1

⁷ Fishing and aquaculture law No. 8436 of 2005

and biological reserves, which are ruled by a particular law that explicitly establishes the allowed and forbidden activities.

“In this moment there is legal ambiguity in the wetland; it is not clear what can be done or what cannot be done. The decree only says the limits and it doesn’t say anything about the use of resources inside the wetland. This should be clear for everyone so that everybody knows what is applied, who applies it and why”⁸.

“Is evident the unawareness from the members of the regional council and from all the other actors about the laws that regulate the protection and uses of resources in the wetland”. (Oduber, 2010: 11)

Regarding the institutional⁹ framework, in 1998 the biodiversity law¹⁰ created a new institutional environmental structure organizing the territory in conservation areas. In this way, the National System of Conservation Areas (SINAC) was created, consisting of eleven Conservation Areas delimited administratively throughout the country. Each Conservation Area is responsible for the wild protected areas inside their jurisdiction. Inside this institutional framework the wetland is located in the Conservation Area of Osa (ACOSA).

This institutional context has different levels of decentralization and deconcentration for decision making. Therefore, the Ministry of Environment and Energy represents the top of the hierarchy, followed by the National Council of Conservation and SINAC direction. These organizations give global strategies and official policies for all protected areas in Costa Rica. Acosa regional Council¹¹ is followed by Acosa direction and they are responsible for specific regulations regarding the Conservation Area. Finally, the wetland’s administrator and the local council¹² are the last part of the pyramid and are in charge of local strategies that are set in the management plan (ELAP-UCI, 2007).

Despite having clearly defined the structure of the protected areas in the national, regional and local levels, the wetland is a protected area that lacks governmental institutional presence. Alvaro Ugalde¹³ confirmed that SINAC has never been present in the area and as a result nobody is available for talking about, bargaining

⁸ Interview José Oduber Rivera. Iniciativas para el Desarrollo Humano Sostenible (IDEHS). San José- Costa Rica, June 2010.

⁹ Institutions in this study will be referred as governmental organizations and not the broader scope usually used in political science which include norms, rules and legislation.

¹⁰ Biodiversity law No. 7788 of 1998.

¹¹ This council is integrated by NGOs, community organizations, municipality and public institutions in the area. Among its responsibilities, the regional council has to approve the strategies, politics and plans of the conservation area. It also has to define specific issues regarding the protected areas in the conservation area and present them to the national council for its approval.

¹² The local council is not compulsory for all protected areas; it will be created in those areas in which is necessary by agreement in the Regional Council.

¹³ Interview Álvaro Ugalde. Ex Acosa Director. San José- Costa Rica, April 2010

for or controlling issues related to the area. Moreover, there is not a clear policy that states how the area is going to be ruled; therefore, the ones ruling are the local people (fishermen, piangueros¹⁴) and big companies surrounding the wetland (palm and rice agriculture).

*"This wetland is the most abandoned protected area of Osa; it is the ugly duck of Acosa. In Costa Rica, the wetlands have not received the appropriate support (..) The wetland does not seem to be a part of the Conservation Area of Osa. Now there is only one person working for the wetland"*¹⁵.

*"Minae does not have any resources to take care of the mangroves; they do not even have a boat to look after it"*¹⁶

The lack of institutions in the wetland might mainly be due to two reasons. First, institutions are not used to deal with people living inside protected areas¹⁷ especially when they are poor. In these situations it is difficult to enforce legislation because the personal agenda prevails over the others. As a result, institutions are not well prepared to work efficiently in the area so as to avoid socio environmental conflicts.

Second, Osa has famous national parks that catch not only national and international attention, but also the regional and local institution's attention. As a result, the funds that have been offered from different organizations and the budget of the Conservation Area (for education, materials, human resources, among others) are invested mostly in these National Parks:

*"Little attention has been paid to the wetland. People, including institutions, have their "baby" which is Corcovado and Isla del Cano. The wetland is odd because it is not beautiful and it has people living there"*¹⁸.

*"Unlike Corcovado, the wetland has always been abandoned; it does not present the usual attractiveness for tourism, the water is brown and it is not easy to be there because of mosquitoes. It is also difficult to walk and it is very expensive because you need to transport in boats"*¹⁹.

¹⁴ People who collect mollusks that live in the mangroves (Piangua)

¹⁵ Interview Jaime Gonzalez. Wetland's Manager. Palmar Norte-Costa Rica, May 2010.

¹⁶ Interview Jorge Uribe. Owner of the restaurant "Las Vegas". Sierpe-Costa Rica, May, 2010.

¹⁷ Interview Edgar Castillo. Member of the management plan facilitator group. San José- Costa Rica, June 2010.

¹⁸ Interview Edgar Castillo. Member of the management plan facilitator group. San José- Costa Rica, June 2010.

¹⁹ Interview Claudine Sierra. Member of the management plan facilitator group. San José- Costa Rica, April 2010.

“Within Acosa, the wetland has been catching the attention of others, but in the past the attention was given to Corcovado, Marino Ballenas National Park and other protected areas. The wetland has always been left apart.”²⁰

In sum, *“although protected by laws and administered by MINAE/SINAC, this coast systems lack the appropriate management and protection”* (Oduber, 2010: 3). As Alvaro Ugalde stated, the wetland, despite being the biggest in the country, is a “paper area” that nobody owns. There is a lack of integral management and there is not a stable policy regarding the protected area. Furthermore, there are not enough human resources, institutions or money to promote an adequate management.

This situation demonstrates a lack of governance in the wetland since the rules are not clear. Although many institutions and organizations are present, their role and actions are neither coordinated among them nor with the community. They do not have common goals and no one is steering a common direction.

Therefore, it is crucial to have *“institutional presence, not only from the control perspective, but also from the point of view of collaboration, support, bargaining, information and communication”²¹*.

The ambiguous legal framework and the lacking presence of institutions in this protected area could be alleviated with a management plan. *“A protected area cannot be managed if there is no document that specifies the different uses and the way the activities should be carried out”²²*. The plan is a strategic document that plans, guides and regulates actions and activities for the medium-long term. *“For a protected area, its management plan is the equivalent of a law or regulation (...) A well-structured management plan defines the way in which the environmental conflicts related to land use are going to be managed. It also creates opportunities for the community in the influenced area to develop their productive activities in a sustainable and responsible way”²³*.

Regarding the management plan historical legal framework, the plan was mentioned in the fundamental environmental law (1995). This law established the requirement of a management plan whenever there will be any delimitation of marine areas, coasts and wetlands as protected zones.

Moreover, the Ramsar Convention specifies that wetlands should be administered according to a management plan so as to adopt proper actions that respect their

²⁰ Interview Etilma Morales. Director of Acosa. Golfito- Costa Rica, May 2010.

²¹ Interview José Oduber Rivera. Iniciativas para el Desarrollo Humano Sostenible (IDEHS). San José- Costa Rica, June 2010.

²² Interview Miguel Madrigal. Director of Osa’s protected Areas. Palmar Norte-Costa Rica, May 2010.

²³ Neotropica Foundation press release. ‘Acosa approved unanimously the management plan of the Terraba Sierpe National Wetland’. San Jose- Costa Rica. In <http://www.neotropica.org/leer.php/3256761>. Accessed on August 2010.

ecological characteristics²⁴. Also, in 2002 a policy document (SINAC, 2002) reconfirmed that protected areas administration should be supported by planning processes like the management plan. More recently, the fishing and aquaculture law (2005) establishes a management plan in order to set the restrictions for fishing activity in areas like wetlands.

The wetland's management plan was developed in 2007, even though it was mentioned years before in national laws. Also, its importance was recognized since the wetland is inhabited and lacks legal and institutional framework. Why then was it only until 2007 that the management plan arrived to the area? If nobody cares about the wetland, including those who declared it, how did the idea of the management plan come up? Who promoted this idea? What caught their attention?

The management plan is the center of my research, considering it as the change in policy needed to break the institutional and legal stability that has prevailed in the wetland for the last years. *"Initiation or blockage of change requires at least the germ of an idea to provide the direction in which the situation needs to evolve"* (Bouma & Huitema, 2009: 26).

The management plan is expected to bring governance to the wetland since institutional and community management and coordination is one of the core actions of the plan. Actually the process of designing the management plan demonstrates the shift of power from the central control to other non-state actors.

In this way, the planning group of the plan comprised local community, national organizations, experts and other stakeholders interested in the wetland. This group was in charge of designing the rules and actions that should operate in the wetland.

"Exercise of methodological facilitation, technical development and realization of agreements for the administration and management of the ASP²⁵, which involves various actors with an impact on these areas, such as local leaders, local community groups, NGOs, financial, technical and scientific organizations, academic and research institutions, municipalities and governmental institutions" (Oduber, 2008)

Also, the rules will be intended to be the same for everybody and known by all actors. Moreover, interactions between local community, institutions and international organizations are expected for its implementation. Finally, the

²⁴ Resolution VIII.14. New Guidelines for management planning for Ramsar sites and other wetlands. In http://www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-documents-resol-resolution-viii-14-new/main/ramsar/1-31-107%5E21393_4000_0_. Accessed on June 2010.

²⁵ Area Silvestre Protegida (Protected wild area)

management plan aspires for the participation on decision making of the local community and non state actors' in the Management Unit²⁶. In this venue, there is not supposed to be central steering in one particular direction, on the contrary, power and control will be a shared task between institutions and non-state actors in the decision making process.

In this study, I will focus on the evolution of the management plan in the wetland, giving special attention to the tactics used to achieve its final approval. In this way, I will identify the actors that fought for the plan's approval as well as the coalitions and networks used as means to achieve policy change. Also, I will analyze whether venues were used for shopping or were manipulated or created in order to gain attention from those that can make the change.

The different strategies will be identified in the description of the management plan process. In this way, this section will be divided in four parts starting with the setting up of the management plan, where I will explain how the idea arose. I will then focus on a transition period that I will refer to as the incubation period. In this section, the emergence of focusing events, networks and international attention will prepare the ground for the policy change that will be described in the next part. Finally, I will describe how the strategies used in the previous sections could be used to promote the management plan implementation.

²⁶ The Management Unit is the one that will implement the management plan actions. As it is created, it guarantees the participation of every actor related to the wetland.

4.2 Setting up the management plan

In the wetland, the ones that have been more interested in its management and protection have been the international NGOs and universities, rather than the environmental institutions. *“The ones that have given us more attention are the international NGOs rather than the national institutions. We are known actors in the wetland due to international assistance”²⁷.*

For the nongovernmental organizations, the wetland is an interesting place for many reasons. First of all, the wetland is the biggest mangrove area in Costa Rica offering many ecosystem services that contributes to people’s welfare. It is also considered a vulnerable area since some activities taking place in the surroundings are threatening the ecosystem. All these factors helped to declare it as a Ramsar site. International organizations are more interested in vulnerable ecosystems especially if they are recognized internationally as an important area.

Second, the global discourse of sustainable development has caught international organization’s attention in the wetland. Sustainable development is based in three interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars – economic development, social development and environmental protection – at the local, national, regional and global levels²⁸. Therefore, NGOs, which are mostly funded by international foundations, are more interested in the interrelation between the biodiversity and local community and how they can be mutually improved. By doing this, they will achieve a double objective of the global discourse. If poverty is embedded in this relationship, then the area becomes even more attractive.

“After weapons and drug trafficking, poverty together with natural resources is the best business”²⁹.

Finally, I have found that another factor that raises attention to the wetland at the international level is from a political and institutional viewpoint. NGOs feel attracted to work in the wetland since it is known that little attention has been paid to it. In this way, there are many things to be done and everything that they would do will be visible and will become important.

²⁷ Interview Yahaira Ramirez. President of the Association of small scale rice farmers. Ciudad Cortes-Costa Rica, May 2010.

²⁸ Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development. Johannesburg, South Africa, September 2002. In http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/documents/WSSD_POI_PD/English/POI_PD.htm. Accessed on July, 2010.

²⁹ Interview Edgar Castillo. Member of the management plan facilitator group. San José- Costa Rica, June 2010.

“Investing in the wetland is not as sure o guaranteed as investing in the protection of species in National Parks. Moreover, it is difficult due to the conflicts with the local people. However, these conditions make any change visible”³⁰

Due to its international recognition, the wetland attracts funds to make the management plan. However, although the necessity of a management plan for protected areas was recognized years ago, only in 2007 it did become a reality. In this year, the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation³¹ had economical resources that needed to be spent before the end of the year. This foundation contacted Acosa in order to prepare proposals for using the resources that the foundation had.

Acosa, TNC, and other organizations selected the strategic areas and the potential projects that could be financed with the offered capital. The management plans for all of Osa’s protected areas were included as one of the projects to be funded and were opportunely chosen by the Moore Foundation as the ideal in which to invest.

Even though the wetland’s management plan was part of the legal framework and its importance was repeatedly highlighted, it came into reality due to a combination of three factors: international resources, good networking among the foundation, TNC and Acosa, and the foundation selection among five other projects. If only one of these factors would not have been there in that specific moment, the wetland probably would not have had a management plan.

Once the management plans for all Osa’s protected areas were chosen, TNC received the resources from the Moore Foundation. Then, through a semi open process, they invited more than seven organizations to present their proposals for the management plan. The selection process was made by TNC and Acosa, focusing on the proposals’ technical and financial aspects. The organization that best adapted to their demands was the Latin-American School for Protected Areas (ELAP³²).

Thus, *“the management plan for the HNTS (Terraba Sierpe National Wetland) was created through a participatory process facilitated by the Latin-American School for Protected Areas (ELAP), University for International Cooperation (UCI), with funds*

³⁰ Interview Claudine Sierra. Member of the management plan facilitator group. San José- Costa Rica, April 2010.

³¹ The Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation was established in September 2000 seeking to improve the quality of life for future generations. The Foundation operates proactively in three specific areas of focus – environmental conservation, science, and the San Francisco Bay Area. In <http://www.moore.org/> . Accessed on 14th July 2010.

³² Escuela Latinoamericana de Áreas Protegidas

administered by The Nature Conservancy (TNC), from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation. All this at the request of ACOSA”³³

Therefore, an *“alliance was formed between ELAP, TNC and Osa’s Conservation Area (Acosa) to elaborate, through a participatory process, six management plans to guide and regulate the management actions in the wild protected areas”* (ELAP-UCI, 2008: 10). ELAP was responsible for the coordination and execution of the plan; TNC was in charge of the budget administration and technical support; and Acosa gave technical support, supervision and logistical support (Oduber, 2008).

This coalition of actors created a venue (planning group) where professional facilitators (facilitator group), governmental organizations and local community participated and worked together to discuss and agree on important issues regarding the wetland’s management.

The environmental institution (Acosa) was responsible for calling the members of the planning group. Although, the facilitator group suggested to include actors surrounding the wetland (big businesses threatening the wetland), the scope of the environmental institution was narrower, inviting only people living and/or working in the wetland. In the end they sort of manipulated the venue in which decisions were going to be made. It was more convenient to deal only with people living inside the wetland than deal with many other powerful sectors that could hamper the management plan design and approval.

The planning group then comprised people and groups with different socio-cultural realities, interests, values and beliefs. Fishermen, piangueros, small farmers, Acosa and some other external experts (like ICE³⁴) were the permanent members of the group. Since some members shared interests but clashed with other’s interests, some people from the same sector formed coalitions in order to gain more power and attention for their ideas.

For instance, the group of fishermen was *“the most proactive sector, also because is the one that has been more affected”³⁵*. Moreover, *“fishermen are a strong group, they have more contacts with Incopesca³⁶ and with NGOs and they were the group that participate the most”³⁷*. In general, they fought for their permits in order to be legal. They also

³³ Neotropica Foundation press release. ‘Acosa approved unanimously the management plan of the Terraba Sierpe National Wetland’. San Jose- Costa Rica. In <http://www.neotropica.org/leer.php/3256761>. Accessed on August 2010.

³⁴ Instituto Costarricense de Electricidad (Costa Rican’s Electricity Institute)

³⁵ Interview José Oduber Rivera. Iniciativas para el Desarrollo Humano Sostenible (IDEHS). San José - Costa Rica, June 2010.

³⁶ Incopesca is the Costa Rican Institute of Fishing and Aquaculture

³⁷ Interview Boris Gamboa y Juan Pablo Méndez. ICE’s Environmental Management Department. Buenos Aires- Costa Rica, May 2010.

wanted to prevent the entrance and work of outsiders³⁸ in the wetland. Interestingly, they were also vying for the protection of the area³⁹.

“We suggest adopting the wetland as a natural fish farming place. Therefore, we proposed the creation of a marine reserve in which only small fishermen groups can fish out of the wetland and near the coast”⁴⁰.

Even though important actors participated in the meetings, there were some sectors that did not attend. Osa’s municipality, for instance, was one of the important actors that was not present in the planning group. Despite being invited to participate several times, they did not attend. Their participation was very important since they could be a big constraint in the plan’s implementation. Therefore, the strategy used by the environmental institution was venue shopping, since they were trying to involve an actor from another institutional sector that could hamper their interest of implementing the management plan.

It is believed that they did not participate because the management plan was seen as a threat to Osa’s development. For instance, the management plan could threaten the construction’s concessions that the mayor is responsible for in the wetland’s surrounding areas⁴¹.

“The management plan decided to put protected areas and make a good environmental management of constructions, but the mayor had a negative reaction towards this”⁴². The mayor’s concern was “What is questioned is that through the management plan, they wanted to expand the protected areas”⁴³. If protected areas are expanded, development can not take place.

This attitude from the major is seen as a strategy to oppose policy change. He is not interested in a plan that would restrict his work or his mandate scope. This will be determinant in the context of the management plan approval.

Regardless some participation and representativeness problems, the management plan was finally completed. The next step was to divulge it in a mechanism called “Open House” in which the information obtained during the planning workshops was presented to the people who did not participate in the planning group. In this venue, members of the planning group, for example fishermen, explained with

³⁸ People that do not live in the wetland but take advantage of it exploiting its resources.

³⁹ Interview Boris Gamboa y Juan Pablo Méndez. ICE’s Environmental Management Area. Buenos Aires- Costa Rica, May 2010.

⁴⁰ Interview Rafael Elizondo. President of the Association of fishermen from Ciudad Cortes- Asopesca. Ciudad Cortes-Costa Rica, May 2010.

⁴¹ Interview Edgar Castillo. Member of the management plan facilitator group. San José- Costa Rica, June 2010.

⁴² Interview Claudine Sierra. Member of the management plan facilitator group. San José- Costa Rica, April 2010.

⁴³ Interview Alberto Cole. Mayor of Osa. Ciudad Cortes-Costa Rica, May 2010.

their own words and methods, the actions that were included in the management plan. People freely and willingly attended to analyze information, brought their ideas and recommendations (Oduber, 2008).

After the management plan design finalized, the venue that was created for this purpose (planning group) was not a venue anymore, but it became a network of contacts. In this way, people from different sectors knew each other and know when, how and who to contact. They became visible for NGOs and international and governmental institutions. Therefore, whenever a project is going to take place in the area, the sectors and individuals who participated in the planning group are the first ones to be called. *“Asopesca is recognized even in other countries. This is because we participated in the management plan”*⁴⁴.

This network could be very important and strategic for the management plan’s implementation. Since they were the ones who proposed many of the actions that are established, it is believed that they will be the interested ones in implementing them. This will be further discussed in the next chapter.

In summation, coalition building and venue creation were the strategies used to design and finish the management plan. This policy, regardless the attempts to block it, was finally completed after two years of meetings, discussions and bargaining. However, two more years passed before the management plan was approved by the regional council in May 2010. What happened during this time? Why did it take so long to approve it? Was somebody deliberately blocking or pressing for its approval? What was the window that finally led to the plan’s approval?

The next section describes the events and circumstances present in the transition period that were crucial for the approval of the management plan. In this section, projects like an airport, a dam building, drug trafficking and tourism development shape the context in which the management plan will develop afterwards. Also, environmental networks, coalitions and international attention influence the final decision.

4.3 Incubation period: using and framing the window of opportunity

This transition period was determinant in the wetland’s management plan approval. In this period of time, important threats to the wetland became influential. *“The main challenges that the wetland face are related to intensive tourism*

⁴⁴ Interview Rafael Elizondo. President of the Association of fishermen from Ciudad Cortes- Asopesca. Ciudad Cortes-Costa Rica, May 2010.

activities, real state projects, an international airport and the Diquís Hydroelectric Project"⁴⁵. These external projects and events developing in the area influenced the creation of two opposing coalitions, a development and an environmental coalition. The former, supported by the mayor, was opposing to the management plan whereas the latter, mainly supported by Acosa, was promoting it.

"The circumstances that have been around the wetland are the ones that have led to the creation of alliances or coalitions in favor or against the wetland. There is a community that defends the wetland, but there are other developers who want to defend their own interests".⁴⁶

In these two years, Alberto Cole, Osa's mayor, gained support for his interests through coalition building with developers, fishermen and piangueros. These groups at the same time started to distrust the environmental institution due to internal problems. Alberto Cole was also supporting constructions that were threatening the wetland and an international airport that was going to be built very close to the wetland.

Consequently, environmental institutions were becoming weak compared to the municipality, the biggest opponent to the management plan. However, environmental NGOs started to invest and give more attention to the wetland. Moreover, environmental networks started to create awareness among people, institutions and international organizations. These circumstances helped to the creation of the environmental coalition.

The situation described above clearly shows that during this period the two opposing coalitions leaded by the municipality and the environmental institution, were more distant than ever. Who will set the pace in the end? What will be the strategies used for each coalition to gain support from people and other institutions? Who will support which coalition?

Before starting to differentiate between the two coalitions it is important to highlight that they both use the same discourse, the one of sustainable development, to gain support for their own interests. This discourse, that is paradigmatic in Costa Rica, is ambiguous and vague enough to allow space for many interpretations. Thus, each coalition was attracting people to support their interest by interpreting the same discourse in a specific way.

⁴⁵ Neotropica Foundation press release. 'Acosa approved unanimously the management plan of the Terraba Sierpe National Wetland'. San Jose- Costa Rica. In <http://www.neotropica.org/leer.php/3256761>. Accessed on August 2010.

⁴⁶ Interview Ana Gloria Guzman. Specialist in Conservation, TNC. San Jose-Costa Rica, May 2010.

Alberto Cole said: *“Conservation for conservation is altruistic, but the people are starving. Both things can be achieved at the same time. There must be equilibrium between both; we need to protect people and the environment”*⁴⁷

Miguel Madrigal, Director of Osa’s protected areas, indicated: *“The management plan process has been interrupted by politicians that want to block the process that really wants to benefit the community and the ecosystems. Acosa is not valuing the resources for the institution itself, but for the community’s welfare”*⁴⁸

What are Acosa’s and the municipality’s real interests hidden in the discourse?

The municipality is interested in the region’s development and in its people’s protection. In this sense, they promote construction such as schools, roads and in general infrastructure that will increase its popular image. Also, it is in charge of providing building concessions thus receiving taxes for each allowance given. It was also found that the municipality employees can have a raise in their wages depending on the municipality’s income that is dependent on the taxes received⁴⁹.

All these issues were arguments for the mayor to be against the management plan. Part of it was because the management plan considered Fila Costeña⁵⁰ a complementary area⁵¹ to the wetland (Green area on the map). This means that studies are going to be made in order to analyze whether that area should be considered as protected or not. For every area of Osa that is protected, the municipality will have less and less space for development, therefore less income.

⁴⁷ Interview Alberto Cole. Mayor of Osa. Ciudad Cortes-Costa Rica, May 2010.

⁴⁸ Interview Miguel Madrigal. Director of Osa’s protected Areas. Palmar Norte-Costa Rica, May 2010.

⁴⁹ Interview Jorge Lobo. University of Costa Rica. San José - Costa Rica, June 2010.

⁵⁰ A forest area (not protected) that connects the Marino Ballena’s National Park with the Terraba Sierpe National Wetland. Because of its beautiful view over the ocean, many constructions have been taking place. According to Jorge Lobo, UCR teacher, some of the impacts that have been produced are sedimentation, more soil impermeabilization and materials extraction in rivers. Specifically, sedimentation is a problem that has affected the coral reefs in the area and the National Wetland.

⁵¹ Areas that attract attention for having direct ecological relation with other areas; special resources that complement the biodiversity incorporated in the protected areas systems; or because they provide services that are vital for the future of the region. They have been mapped as priority areas for conservation efforts.

Mapa 5. Humedal Nacional Terraba Sierpe, áreas complementarias

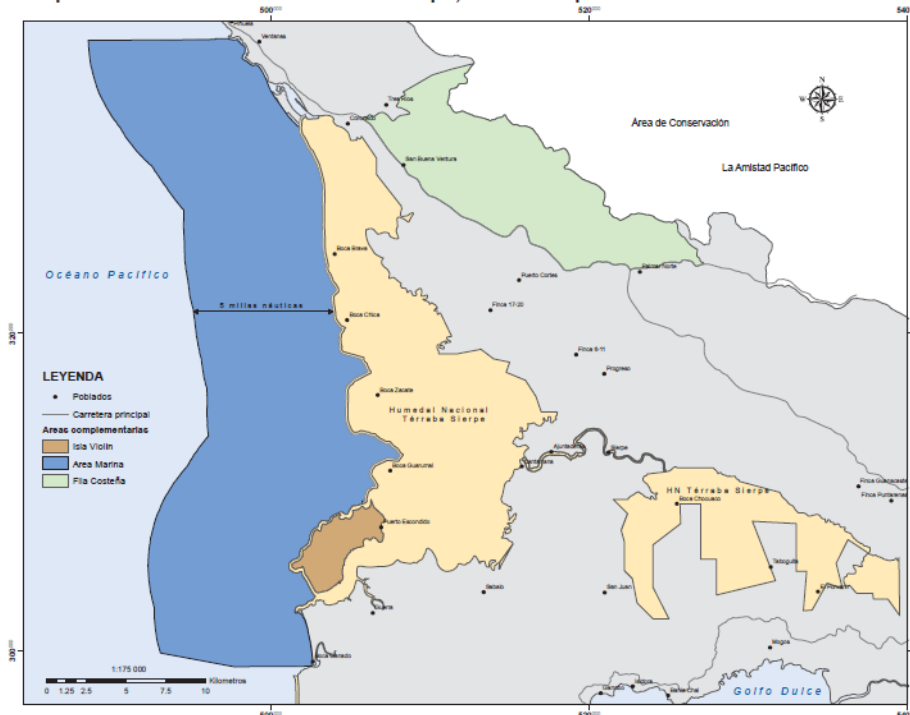


Figure 2: Terraba Sierpe National Wetland and its complementary areas. (ELAP-UCI, 2008)

On the other hand, the environmental institution’s interests are to conserve, control and prevent any damage to their protected areas. Therefore, they are driving and supporting the management plan and are forewarned of every person that opposes it. Their interest in supporting people in the wetland is to gain support in the activities that should and should not take place in the protected area.

In this period some projects and events became very important for the region and specifically for the wetland and the coalitions formed. An international airport, a hydroelectric plant, tourism development in the region and drugs trafficking are considered focusing events and projects that constitute the base of a problem window of opportunity.

Although these projects and events started to develop before this period, and are still developing, in the “incubation period” they were strategically used and framed by the coalitions to sell their discourses to gain supporters for their interests. Since the management plan’s support or opposition is involved in the interests of the coalitions, the power that each one gets in this period is crucial for the approval of the management plan.

4.3.1 Airport

One of the focusing projects is an international airport for the southern area of Costa Rica that is planned to be built between Sierpe and Palmar, which are close areas to the wetland. This project aims to attract thousands of tourists to enjoy the biodiversity that exists in the region as well as to become an important source of employment.



Figure 3: Potential location for the airport (Image made by Ecoticos⁵²)

The international airport is framed by the mayor as a necessity for the region to gain development, more jobs and a big opportunity to show Osa to the world. Most of the people in the wetland have the same belief and are biased by this idea, perceiving it as a development opportunity. They do not link the airport impacts to their personal lives; they only foresee employment.

*"I have heard about the airport, but we will not be affected since the airport is there and we are here. We will benefit because if many tourists arrive the development will increase"*⁵³.

*"The airport will be beneficial because it will bring tourists. Also, it will enhance the transportation means to San Jose and will bring jobs opportunity. The Southern area of Costa Rica is abandoned and an airport could change this situation"*⁵⁴.

On its turn, the environmental coalition frames the project as one of the biggest threats to the wetland due to its proximity to the area. Environmental impacts⁵⁵

⁵² In <http://picasaweb.google.com/ecoticos/SierpeTerrabaCostaRica#5258862548738807666>
Accessed on June, 2010.

⁵³ Interview Daguela Pineda. Terraba Sierpe National Wetland inhabitant. Sierpe-Costa Rica, April 2010.

⁵⁴ Interview Urias Porras. Member of Coopemangle. Coronado- Costa Rica, May 2010.

during the construction and operation are used to sell and promote their ideas and interests. In this way, this event has raised the importance of the wetland and its vulnerability. This, at the same time, has been used by this coalition as an argument to oppose to the airport.

“To oppose to the airport, the best argument is the wetland. To resist something, you need arguments and one natural argument is the wetland. It is the same with the dam. These two have raised the best characteristics of the wetland to give some opposition to decisions. The wetland has been used to oppose mega projects”⁵⁶.

This focusing event has also been used to justify new projects and investments in the area. Due to the threat that it represents to the wetland, NGOs and Universities are more interested in working on it to prevent or reduce the environmental impact that could be caused.

Media has been used as a venue and has played an important role in this project. The airport has been sold in the news like a project that will be beneficial for Costa Rica and for the region, bringing tourism and development to the area. This framing has been supporting the development coalition. However, the mangroves are somewhat mentioned in the news, raising its attention to the ones that are interested in this area.

“Gustavo González, General Airport Coordinator, assured that this Project intends to attract thousands of European tourists to enjoy the vegetation and the virgin jungle that exist in Osa”⁵⁷

“Carlos Centeno, President of the Osa’s tourism chamber, considered that the future airport will increase the hotel development in the region and will be a source for new jobs and a factor to reduce the immigration from the rural areas to the city”⁵⁸

“The airport is a development expectative for the region. The important thing is to prepare ourselves to take advantage of the great number of tourists. Bolívar Mora Herrera”⁵⁹

“Other neighbors claim that the airport project will bring problems to the Sierpe river mangroves”⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Among others, the most important impacts identified are the increase in tourism (without capacity to host), noise that may affect fauna in the wetland and impacts to local community.

⁵⁶ Interview Etilma Morales. Director of Acosa. Golfito- Costa Rica, May 2010.

⁵⁷ La Nacion.com. Saturday 15th April, 2006. “Airport in the South will be built in Sierpe Valley”

⁵⁸ Ibid

⁵⁹ La Nacion.com. Sunday 26th November, 2006. “Southern Cantons give 600 million colones for the airport”

⁶⁰ La Nacion.com. Thursday 7th of June, 2007 “Neighbors fear evacuation due to the construction of the airport”

This enabled ICE to sell the dam to the media in a way that prevents opposition from people and organizations, in more support of the municipality coalition. An example of how the media report on the dam:

“ICE chose the plant in order to replace the ambitious hydroelectric project Boruca because it has less environmental and social impacts. The Boruca’s idea was born in the 1960s. However, that project was going to force 2.500 people to mobilize, whereas El Diquis only 1.100. The Boruca reservoir would have covered 12.500 hectares, from which a third of a portion was indigenous territory. El Diquis, on the other side, floods 6.800 hectares, of which only 12% are indigenous.”⁶⁴

However, the media has also paid attention to the relationship between the dam and the wetland, increasing the awareness of the protected area:

“Another disadvantage of the construction born in the 60’s is that it retained almost all Grande de Térraba river affecting the Térraba-Sierpe wetland. This does not mean that El Diquis will not affect the wetland, but the ICE experts foresee that the effect will be less.”⁶⁵

Like the airport, the media has played an important role in framing the hydroelectric plant in favor of both coalitions, but supporting more the development alliance. However, media while reporting the project, also mention the wetland as an influenced area giving it importance and increasing its awareness among public and national and international organizations.

4.3.3 Tourism development

Another event that was crucial and perhaps more influential in separating the two coalitions, is the tourism constructions that have been taking place in Osa, more specifically in the Fila Costeña (See Figure 2). The mayor has supported the constructions for foreigners attracting more tourism to the area. At the same time the environmentalists have raised the attention of the environmental problems caused with the constructions.

“The wetland has been experiencing many threats. These have been changing according to the events that show up. Ten years ago, the biggest fear was the forestry plans and before that was the gold extraction. Today the biggest threat is the unsustainable and disorganized tourism that occupies huge spaces for little use and for people that are not even from Costa Rica”⁶⁶

⁶⁴ La Nacion.com. Sunday 2st December 2008. “Diquis substitutes the great project Boruca”

⁶⁵ La Nacion.com. Sunday 2nd December 2008. “Diquis substitutes the great project Boruca”

⁶⁶ Interview Etilma Morales. Director of Acosa. Golfito-Costa Rica, May 2010.

The University of Costa Rica, which can be considered to be part of the environmental coalition, applying the venue shopping strategy, raised the attention of the Environmental Tribunal⁶⁷ who closed several illegal constructions in the area. In the meantime, the environmentalists used media to raise the attention about the environmental damage that was produced and to affect the mayor's image. In this sense, the headlines of La Nacion in that period referred to the event as:

*"Constructions destroy forests and fauna in Osa"*⁶⁸.

*"The regeneration could take 40 years"*⁶⁹

*"University of Costa Rica proves coral damage"*⁷⁰

*"Osa's mayor defends the development of the area"*⁷¹.

Additionally, an informal network composed of universities, NGOs and individual environmentalists was created to share information and opinions of that particular situation. They proposed a motion to stop the constructions in the area and present it to the municipality. In order to create pressure to its endorsement, members of the network went to the municipality manifesting its importance.

However, other actions took place in the same period that strengthens the development coalition. For instance, fishermen and piangüeros from the wetland had conflicts⁷² with environmental institutions. Additionally, there was a plan to expand the Marino Ballena's National Park affecting fishermen of the area. The mayor then decided to join together developers, fishermen and piangüeros forming an alliance in order to fight against the environmental coalition.

"Three bargaining groups were formed. One fighting for the Fila Costeña which was supported by the mayor and developers. Another group was fighting for the no extension of

⁶⁷ Decentralized body of the Ministry of Environment and Energy, with exclusive competence and independence in the performance of its powers. Its judgment exhausts the administrative venue and its resolutions would be of strict and mandatory compliance.

⁶⁸ La Nacion.com. Sunday 19th of October, 2008.

⁶⁹ Ibid

⁷⁰ Ibid

⁷¹ Ibid

⁷² Acosa confiscated their fishing equipment because they were fishing without permits in an area that was supposed to be only for small scale fishing. This area was included in the management plan as a complementary area; however they could not fish there because the management plan was not approved by then.

*Marino Ballena's National Park and the fishermen from the wetland were fighting for the damage that Acosa was doing to them"*⁷³

The mayor's strategy was then coalition building and venue shopping. In this sense, he took advantage of a forum that the government was organizing in the area aiming to discuss environmental threats in Osa. Due to the presence of important stakeholders (NGOs, experts and national governmental officials), the mayor used his coalition to protest against some actions taken that hampered the region's development. Moreover, he organized a manifestation in front of the Legislative Assembly so that fishermen and developers were heard by the national government.

In this event, fishermen and piangüeros were used to show crowd, but they were not really fighting for the same objective of developers and the mayor. However, the mayor framed the problem in a way that would be attractive to fishermen and piangüeros. Fishermen felt that they were supported by the mayor. *"Alberto Cole helped the fishermen to have their fishing equipment back; he has supported the people"*⁷⁴

The framing of the development of tourism in Fila Costeña by each coalition helped them to become more powerful than they were before. The development coalition, comprised only by developers and the mayor, gained new actors such as fishermen and piangüeros, important players in the wetland. Alternatively, the environmental coalition become stronger using the media and sharing and expressing information as well as opinions through an informal network.

4.3.4 Drug trafficking

Finally, a focusing event that has gained much attention is drug tracking. This activity is developing in the wetland due to the lack of control and monitoring of illegal actions. *"Drug trafficking is a latent threat and it is a fact in the wetland; the combination of little surveillance and the canals network, makes it simpler to hide people and drugs"*⁷⁵. Also the wetland is a strategic place for the drug dealers due to its location and vulnerable people living in it. In this latter regard, it has been found that fishermen have collaborated with drug dealers providing gasoline⁷⁶.

⁷³ Interview Rafael Elizondo. President of the Association of fishermen from Ciudad Cortes- Asopesca. Ciudad Cortes-Costa Rica, May 2010.

⁷⁴ Interview Rafael Elizondo. President of the Association of fishermen from Ciudad Cortes- Asopesca. Ciudad Cortes-Costa Rica, May 2010.

⁷⁵ Interview to Jorge Uribe conducted by Jorge Oduer for the document: Integración de insumos de las reuniones. Bluemoon Fund and Conservation International

⁷⁶ Interview Gerardo Zamora. Incopecsa. Golfito-Costa Rica, May 2010.

This is a threat that has been presented in the media almost on a daily basis. News on the television and in the newspaper has raised the awareness of the problem.

“The wetland is known internationally for drug trafficking. The wetland has been taken as a storage site for drugs. The news shows once or twice per day this problem and the wetland is always mentioned”⁷⁷. There is even a whole report called “The Mafia Mangroves” that makes the wetland’s problems and vulnerabilities visible. Therefore, this event has put in evidence the lack of institutions in the area raising environmental institutions’ concerns.

4.3.5 Outcomes of the incubation period

Three important factors can be highlighted from the events and projects discussed above. First, the media has played an important role because it is used as a venue to attract people, institutions and international organizations’ attention to the wetland. Therefore, whenever the wetland is studied or investments are made, the management plan becomes increasingly important.

“There have been threats to the wetland, for example the hydroelectric project and the airport (..). Every time that there is a threat, the wetland becomes important in the discussions”⁷⁸

“Everybody who wants to protect the wetland is interested in the management plan approval and even more so when the airport comes into play; here, people who did not have the wetland on their minds, started to have it. The same goes with ICE. Cooperatives and the tourism sector will turn on the alarms”⁷⁹

Second, these events have led to the formation and activation of environmental networks that attract more and new actors to the environmental coalition. These networks bring important dynamics to the area and help to frame the issues to gain support.

For example, there was a network called Osa Thoughts that was created during the period when the management plan was developed, but is not active anymore. Here I interpret it as an issue network because they formed with the purpose of sharing information, highlighting news and events that were considered threats to Osa’s environment. They communicated with each other through e-mail and they barely met to discuss issues. Another environmentalist’s network, that can be considered the continuity of Osa Thoughts, is called Pro Osa Group, whose members communicate by e-mail sharing information about threats to Osa.

⁷⁷ Interview Jorge Uribe. Owner of the restaurant “Las Vegas”. Sierpe-Costa Rica, May, 2010.

⁷⁸ Interview Miguel Madrigal. Director of Osa’s protected Areas. Palmar Norte-Costa Rica, May 2010.

⁷⁹ Interview Edgar Castillo. Member of the management plan facilitator group. San José- Costa Rica, June 2010.

Pro Osa Group's director has built a network that congregates all actors concerning the Osa's environmental issues. This network is called the Citizen Intelligence Network. It maintains a web page where news, articles, documents, reports and opinions regarding the region are shown. A radio station named Rainforest Radio⁸⁰, discussing environmental concerns, is also part of this network. Through Intelligence Network, knowledge is shared among the members and therefore, awareness of problems is created.

Another example is Ecoticos which is a coalition of Universities and NGOs⁸¹ that was formed by networking strategy. Azur Moulaert⁸², director of Ecoticos, decided to form a group of experts using his field experiences and professional relationships. He contacted the people with different expertise that would be useful for the project that he had in mind. He presented the project to Blue Moon Fund, successfully finding resources to put it in practice.

The third factor highlighted from the focusing events is the increase of projects in the wetland attracted by the threats that are taking place. In this case, the intertwined relationship between media and networks has helped to bring national and international attention to the wetland. This is important because whenever new projects arrive, they face the lack of legal and institutional framework enhancing the management plan's importance.

An example of the latter situation is Ecoticos that used issue linkage between the major threats of the wetland and their project in the area:

"The protected area of the "Humedal Nacional Térraba-Sierpe" (TS) ... one of Costa Rica's best preserved wilderness areas, (...) is a keystone ecosystem within this complex system (...) The government however is currently planning to build the largest airport in Central America, capable of landing 2000 tourists a day; (...) and a massive power plant looms on the horizon.

Should Costa Rica build a world-class airport in the TS region? Will the airport prove an economic success in today's precarious global economy? What will be the ecological and social costs? What are the alternatives?" (Moulaert, 2009).

Ecoticos made an Ecosystem Services Green Map which captures the good, the bad, the ugly and the possible actions that can take place in the wetland. Also,

⁸⁰ <http://rainforestradio.com/>

⁸¹ University of Vermont (UVM), Neotropica Foundation, Latin-American School for Protected Areas (ELAP), University of Costa Rica (UCR) and Earth Economics

⁸² Research Associate, Community Development & Applied Economics of University of Vermont. Member of the Gund Institute for Ecological Economics.

they did an Ecosystem Services Valuation Exercise and a Multi-criteria Analysis showing different scenarios including activities and projects that could take place in the wetland in the coming years. As will be explained later, this coalition and the outcomes of its projects are decisive for the management plan's approval.

In sum, during the incubation period the management plan was finished but the conditions by which it can be approved were not the ideal. The biggest opponents to the management plan, the development coalition, increased their power using focusing events to form a strong coalition with developers, fishermen and piangüeros. Also, they used the airport and the hydroelectric plant to sell the idea that Osa needs development for the welfare of the people. On the other hand, the environmental coalition also got stronger due to the threats that the focusing events were presenting to the wetland. Therefore, new networks were created, media was successfully exploited and new investments came to the wetland.

The outcomes of this period are determinant to the approval of the management plan. In the next section I will describe how the coalitions, the networks and the new projects influenced the final decision. It will be explained who won in the end and the strategies used to support their interests to achieve victory.

4.4 Exploitation of window of opportunity

During the incubation period, opposing coalitions became stronger, each one attracting more and more actors to gain support. How then was the management plan approved? Who influenced the final decision?

Even though the opposing coalitions were more distant in this period, we have to remember that they use the same discourse. Therefore, in the end they both seem to be interested in people's welfare and environmental protection. Who or what makes them finally act under the same discourse, putting away their own interests?

The coalition of universities and NGOs comprising the Ecoticos project was one of the key actors that made the interests of each coalition start to act consistently with the discourse. Part of the project of Ecoticos was to promote the creation of alternative and sustainable economic activities among the local people. In doing this, they needed to have the rules in the wetland clear, knowing which activity could be developed where. Therefore, they were interested in the approval of the management plan, a clear legal and institutional framework for everybody.

They did networking with crucial actors to show the potential of the wetland, the importance of their ecosystem services and the relevance of unifying development and protection in one single goal. In this way, they started to gain local people's support, local government trust and environmental institutions credibility.

*"To influence decisions, you need to influence three levels of governance: show your credibility and respect to the government, establish relations with the ones in charge of the regional management, and establish relationships with the community."*⁸³

While all this work and networking was developing in the wetland, the management plan was waiting to be approved in the regional council⁸⁴. The mayor is part of this council and this explains why the management plan waited so long before its sanction.

However, in the regional council assembly in April 2010, the members agreed on discussing the wetland's management plan. In this setting, the two opposing

⁸³ Interview Bernardo Aguilar. Director of Neotropica Foundation. San José- Costa Rica, June 2010.

⁸⁴ Once the plan has been prepared by the planning group, it must be approved by the regional council and then by national council

coalitions were present. *“There are two coalitions clearly identified, the mayor and the Acosa position. These two provide contrary arguments that affect governability”*⁸⁵.

In that venue, they both called representatives of their coalitions to express their opinions regarding the management plan. On the one hand, Etilma Morales (Acosa’s Director) invited the Neotropica Foundation representing Ecoticos and José Oduber representing Conservation International. On the other hand, Alberto Cole (Osa’s mayor) invited fishermen and piangüeros taking advantage of the coalition that he had built in past events.

Fishermen and piangüeros claimed the lack of services and the low quality of life in the wetland. Moreover, they stated that some issues discussed in the planning group meetings were not considered in the final document and that fishing equipment decommission continues in the wetland. The mayor claimed that key actors did not participate in the planning group (Oduber, 2010) and that the expansion of protected areas is not helping the development of Osa.

The environmental coalition defended its position stating that the national legal framework is the one that rules, hence some of the ideas raised by fishermen about the wetland’s management cannot be accepted for being against existing laws. They also emphasized the importance of the activities considered in the plan as they intend to decrease people’s vulnerability. Regarding the participation, they made clear that, although some actors did not participate, the plan considers its activities and intend to take them into account in decisions and also control them (Oduber, 2010).

In the discussion, the environmental coalition had stronger arguments than the development coalition. Not only because of the answers they gave to the opposing arguments, but also because they based their arguments in the outcomes of important research projects made in the wetland. These projects conducted by Ecoticos and José Oduber showed the relevance of the management plan for the people and for the environment.

On the one hand, Ecoticos with their project of Ecosystem Services Valuation assessed the impacts of development in the Osa peninsula. *“Results from the valuation, if incorporated into social, legal, and economic institutions, will supply a common basis to assess economic development schemes and their impacts upon local ecosystems that provide valuable economic benefits”* (Moulaert, 2009)

The results of the ESV were used in workshops to create a list of possible indicators and processes to be validated by stakeholders. This was used to create a diverse

⁸⁵ Interview José Oduber Rivera. Iniciativas para el Desarrollo Humano Sostenible (IDEHS). San José - Costa Rica, June 2010.

range of potential development scenarios for a qualitative analysis through Multi Criteria Analysis exercises. The combination of projects such as the international airport, the hydroelectric plant, the tourism development and the management plan created the different scenarios. Stakeholders were asked to quantitatively grade each scenario considering their preferences and their desire for the future of the area. The outcomes of this activity showed that in general all stakeholders highly graded those scenarios that include the management plan.

*"One of the most relevant results (...) of the Multi Criteria Analysis workshops was the communities' preference for scenarios where the Management Plan was involved"*⁸⁶.

José Oduber, on the other hand, made an analysis of the management plan process called "Systematization of the process of Osa's protected areas' management plans". In this study, he analyzed secondary information (management plans and other documents) and primary information given through interviews by members of the management plan's planning groups among other important players. The objective of the assessment was to identify key issues regarding the development of the management plans so as to use them in their implementation.

Some of the assessment outcomes indicated that key players' participation and representativeness of some sectors were not what was expected. *"The absence of all or part of key stakeholders is regrettable, for example, shrimp farmers, stockbreeder, rice farmers, Incopesca and municipalities. Being a highly participatory, dynamic and adaptable method the contribution of these actors was missed, and in some cases was "an important void.""* (Oduber, 2008). Nevertheless, he believed that these elements were not sufficiently inadequate to stop the management plan's approval.

*"My conclusions were taken out of context by Alberto Cole, trying to harm and delegitimize the management plan, as always. There was a feeling that he might use these results in the regional council to try to block the management plan approval"*⁸⁷. This is the reason why he was invited by Etilma, in order to clarify the outcomes of his research and the way they should be interpreted.

After having discussed all arguments from both coalitions' representatives, the ones presented by the environmental experts could not be contradicted by the mayor. *"The mayor proposed the motion to accept the management plan because he faced an indefensible situation in the Regional Council. Qualitative data were presented*

⁸⁶ Neotropica Foundation press release. 'Acosa approved unanimously the management plan of the Terraba Sierpe National Wetland'. San Jose- Costa Rica. In <http://www.neotropica.org/leer.php/3256761>. Accessed on August 2010.

⁸⁷ Interview José Oduber Rivera. Iniciativas para el Desarrollo Humano Sostenible (IDEHS). San José - Costa Rica, June 2010.

demonstrating the people's preferences towards development options that included the management plan. He has political intelligence, he supports popular visions"⁸⁸.

The mayoral elections coming in December 2010 might have influenced the mayor's decision as well. He does not want to do something that could harm his popular image. Since the projects gave evidence of the people's will, he better join to this coalition rather than lose votes for being the only one opposing to the management plan.

The description of these discussions reveal how different events and circumstances that were created over time, came together in order to achieve the environmental coalition's goal. The problems of the wetland were plainly defined and framed; the solutions were identified and the right political conditions finally were set. The combination of all these streams in one particular moment opened a window resulting in the management plan's endorsement.

*"This decision of the Acosa's Regional Council is extremely important because it gives a framework that enables us to decide the compatible activities and to strengthen the HNTS (Terraba Sierpe National Wetland)"*⁸⁹

4.5 Summary

The adoption of the management plan is the policy change that has been analyzed here as a case study decision making in vulnerable areas. Because the wetland is not attractive and is an uncommon protected area for having inhabitants, little institutional attention has been paid to it. However, international organizations have been in charge of bringing resources, ideas and projects like the management plan in order to support protection of the wetland.

A coalition between the environmental institution, an NGO and an international expert body, made possible the management plan realization. This coalition created the planning group as a venue to design the management plan with collaboration of all interested actors. In this venue, different sector groups came together. For instance, fishermen and piangüeros formed a coalition inside the venue to defend their interests that were somewhat threaten by the actions included in the management plan. The municipality's interests were also threatened; however its strategy to oppose to the management plan was not to participate in the venue. From this moment, the creation of two opposing

⁸⁸ Interview Bernardo Aguilar. Director of Neotropica Foundation. San José- Costa Rica, June 2010.

⁸⁹ Neotropica Foundation press release. 'Acosa approved unanimously the management plan of the Terraba Sierpe National Wetland'. San Jose- Costa Rica. In <http://www.neotropica.org/leer.php/3256761>. Accessed on August 2010.

coalitions was noticeable: the environmental coalition and the development coalition, supporting and opposing the management plan, respectively.

The incubation period, starting when the management plan finished until it was approved, set the pace for its future development. Here, focusing events and projects like a dam, an airport, drug trafficking and tourism constructions, were framed by the two opposing coalitions aiming for the attraction of more actors thus more support to their own interests. Furthermore, the external events helped to the creation of networks, new projects and new coalitions that strengthened both opposing coalitions. These strategies played an important role in the period of the plan's approval.

Finally, the two coalitions' leaders, the mayor and the Acosa's Director, came together in the Regional Council to discuss the management plan. In this venue both coalitions' leaders invited key actors from their group in order to defend their interests related to the plan. The outcomes of the projects developed in the wetland by international and national organizations (Ecoticos and José Oduber) were sufficient to demonstrate that the wetland and its people were in need of the management plan. Therefore, the arguments of the environmental coalition were stronger and more influential than those of the development coalition; crucial condition to the endorsement of the plan.

5 POLICY ON PAPER, WHAT IS NEXT?

In this study, I have analyzed the conditions of the wetland since the moment it was declared a protected area and how these conditions could change if the policy proposed is implemented. The policy in study is the management plan, which is expected to give the legal and institutional framework that is lacking in the wetland.

In the process of designing, making and approving the management plan, there are interests involved that have formed opposing coalitions. On the one hand, the environmentalists were struggling to give importance to the management plan so that it could be approved. On the other hand, the mayor wanted to prevent and stop environmentalist's actions so that he could continue gaining money out of concessions.

Finally, the environmentalists won the battle in the regional Council setting where the management plan was approved. However, policy change can be achieved on paper, but could be perfectly blocked on the ground. The implementation of the management plan could be seen as another opportunity for opponents to block change.

Therefore, in this section, I will discuss the major threats of the management plan implementation. Moreover, I will analyze which strategies for change could be used in order to achieve a successful implementation of the management plan. Although this study analyzed the policy change on paper, it will go further, giving recommendations to attain the change that the wetland and the people need to achieve nature's conservation and improve people's welfare.

Several of my interviewees indicated they are not optimistic about implementation of the plan. This is mainly for the following reasons. First, there still is no institutional presence in the wetland and some people do not think this will change. Second, there is no budget allocated for implementation of the management plan. Furthermore, the mayor continues to have important political power and a strong relationship with important leaders of crucial sectors (piangüeros and fishermen). Finally, some people believe that is going to be one of the many projects that in the end do not benefit local community.

*"The biggest problem of the wetland is not having the resources to make direct investment. It has a very complete document that says what should be done and how, but it does not have the money to put it to practice"*⁹⁰

⁹⁰Interview Miguel Madrigal. Director of Osa's protected Areas. Palmar Norte-Costa Rica, May 2010.

“Now the second phase (management plan) is coming. We were used to give information and to approve a management plan that they (Acosa) will not accomplish anyway (...) Fishermen have implemented everything of what is written in the management plan; now we need to wait and see if they (Acosa) will implement what they have promised, because up till now they haven’t done anything of what they said”⁹¹

“I regard the implementation of the management plan with skepticism. There has to be a change in the people and a radical change in attitudes and aptitudes from Acosa. There is a need for a stronger and multidisciplinary human team; there must be a local council to set the pace of the management plan. It has to be representative and reinforced. If they decide not to work with people in the wetland, nothing is going to be achieved”⁹²

However, some of the strategies used to gain policy change on paper could also be used to obtain an effective policy implementation. Therefore, new ideas are coming to the wetland, there are coalitions that can have a crucial role in the implementation and networks that can help raise wetland’s attention. New venues have been created and others can be manipulated in order to achieve change. New problem and political windows will arise. The combination of these factors and the way they will be used by actors will determine the degree of implementation or block of the management plan on the ground.

For example, regarding the development of new ideas strategy, the wetland has acquired international resources due to its ecological importance and its relation with poor people. However, the projects that have arisen are criticized because they are sporadic, do not belong to an integral and long-term strategy⁹³, do not benefit people directly and receive money that goes into hotels, cars and experts. Everybody agrees that if this money would have been spent in people, the situation in the wetland would have been much better.

“The money is spent on trips, consultants and cars, and in the end there is no added value to the community; there is nothing left”⁹⁴

“If at least some percentage of what they receive would have been spent in conservation actions, the story would be different, instead of making studies. Many of these studies are the same but financed by different people.”⁹⁵

⁹¹ Interview Rafael Elizondo. President of the Association of fishermen from Ciudad Cortes- Asopesca. Ciudad Cortes-Costa Rica, May 2010.

⁹² Interview Edgar Castillo. Member of the management plan facilitator group. San José- Costa Rica, June 2010.

⁹³ Interview Dagoberto Rodriguez. Mayor’s assessor in social issues. Palmar Sur- Costa Rica, May 2010.

⁹⁴ Interview Miguel Madrigal. Director of Osa’s protected Areas. Palmar Norte-Costa Rica, May 2010.

⁹⁵ Interview Alberto Cole. Mayor of Osa. Ciudad Cortes-Costa Rica, May 2010.

“It is worrying the short term projects because they have limited impact and do not contribute that much to the conservation strategies” (Oduber, 2010: 10).

However, the new ideas and projects⁹⁶ that have recently arrived to the wetland are based on the management plan. This is essential because they reinforce each other, giving more importance, and even driving, the management plan implementation. They also belong to an integral strategy that was designed with the community and institutions attending to the specific needs that have been recognized. They act under an accepted and clear framework that guides the pace of new actions.

One of the most important actors present in the wetland is the Blue Moon Fund. It has been financing initiatives in Costa Rica seeking for multi-sectorial integration of policies and water use practices, focusing mainly on the threats affecting the Terraba Sierpe Wetland. *“This organization could be a factor of change because it has money to invest in the wetland (...). They want to protect the area, but most importantly, they want to have political impact”⁹⁷. “Blue Moon doesn’t want to work in the wetland through independent projects that do not have impacts”⁹⁸*

Because Blue Moon is interested in continue investing in this area, they are analyzing the impact of their projects on the people and the wetland and the actions that should be supported by them. They want to integrate the results of their projects in a proposal of policies and practices that would be feasible to apply to the management of the wetland.

One of the conclusions of the assessment was that the projects, the policies and the practices in the wetland should be implemented under the framework of the management plan and should be incorporated in the objectives and actions of it. Therefore, it would be inappropriate to support actions in the wetland that do not focus on the fulfillment of the management plan objectives (Oduber, 2010).

Another conclusion was *“The progress and success of the initiatives (funded by Blue Moon Fund) hit the purposes of the management plan; therefore they are presented as opportunities to strengthen the management of the HNTS” (Oduber, 2010: 48).*

One of the projects that has been financed by Blue Moon Fund and has been very influential is Ecoticos. Its importance is not only due to their influence on the management plan approval, but on the outcomes of the project. Besides the

⁹⁶ Palm and rice project in the region of Osa (Rainforest Alliance); Ecoticos second phase and Sustainable economic activities for piangueros (University of Costa Rica).

⁹⁷ Interview Claudine Sierra. Member of the management plan facilitator group. San José- Costa Rica, April 2010.

⁹⁸ Interview José Oduber Rivera. Iniciativas para el Desarrollo Humano Sostenible (IDEHS). San José - Costa Rica, June 2010.

activities that they have conducted, they are also promoting new economic activities that fulfill the management plan requirements. By doing this, during their workshops, they illustrated to the people the management plan and stressed its importance. Local community were also trained and encouraged to create their own business plan about sustainable economic activities that are allowed in the wetland according to the management plan.

The first phase of Ecoticos will finish in August 2010; however a second phase of the project is planned. The implementation of this second part will be crucial for the success of the management plan in the wetland. Ecoticos' team can use their knowledge, reliability, good contacts and excellent relationships with local community and governmental institutions to promote the plan's implementation.

Another actor promoting new initiatives in the wetland is the University of Costa Rica. They are starting a communal project in the Terraba Sierpe Wetland aiming to work with piangüeros in the sustainable use of marine resources. The project is based on the management plan in order to better achieve its objectives and to act under the legal framework of the wetland.

If these projects want to succeed, they should be medium to long term and integrated with other initiatives or be a part of a general framework. Coalitions could play an important role in this part when different organizations come together to support Acosa and to work for the welfare of the community. This coalition could provide the support and accompaniment that the community needs to implement new practices included in the management plan.

Moreover, these projects and investments related to the management plan's implementation could work better if people are organized in the wetland.. If coalitions are formed among the people living there, they will be more visible to investors and others bringing the projects to the wetland. In this way, they will enjoy the benefits of the projects. Moreover, for the ones investing and promoting projects, it is easier to work with a group of people that is already formed and that knows their own abilities and inabilities to achieve certain goals.

Coalitions formed with the people in the wetland are also important because they will have more strength to influence the decision making process. In this way, they will feel more powerful to influence different levels of governance. Also, as they are more visible, governmental institutions can take them into account when they need to consult regulations or actions in the wetland. *"People need to be organized; there has to be a leader among the community that everybody will listen and follow"*⁹⁹.

⁹⁹ Interview Jorge Uribe. Owner of the restaurant "Las Vegas". Sierpe-Costa Rica, May, 2010.

These coalitions can be formed by different means. One way is to encourage the power of the cooperatives that are already formed. Some projects can focus on this, enhancing their union and their capacity to express their ideas in different scenarios. Another way is to try to coalesce with other cooperatives of the same or different sector in order to create a bigger group. The latter can be built with the assistance of ICE through “Linking Commissions”¹⁰⁰.

Finally, it will be crucial to strengthen the coalition built with the people participating in the planning group so that they will enhance its implementation. The strengthening of this group is crucial because they know the scope, objectives and actions of the management plan. They have worked together for two years, so they have already established a relationship among them. Also, they are visible for investors and projects that want to be implemented in the wetland since their names appear in the management plan document. Finally, they have already established contacts with NGOs and governmental institutions.

In sum, the ideas and projects would be efficiently implemented if they are immersed in the scope of the management plan. Furthermore, it would be easier to put them into practice if there is a group of people willing to participate and implement them. This coalition could be formed with the participants that collaborated in the design of the management plan.

In order to implement ideas and actions supported by the management plan, economic resources are needed. In this way, it is important to attract international funding because, as it has been demonstrated, international organizations are the ones who have shown more interest in the wetland. Therefore, the idea of the management plan, how it was constructed, who participated and how it was developed, could be sold in different scenarios to gain attention and attract investments in the area.

“Of the six management plans, there are two that if they succeed to be implemented as they were designed, they could be an international example due to the absolute community participation. These two are Golfo Dulce Forest Reserve and the Terraba Sierpe National Wetland. They incorporated community management that was not important before, but now they are the main driver of the management plan.”¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ The dynamic of the first hydroelectric project (Boruca) created among people a strong willingness to organize in order to gain attention from the project developers. Thus, groups called “Linking Commissions” were created to make mutual decisions. They have slowly become political actors, have gained expertise and have participated in decision making processes. Since the wetland is considered as a project’s influenced area, ICE can help with the construction of these commissions. Interview Boris Gamboa y Juan Pablo Méndez. ICE’s Environmental Management Department. Buenos Aires- Costa Rica, May 2010.

¹⁰¹ Interview Edgar Castillo. Member of the management plan facilitator group. San José- Costa Rica, June 2010.

This idea fits in the international discourse of environmental protection, poor people alleviation and public participation. Therefore, the management plan could be framed towards that specific direction so as to gain acceptance in an international venue, receiving resources that help in the plan's implementation. There are projects and initiatives that could be used for this specific purpose. For example, Rainforest radio could be a venue to attract national and international resources selling the idea of the wetland, its threats and the solution, stressing the importance of the management plan.

Selling this idea will also depend on the networks that are formed or could be formed in the context of the management plan implementation. Networks consisting of people from the local to the international community can help to pose the management plan at different levels looking for investment for its implementation. For example, the informal network that has been created with people who participated in the planning group is important and could be used for that purpose. As was mentioned before, they have obtained contacts not only with NGOs, but also with local government and environmental institutions.

Moreover, the tourism sector has been identified by some interviewees as an important network in the wetland. This network can sell the management plan idea showing it as a part of their ecotourism strategy. For instance, they could be interested in explaining to their clients (mostly foreigners) the idea of the management plan and how it works. Also, they could show that they are fulfilling the requirements of the management plan (boats' speed and environmental practices). In this way, the idea of the management plan can start to be sold in international levels as an interesting model to protect the people and the environment.

Networks, besides being helpful for selling the idea of the management plan in order to obtain resources, can also be useful to keep potential opponents back. For instance, Carlos Leon, a well-recognized leader in the region, promotes social and environmental actions in Osa. He has been especially critical of some of the actions and decisions made by the mayor, the biggest opponent of the management plan. Therefore, through the networks he has built¹⁰², he can build resistance to the development coalition's actions that threaten the management plan implementation.

¹⁰² Intelligence Citizen Network and Pro Riqueza OSA are networks that Carlos Leon is responsible for. In these networks, the members share environmental and social information regarding Osa. He uses them to inform people, to denounce, to promote environmental thinking and to share important news, among others. <http://www.inteligenciaciudadana.com/>

For example, one of the web sites of his networks (Osa Pro Group), states: *“The Coalition’s aim is to support the actions of community leaders, academics, and small-scale tourism operators, as well as representatives of social and environmental organizations and government entities, who are interested in conserving Osa’s natural wealth, stopping the destructive practices allowed by local government and implementing a plan of sustainable development”*

This kind of network that shares information and disclose irregularities on actions of some governmental organizations, can help to raise awareness of the wetland and to create pressure on those who are threatening the protected area. Also, they get in contact with lawyers and experts trying to find technical arguments to defend their ideas and oppose those that can put the wetland in danger.

Finally, networks can also be used to reconcile the opposing coalitions that rule in the wetland. One example is Ecoticos that is creating a network between the actors that are involved in the wetland’s management. They act as a ‘bridging’ capital network due to their good networking skills and their ability to connect to different governance levels, maintaining good relationships with key actors of every level. One important aspect is their special connection with conflicting actors, like the municipality and environmental institutions that have a crucial role in the wetland’s decision making.

Moreover, their technical knowledge and their studies in the area help them to find arguments and solutions that could be shared by the opposing coalitions. For instance, one of their purposes was to build the Ecoticos Green Map basically *“to provide a tool for municipalities to review permits, visualize development strategies and a public, online, and transparent mechanism for monitoring land use change”* (Moulaert, 2009:6)

Networks can then play an important role in policy change. However, sometimes, they are not enough to achieve the expected change. On some occasions it is necessary to manipulate or smartly move through different venues, in order to find the best scenario to present an idea to achieve policy change.

In the case of the wetland, there are venues that can be exploited, manipulated or created to gain support for the plan implementation. For example, the management plan created a venue called The Management Unit that is in charge of its implementation. The members of the Management Unit are the Director of the Wetland, the Local Council and other groups that will be officially formed.

“It is a dream if it is implemented because it is a loss of authority and vanity from the ministry of environment. Now the management of the area will be in the people’s and organizations’ hands”¹⁰³

Regarding the local council, it is a group comprised of the local community that, according to the Biodiversity law, should be created in social and environmentally vulnerable protected areas. In this venue, the local community proposes actions for the area and assists, cooperates, and implements measures regarding the area’s management.

This local council will be crucial in the implementation of the management plan. It will not only guarantee local community participation in decision making and implementation, but also its integration with upper levels of governance.

Moreover, a venue that could be exploited in order to make the management plan feasible is ICE. If this venue is correctly exploited, money for the management plan implementation could be obtained since the wetland is considered a part of the project’s influenced areas. Therefore, ICE must compensate the area and the people according to the impacts that are produced.

The strategy of venue shopping could be used with the new government of Laura Chinchilla started in May 2010. This new government could represent a new opportunity for changing the regime and presenting ideas that have been developing in the last period. Since two important politicians in the new government, the Vice president¹⁰⁴ and the Minister of Foreign Affairs¹⁰⁵ are environmentalists, decisions and actions benefiting protected areas can be promoted. Therefore, decisions taken in the previous governments (e.g. Osa’s airport near the wetland) can be blocked and new ideas, like the management plan, can be encouraged.

There is a potential for venue manipulation in the Osa’s mayoral elections that will take place in December 2010. It is still uncertain whether this event will be beneficial or not for the wetland, since the current mayor has been acting strategically, supporting and rejecting environmental actions. He can either support the plan implementation (because he actually understands that it is better

¹⁰³ Interview Edgar Castillo. Member of the management plan facilitator group. San José- Costa Rica, June 2010.

¹⁰⁴ Dr. Alfio Piva Mesén, was the Executive Director of the Costa Rica’s National Biodiversity Institute (INBio) where he dedicated 20 years to biodiversity conservation. He supported, through research and management activities, the National Protected Areas System (SINAC). He influenced Costa Rica’s environmental legislation, like the wildlife and biodiversity laws, and developed an innovative financing mechanism for protected areas. He coordinates the commission responsible for reviewing the protected areas legislation.

¹⁰⁵ Dr. René Castro Salazar was Costa Rica’s Minister of Energy and Environment and was head of the Conventions on Biodiversity, Climate Change and Ozone. He has promoted the payment of environmental services in Costa Rica. In recent years, he has worked in the field of sustainable tourism.

for the people living there) or block it (because some local people could be against the plan and he wants their votes). The two venues described above can potentially be a political window of opportunity.

Whether the mayor will support the management plan implementation or not, depends more on the people's perception. Therefore, this is a venue that can be still manipulated. If the management plan wants to be implemented without major obstacles, then the focus will have to be on the base, looking first for people's understanding and support. Therefore, if local community supports the management plan's actions, I expect the mayor will promote it trying to get people's votes. It could also be the other way around.

Finally, media is a potential venue that, if correctly exploited, could produce important changes. It has played an important role in giving attention to special events and projects in the area. However, it could be exploited even more, showing the direct effects of those projects in the wetland. If media starts to show and focus more on this aspect, the wetland gains more attention from the public in general, institutions and international organizations.

For example, media can be exploited in the Wetland's Festival that will take place at the end of July of 2010. The main objective is to raise wetland awareness, create strong linkages between the wetland's ecosystem services and the community and to help the tourism sector in the low season. People can use media as means to show the festival to everybody and attract different people to the wetland.

This event could also be used to organize people and to promote communication between them. Environmental education could be provided, focusing on the ecosystem services and threats of the wetland. This festival is also ideal to present studies and reports that have been produced in the wetland including the management plan. In this way people will start to familiarize themselves with it and start to recognize the importance of its implementation.

In summary, even though the management plan has been approved, its implementation could be threatened by many factors. Some of the strategies used to achieve policy change on paper could be useful to achieve policy change on the ground, tackling the most important threats. The use of networks is important to raise awareness, bring new resources, reconcile opposing coalitions and block actions that hamper the implementation of the management plan. Coalitions among the local people and among organizations and institutions could be helpful to implement integral and medium to long term projects and actions contained in the management plan. The use of venues such as the Management Unit, new government, media and mayoral elections could be order to achieve the correct implementation of the management plan.

All in all, the idea behind using the latter strategies is to promote the implementation of the management plan and to address some of the difficulties that could arise in its 10 years of execution. If the plan is implemented without major obstacles, the wetland will have the legal and institutional framework needed to protect and ensure its ecosystem services as well as its people's welfare.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The story of the Terraba Sierpe National Wetland management plan is about policy stability and policy change. The first one refers to the paradigm that has ruled in the wetland for many years characterized by a deficient legal and institutional framework. As a result, there has been a lack of governance in the wetland as the rules of uses are unclear and the roles and actions of the actors are neither coordinated nor form part of an integral policy with common goals and vision. The latter condition not only threatens the ecosystem itself, but also the people living inside the protected area.

Policy change then was needed to break the stability governing the wetland. In this study, the management plan was considered as the policy required to bring change. Since management plans are not new instruments in natural resources management and the process through which it was developed in the wetland show incrementalism, the management plan can be considered as a first order learning policy, according to Hall.

Although it is not innovative and does not entail radical change, it is very important for the wetland's management since the allowed and forbidden activities in the protected area are settled and the institutional framework needed to govern the area is established. The strategies and actions contained in the plan, if they are correctly implemented, will result in the improvement of people's welfare and biodiversity protection.

The management plan development was a process in which the boundaries between governmental levels and other organizations were blurred. In this process, not only governmental organizations were making decisions; the power to bring ideas and decide was also given to the local community, international organizations and other important stakeholders, who became active in politics during the process. This multi-level decision-making process illustrates that governance in the wetland initiated when the management plan started to develop.

Decision making in multi level processes can be influenced by many actors. These actors will struggle for the representation of their interests and ideas in the policy domain. Therefore, there are strategies that players, either proponents or opponents to policy change, can employ to achieve their objectives. The strategies analyzed here were: development of new ideas, coalition building, networking, creating and manipulating venues and exploiting windows of opportunity.

In the struggle for achieving the management plan approval, some of these strategies were used to promote it, as well as to resist it. The most important strategy used for both objectives was coalition building. Two opposing coalitions, an environmental and a development coalition, were strengthened as a result of framing focusing events. External projects, considered as threats to the wetland, like the international airport, the Diquis hydroelectric plant, tourism development and drug trafficking, were strategically framed to gain supporters to both coalitions. As a result, new actors, projects and arguments were increasing the importance of both alliances.

On the one hand, the development coalition was led by the mayor and initially comprised developers. This coalition opposed the management plan since it threatened its interests. Through a non-decision strategy, the mayor prevented the management plan from reaching the regional council discussions, aiming to maintain policy stability and the status quo. Moreover, he did not participate in the planning group, demonstrating his opposition. Through framing focusing events, like tourism development, he built a coalition involving fishermen, piangueros and developers. Despite having different policy objectives and interests, they used each other's resources to hinder environmental organizations' actions.

Additionally, the mayor applied the venue shopping strategy, selling their concerns in forums that assembled important people from the regional and national level related to environmental and development issues. Media also played an important role in strengthening this coalition, since it helped to frame some focusing events as important development projects to the area.

On the other hand, the environmental coalition, involving environmental institutions, networks, NGOs, universities and international organizations, was supporting the management plan idea, design and approval. This was an informal coalition where only the policy objectives were shared. The members were separately promoting actions to satisfy their own interests, but congregation of outcomes was an important input to the management plan approval. Focusing events, especially the airport, tourism development and drug trafficking, were essential in supporting the coalition, since media raised the attention of new actors. Consequently, environmental networks formed and international organizations were attracted to invest in the vulnerable protected area. The outcome of these investments in the area played a determinant role in the management plan endorsement.

In struggling to achieve policy change, the environmental coalition won the battle against the development coalition. This occurred in the April 2010 regional council's assembly where a window of opportunity finally opened. In that moment, the problems were clearly defined and the solutions were well identified.

The political conditions, that were not ideal before, were appropriate in the assembly. Therefore, in this venue, the two coalitions discussed the management plan. They both called representatives of their coalition to bring arguments defending their own interests. In the end, representatives of the environmental coalition presented arguments that could not be contradicted by the opposing coalition.

Although the management plan was approved due to the inputs of all members of the environmental coalition, there is one member that was crucial to obtain the change. This member is the director of Ecoticos, Azur Moulaert, who can be recognized as a policy entrepreneur in this story about struggling for policy change. He coalesced with important universities and NGOs to conduct projects in the wetland that were decisive for the management plan approval. Azur framed focusing events to show crisis was at hand and that something needed to be done. More importantly, he kept good relationships with both coalitions' leaders trying to reconcile their clashing interests. Finally, Neotropica Foundation (Ecotico's member) gave the correct arguments in the venue where the management plan was approved.

Even though the management plan has been adopted, victory can not be taken for granted. The real policy change will come with the management plan's implementation since it is supposed to bring a clear, unambiguous and definite legal and institutional framework to the wetland. Nevertheless, the plan's implementation can still be blocked by those who feel threatened with the management plan actions.

Some of the strategies used to promote policy change on paper can be used to promote the implementation of the plan. New ideas promoting sustainable economic alternatives that need to be in line with the management plan can reinforce its importance. Also, coalitions can be formed to strengthen the environmental coalition supporting the management plan actions. Therefore, cooperatives already established and the management plan's planning group could be the base for the formation of important coalitions. These coalitions, at the same time, can be part of a network that promotes the management plan's implementation and thwarts opponents.

In this way, a policy network could be developed in the wetland. This network would be important because decision making and implementation of the management plan is distributed among the local community and public actors. It will provide the framework for coordination bringing governance to the wetland. In this way, the government plays an important role enabling these networks and introducing new forms of cooperation.

Coalitions and networks involving actors from different organizations and institutions, including local community, can also play an important role in opposing decisions threatening the wetland. If the link between the ecosystem services of wetland and the people living inside or in the surroundings is well known and recognized, coalitions and networks can form an interesting block to national decisions, such as the airport and the hydroelectric plant.

Furthermore, venues can be created, exploited and manipulated to sell the idea of the management plan in order to gain support for its implementation. The creation of the management unit and the local council are venues that are designed to bring governance to the wetland. These venues are essential because they are responsible for enforcing the management plan. International, as well as national organizations, and the media are venues that could be exploited to obtain economic resources needed to implement the plan. Finally, the new government represents an opportunity to promote the wetland's importance and the necessity of the management plan's enforcement.

All in all, strategies like coalition building were crucial, not only for the development of a strong environmental group promoting the management plan, but also in strengthening the opposing coalition. Framing of focusing events was an important tool used by the two coalitions to attract supporters. These strategies, in addition to networking, exploitation and creation of venues, if correctly addressed by actors of the environmental coalition, could be influential to achieve the policy change. The management plan then would be the policy bringing harmony and balance between people's welfare and environmental protection.

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ANNEX I: Interview format

The following format was used in the interviews as a guideline of the questions for the interviewees. It was also sent to some of them before the interview in order to give them information about the project beforehand. a

The description of the project as well as the questions is in Spanish; this information and the general questions can be found in the Conceptual framework WP6 in http://www.livediverse.eu/?page_id=20.

PROYECTO DE INVESTIGACION DE MAESTRIA LIVEDIVERSE GOBERNABILIDAD DE AREAS PROTEGIDAS Y SU RELACION CON LAS COMUNIDADES LOCALES

Livediverse es un proyecto financiado directamente por la Comisión Europea que busca analizar la relación entre la calidad de vida de las comunidades y la protección de la biodiversidad. Por lo tanto, el proyecto estará enfocado en la investigación de esta interacción en 4 países en vía de desarrollo: Vietnam, Sudáfrica, India y Costa Rica.

La VU Universidad de Amsterdam está encargada de analizar los aspectos socio económicos de la interacción entre la comunidad y la biodiversidad. Específicamente, este proyecto de grado está enfocado hacia la gobernabilidad del proceso, es decir, el análisis de las diferentes instituciones que influyen en la toma de decisiones. Dentro de este análisis se pondrá especial atención a la capacidad de las comunidades locales para influenciar la toma de decisiones en áreas vulnerables tanto para la gente como para la biodiversidad.

Lo anterior sugiere que uno de los mejores lugares para realizar el estudio es el Área Protegida del Humedal Terraba Sierpe ubicado en el Área de Conservación de ACOSA. En esta importante área, la comunidad depende de los servicios ambientales que brinda el humedal para su supervivencia. Al mismo tiempo, la comunidad impone una amenaza a los recursos naturales al sobreexplotar algunos de los recursos protegidos. Sin embargo, esta relación podría ser beneficiosa para las dos partes si es manejada adecuadamente.

Las entrevistas y el análisis de documentos ayudarán a comprender cómo las comunidades han influenciado la toma de decisiones realizadas en el Humedal, ya sea para reducir las medidas de protección o para incrementarlas. Así mismo, se analizará si las medidas tomadas en el área protegida han mejorado o desmejorado las condiciones de vida de la comunidad ubicada al interior y alrededor del Humedal.

Presentación del entrevistador:

Mónica Uribe

Bogotá- Colombia

Ingeniera Ambiental- Universidad de los Andes, Bogotá-Colombia

Especialización en Derecho Ambiental- Universidad del Rosario, Bogotá -Colombia.

Maestría en Gestión Ambiental y Manejo de Recursos- Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam-Holanda.

Proyecto de investigación:

Cómo las comunidades locales han influenciado, influyen o podrían influenciar la toma de decisiones en el Humedal Nacional Terraba-Sierpe.

- Cómo las comunidades aledañas o internas al Humedal se han beneficiado o afectado desde la creación del Humedal
- Las comunidades locales han sido tenidas en cuenta para los procesos de toma de decisiones en diferentes niveles de gobernanza?
- Tienen las comunidades la capacidad de influenciar la toma de decisiones concernientes al Humedal?
- Cuáles han sido las estrategias usadas por las comunidades para llamar la atención de las instituciones?
- Han sido exitosos los esfuerzos de las comunidades para posicionar sus ideas en la agenda?

Preguntas para entrevistas:

INTRODUCCION

- Cuál es su trabajo actual? Cuál es su relación con el humedal?

DESARROLLO DE INICIATIVAS

Estas preguntas estarán enfocadas hacia el manejo del Humedal, específicamente quienes son los líderes en la formulación de ideas para su manejo y como las comunidades han participado en este proceso.

- Me podría usted explicar el evento o circunstancia que promovió la creación del Humedal?
- De donde se creó la idea de hacer planes de manejo? Que hecho o evento llevo a la creación de Planes de Manejo?
- Como fue el proceso de participación de la comunidad en el Plan de Manejo? Como clasifica usted su participación? Que actores estuvieron siempre presentes en las reuniones?

- Que actores han defendido las ideas o políticas de manejo del humedal (políticas o el mismo plan de manejo) y que actores se han opuesto? Cuáles han sido sus estrategias? Que actores han sido los más activos en aspectos relacionados con el manejo del humedal? organizaciones o individuales locales?
- Que grupos presionaron para la aprobación del plan de manejo del humedal?
- Considera usted que algún actor podría frenar la implementación del Plan de Manejo? Quien? Y que estrategia podría utilizar?
- En el contexto del Humedal Nacional Terraba Sierpe, qué actores considera usted que son los promotores de propuestas de manejo?
- Podría usted identificar alguna institución, organización o individual clave que haya influenciado la toma de decisiones del Humedal (o que haya logrado un cambio en las regulaciones) ?

VENTANAS DE OPORTUNIDAD

- Cuál es el aspecto más mencionado cuando la gente se refiere al Humedal?
- Qué eventos especiales (que llamen la atención) han ocurrido que promuevan discusiones relacionadas con el Humedal?
- Qué cambios en la política considera usted que han tenido influencia en el manejo del Humedal? Considera usted que el nuevo gobierno es una oportunidad para las ASP y el humedal específicamente?
- Estrategia de medios? Alguna vez ha salido el humedal en noticias?

REDES DE COOPERACION (NETWORKING)

- Hasta que punto cree usted que existe una cultura de organización en el Humedal Terraba Sierpe para enfrentar conflictos, defender el Humedal por malas políticas nacionales y problemas locales?
- Se han creado coaliciones entre actores relacionados con el humedal para defender u oponerse a ideas?
- Que redes de actores (redes de cooperación) se pueden identificar en el proceso de toma de decisiones del Humedal?
- Cómo describiría usted la conexión o el vínculo de los grupos o actores que componen las redes? (unión fuerte entre las organizaciones o más bien desligada)
- Como las redes o grupos formados han influenciado el proceso de toma de decisiones? Cree usted que las cooperativas y las otras formas de unión actuales han incidido de algún forma la toma de decisiones (han dado ideas de manejo, ideas sostenibles o han influenciado para que no se tomen ciertas decisiones)
- Cómo es la conexión entre las comunidades y los altos niveles de jurisdicción? Como afecta esto la toma de decisiones?

A nivel regional y local sería importante realizar estas preguntas:

- Que campañas se han hecho para llamar la atención y despertar conciencia de los humedales?
- Quien creó la idea del festival?
- Cuáles son los líderes que se vislumbran en el manejo del humedal? (personas que tengan nuevas ideas..) Porque se les considera líderes?
- Han las organizaciones o los individuales denunciado casos ilegales en el humedal?
- Que cambios en el manejo y organización del humedal considera usted que traería la aprobación y ejecución del Plan de Manejo? (Que se podría hacer o promover que antes no se estaba haciendo?Cuál sería la diferencia entre el humedal con el plan de manejo y el humedal de hace 2 años, por ejemplo?)
- Cuál es su opinión acerca del compromiso y sensibilización de las comunidades con el humedal para un uso y manejo sostenible?
- Considera usted que las comunidades están abiertas al trabajo en equipo, formando procesos organizativos comunitarios.

FINALMENTE

- Que instituciones considera usted que podrían ser valiosas para el estudio?

ANNEX II: List of people interviewed and visited

	Name	Organization	Relation or importance for the wetland	Purpose of meeting
National level	Sirleny Vega Herrera	SINAC	Legal Assessor	Obtain information
	Eva Salas de Marviva	MARVIVA		Obtain information
	Vicky Cajado		Manager of policy incidence department	Obtain information
	Jose Rodriguez		Manager of control and surveillance department	Obtain information
	Edgar Castillo	Independent Consultant	Member of the facilitator group- Responsible of the social, economical and productive issues.	Interview
	Claudine Sierra	National University	Member of the facilitator group- Responsible of the biophysical component	Interview
	Stanley Arguedas	UCI	Member of the facilitator group. Responsible of institutional component and general coordination.	Obtain information
	Ana Gloria Guzman	TNC	Specialist on Conservation-Osa's program	Interview
	Richard Kogel	TNC	Former TNC Osa's manager. Active participation in the management plan process	Obtain information
	Bernal Herrera	CATIE	EX TNC member. Participant of the management plan process	Obtain information
	Jorge Polimeni	Independent Consultant	Coordinator of the Agenda 21 in the Osa's Conservation Area	Interview
	Alvaro Ugalde	Nectandra Foundation	Ex Acosa's director	Interview
	Bernardo Aguilar	Fundacion Neotropica	Member of Ecoticos	Interview
	Azur Moulaert	University of Vermont	Director of Ecoticos	Interview
	Allan Valverde	ELAP	Member of Ecoticos	Interview
Jorge Lobo Segura	University of Costa Rica	Leader in the Fila Costeña (tourism development in Osa) issue	Obtain information	

	Daisy Arroyo	University of Costa Rica	Promoter of the project about the sustainable economic activities for piangüeros	Obtain information
	Eddy Vargas	Channel 7	Field producer. Reports and news related to the wetland	Obtain information
	José Oduber Rivera	External Consultant-Initiatives for the Sustainable Human Development (IDEHS)	Assessor of the management plan process. Worked for Conservation International assessing the impact of the Blue Moon investments.	Interview
Regional Level	Gerardo Zamora	Incopesca	Employee of Incopesca	Interview
	Etilma Morales	ACOSA	Director of Acosa	Interview
	Miguel Madrigal	ACOSA	Director of the Osa's protected areas	Interview
	Jaime Gonzales	ACOSA	Wetland's manager and director of the Diquis sub regional council	Interview
	Alberto Cole	Osa's municipality	Osa's mayor	Interview
	Boris Gamboa Balladares and Jose Pablo Méndez Solís	ICE-PH Diquis	Members of the environmental and social management department in ICE. Member of the management plan planning group	Interview
	Alejandra Monje	Corcovado Foundation	Member of environmental networks.	Interview
	Dagoberto Rodríguez Pérez	CORAC-OSA Asodiquis	Member of Osa's regional council. Member of the management plan planning group	Interview
	Carlos Leon	Pro Osa Group	Member of the Citizen Intelligence network. Member of the management plan planning group	Interview
	Miguel Valerio	Development Association	Participant of Ecoticos workshops	Interview
	Luis Centeno	Catuosa (Osa's tourism chamber)	President of Catuosa. Knows about tourism in Osa.	Interview
Local Level	Jorge Uribe	Las Vegas Restaurant	Owner of a restaurant and tourism business in Sierpe	Interview
	Agueda Pinales	Wetland's inhabitant	Wetland's inhabitant	Interview

	Urias Porras	Coopemangle	Member of local organization with sustainable ideas that were implemented in the wetland.	Interview
	Daniel Villalobos	CEDAR	Agricultural farmer of the surroundings of the wetlands. Member of the management plan planning group	Interview
	Rosa Esmeralda Alvarez	Piangüera - Coopeperla	Piangüera	Interview
	Jose Antonio Araya	National Association of Piangüeros in Sierpe	Piangüero	Interview
	Oscar	Tourism guide in Sierpe	Tourism guide in Sierpe	Interview
	Dagoberto Organitrillo and Yahaira Ramirez	Rice Farmers Association	Small farmers living inside the wetland	Interview
	Franklin Obando	Surcoop (agriculture in the surroundings of the wetland)	Member of the management plan planning group	Interview
	Rafael Elizondo	Asopescar (Fishermen Association of Puerto Cortes)	Fishermen leader. Member of the planning group and member of the coalition with the mayor	Interview
	Rufina Gomez	Piangüera	Piangüera - member of the coalition with the mayor	Interview