

WP5 – Socio-economic analysis of circular water governance

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Research objective

This project aims to answer the following main research question:

How can the existing water governance structure, or modifications thereof, facilitate the transition of water management practices to a Circular Economy of Water?

This question will be answered by studying the following main elements:

1. Identify and understand the necessary governance transformations.
2. Understand which and how economic valuation methods can help facilitate and enable the transition towards a circular economy of water.
3. Understand which and how policy instruments can help facilitate and enable the transition towards a circular economy of water.
4. Describe and explain the frameworks that shape how environmental decisions are made, including the key elements that influence these processes.

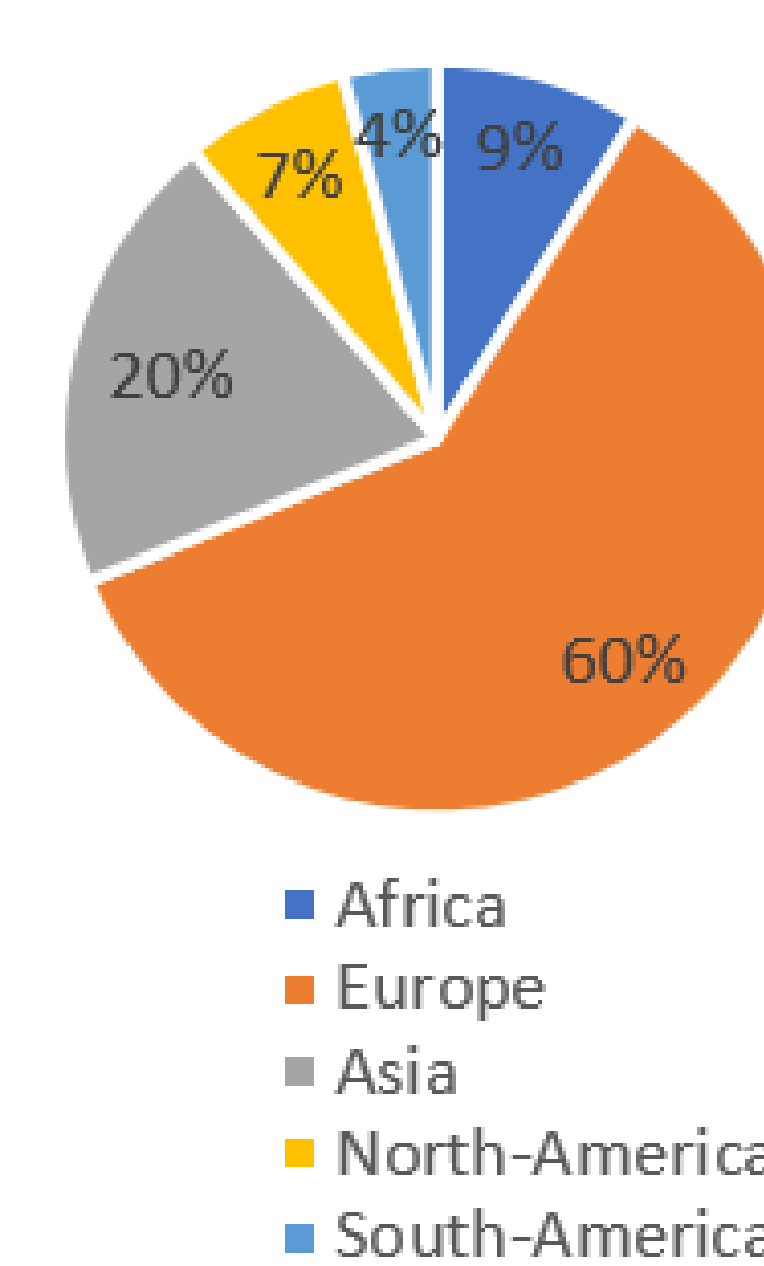
Results

First research article: What drivers and barriers to water governance transformation in support of the transition to a Circular Economy of Water have been identified in the water governance and policy literature, and what has been suggested to overcome current barriers?

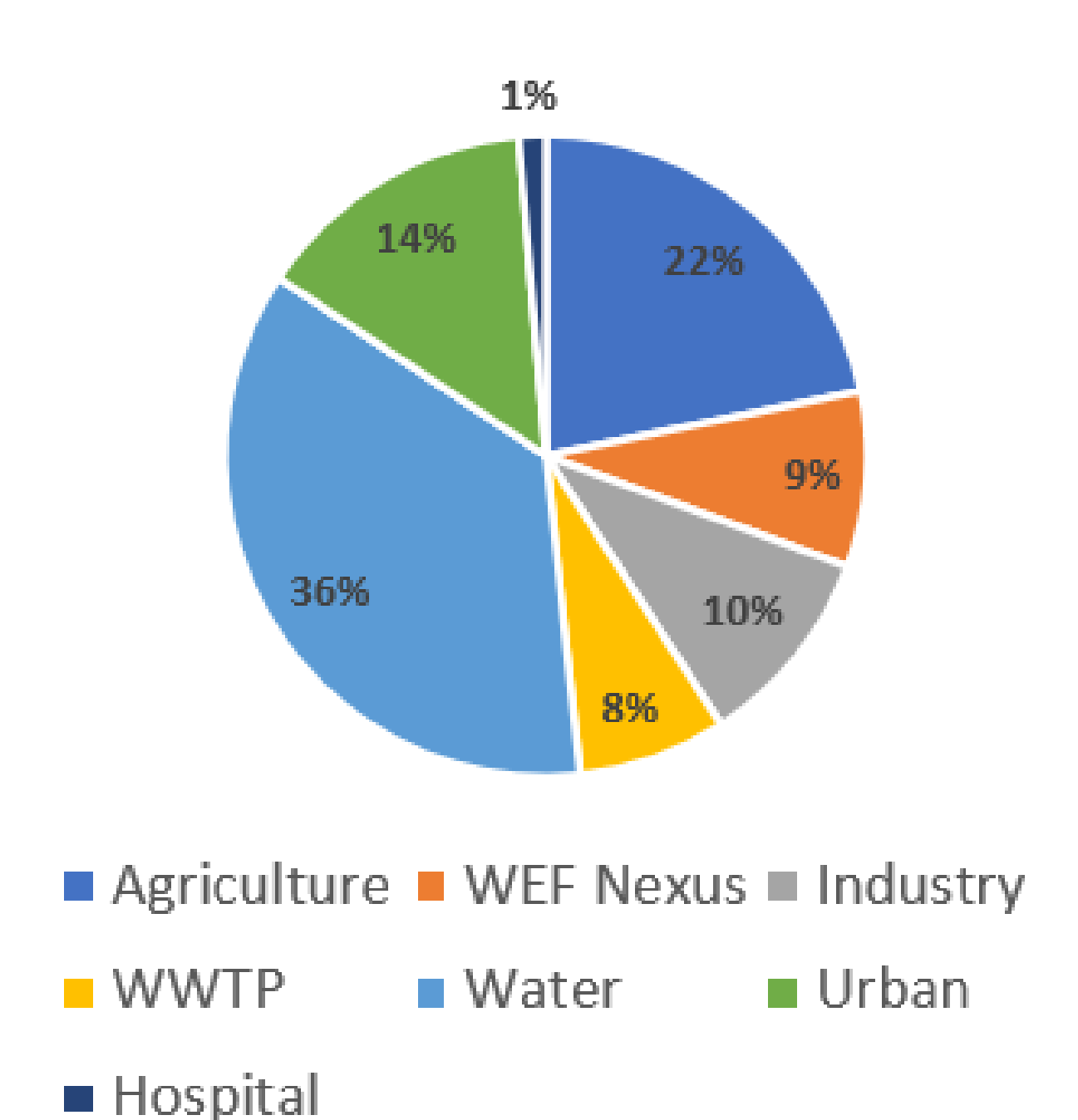
Methodology: Systematic literature review

N = 147

Geographic focus of the selected articles



Target sectors in the selected articles



Extracted implementation dilemmas

Regulation: how can regulation boost innovation while maintaining a sufficiently high level of precaution to limit risks towards health and the environment?

Collaboration between sectors and stakeholders: how to increase collaboration between stakeholders and sectors without over-complexifying the governance framework?

Decentralization: How to find local circular solutions in a historically centralized water system?

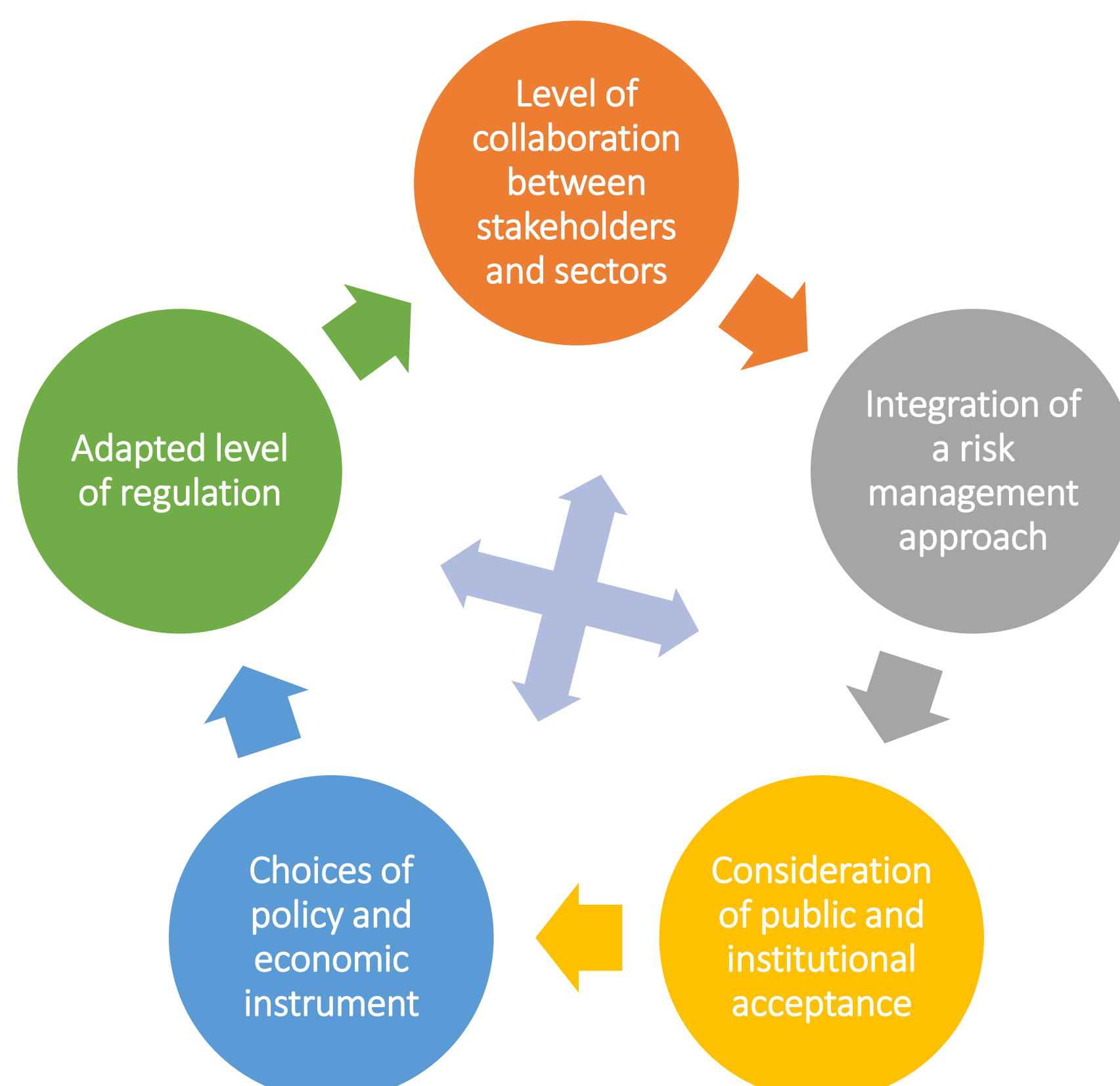
Level of information: How to boost public awareness on water and circularity without creating mistrust and fear?

Cross-sectoral collaboration: How to secure long term commitment of stakeholders in circular projects without compromising flexibility?

Timing of action: How to anticipate the crisis and enact change now in a system that is already facing its limits?

Responsibility of the action: Who should take the responsibility of the action between all different public institutions, and the private sector?

Identified socio-institutional elements that impact a transition towards circular economy of water



Take-home messages

- Circular economy of water is studied at specific single levels and institutions, with little to no focus on the overall governance architecture and its coherence
- The identified necessary governance transformations require a systems-thinking approach

Future plans

Keep working closely with the AquaConnect case studies to collect empirical data, focusing on the role of economic valuations of water and policy instruments in a transition towards circular economy of water.

The research methodology here will consist of a mix of semi-structured interviews, workshops, and other survey approaches to elicit stakeholder and expert opinions and experiences.