

Stakeholder Mapping Techniques in Public Policy

A comprehensive guide to identifying, analyzing, and engaging key actors in the policy environment

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Course Overview

This lecture covers the essential framework for understanding and applying stakeholder mapping in the context of public policy. Each section builds upon the last to give students a comprehensive toolkit for real-world policy analysis.

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Introduction to Stakeholders in Public Policy

Stakeholders are **individuals, groups, or organizations** that can influence or are affected by public policy decisions. In the realm of public policy, understanding who the stakeholders are — and what they want — is the first and most critical step in designing effective, inclusive, and sustainable policies.

Policy outcomes often depend heavily on the level of support, opposition, or engagement stakeholders bring to the process. A policy that ignores key stakeholders risks poor implementation, public resistance, and ultimate failure — regardless of how technically sound it may be.



Government Institutions

Ministries, local governments, regulatory agencies, and parliament. These actors hold formal authority and are often the primary initiators of policy.



Private Sector

Companies and industry associations that are affected by regulations or have interests in particular policy outcomes. They often possess significant financial and lobbying power.



NGOs / Civil Society

Non-governmental organizations and civil society groups that advocate for specific communities or causes, often serving as watchdogs and voices for marginalized populations.



Communities / Citizens

The general public and specific community groups directly impacted by policy. Their participation is essential for democratic legitimacy and effective implementation.



Media

News organizations and digital platforms that shape public perception, amplify voices, and hold decision-makers accountable. Media can accelerate or derail policy agendas.

Why Stakeholder Mapping Matters

Stakeholder mapping is far more than an academic exercise — it is a **strategic management tool** that enables policymakers, analysts, and program managers to navigate complex political and social environments. Without a clear map of who the stakeholders are and what motivates them, even the best-designed policies can fail at the implementation stage.

The Core Purpose

Stakeholder mapping provides a structured way to visualize the policy environment — identifying who has power, who has interest, and who can make or break your policy goals. It transforms an abstract political landscape into an actionable strategic picture.

It is especially valuable in complex, multi-actor environments where interests conflict and coalitions must be built carefully.

Five Key Benefits

→ Understand Who Matters Most

Not all stakeholders carry equal weight. Mapping helps prioritize attention and resources toward those with the most influence over policy outcomes.

→ Identify Supporters and Opponents

Knowing who will champion or resist a policy allows for targeted coalition-building and proactive conflict management.

→ Minimize Conflict and Resistance

Early identification of opposing interests allows negotiation strategies to be developed before tensions escalate.

→ Improve Policy Effectiveness

Policies designed with stakeholder input are more likely to be realistic, accepted, and successfully implemented on the ground.

→ Support Participatory Policymaking

Inclusive processes strengthen democratic governance and build long-term public trust in institutions.

Key Concepts in Stakeholder Analysis

Effective stakeholder mapping rests on three foundational analytical dimensions. Understanding these dimensions allows policymakers to assess each stakeholder accurately and design tailored engagement strategies. These are not independent concepts — they interact and together paint a complete picture of each actor's relevance in the policy process.

Power

Power refers to the **ability of a stakeholder to influence policy decisions** — whether through formal authority (legal mandates, budgetary control), political connections, or the capacity to mobilize people and resources.

High-power stakeholders can determine whether a policy is adopted, modified, or blocked. Examples include ministers, legislative bodies, and large corporations with significant lobbying capacity.

Power can be *formal* (e.g., a regulator's legal mandate) or *informal* (e.g., a community leader's social authority).

Interest

Interest refers to the **level of concern or stake a stakeholder has** in the policy — how much it affects their goals, livelihoods, or values.

A stakeholder with high interest is deeply invested in the outcome, whether positive or negative. Farmers directly affected by agricultural policy, for instance, have a very high interest in how subsidies are distributed.


Interest drives motivation: *high-interest stakeholders are more likely to actively engage, advocate, or resist.*

Influence

Influence captures **how strongly stakeholders can shape outcomes** — both directly (through decision-making roles) and indirectly (through advocacy, public opinion, or coalition-building).

Unlike formal power, influence can be exercised by actors who lack official authority. Civil society organizations, academic experts, and media personalities often exert substantial indirect influence on policy direction.

Influence is often more fluid and context-dependent than power.

 These three dimensions — Power, Interest, and Influence — form the backbone of every major stakeholder mapping technique covered in this lecture. Mastering their distinctions is essential for accurate analysis.

Types of Stakeholders

Not all stakeholders play the same role or carry the same weight. In public policy analysis, stakeholders are typically classified into three broad categories based on how directly they are affected by a policy and how much power they hold. Understanding these categories is essential before any mapping can begin.

1

Primary Stakeholders

Directly affected by the policy — positively or negatively. These are the people or groups whose lives, livelihoods, or rights are most immediately at stake. They are often the intended beneficiaries or the primary groups bearing the costs of a policy.

Example: In an agricultural subsidy policy, *farmers* are primary stakeholders. Their income, working conditions, and food security are directly shaped by how subsidies are allocated and distributed.

2

Secondary Stakeholders

Indirectly affected by the policy — they experience the policy's effects through their relationship with primary stakeholders or through broader systemic changes. They may not be the main target of the policy but still have a significant role in its outcome.

Example: In the same agricultural policy, *distributors and NGOs* are secondary stakeholders. Distributors are affected by subsidy-driven changes in supply chains; NGOs may be involved in advocacy or monitoring the policy's fairness.

3

Key Stakeholders

These are stakeholders with **high power and high influence** over the policy process — regardless of whether they are directly or indirectly affected. Their support or opposition can be decisive in determining policy outcomes.

Example: *Government officials* (e.g., a minister with decision-making authority) and *regulators* fall into this category. Academic think tanks and major media outlets may also qualify as key stakeholders in certain policy domains.

Stakeholder Mapping Techniques

Several analytical frameworks have been developed to help policymakers and analysts systematically map and prioritize stakeholders. Each technique has its own strengths, and the choice of method depends on the policy context, available data, and the purpose of the analysis. The three most widely used techniques are presented here.

Power–Interest Grid

The most common technique; categorizes stakeholders into four quadrants based on their level of power and interest

Stakeholder Salience Model

Prioritizes stakeholders based on three attributes: Power, Legitimacy, and Urgency

1

2

3

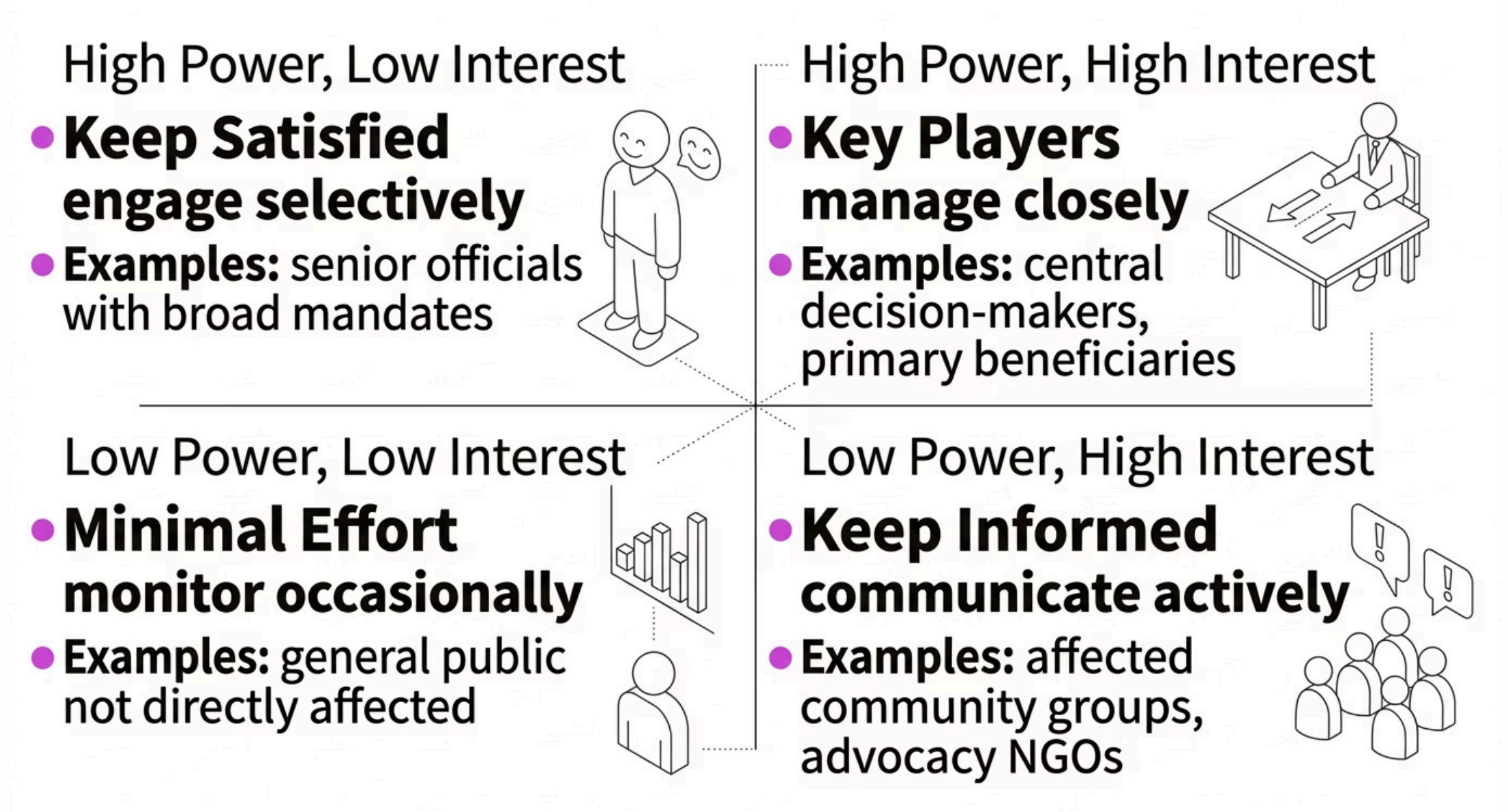
Influence–Impact Matrix

Focuses on the relationship between how much stakeholders influence a policy and how much they are impacted by it

Technique 1: The Power–Interest Grid

The **Power–Interest Grid** (also known as the Mendelow Matrix) is the most widely used stakeholder mapping tool in public policy and management. It provides a simple, visual way to categorize stakeholders and derive strategic engagement approaches based on two dimensions: **how much power** they have to influence the policy, and **how much interest** they have in its outcome.

By plotting stakeholders on this two-by-two grid, policymakers can immediately see where to focus their energy, who needs to be kept informed, and who must be actively managed throughout the policy lifecycle.



The grid is most effective when used as a *living document*— stakeholder positions shift over time as policies evolve, so the grid should be revisited at each major stage of the policy cycle.

Techniques 2 & 3: Influence–Impact Matrix and Salience Model

Influence–Impact Matrix

The **Influence–Impact Matrix** shifts the analytical focus from interest to *impact* — asking not just who cares about the policy, but *who bears the consequences* and *who shapes them*. This makes it particularly valuable for **risk assessment** and understanding vulnerability within the policy system.

Stakeholders are plotted on two axes:

- **Influence:** The degree to which a stakeholder can affect policy design, approval, or implementation
- **Impact:** The degree to which a stakeholder is affected by the policy's consequences

This technique is especially useful for identifying *high-impact, low-influence* groups — such as marginalized communities who bear significant policy costs but have limited voice — who may be overlooked in traditional power-focused analyses.

It is frequently used in **environmental policy, social welfare programs, and development projects** where equity concerns are paramount.

Stakeholder Salience Model

Developed by Mitchell, Agle, and Wood (1997), the **Stakeholder Salience Model** offers a more nuanced, three-dimensional framework for prioritizing stakeholders. It goes beyond power and interest by introducing *legitimacy* and *urgency* as key variables.

The three attributes are:

- **Power:** The ability to impose one's will in a relationship
- **Legitimacy:** The perceived validity or appropriateness of a stakeholder's involvement — based on legal, moral, or social grounds
- **Urgency:** The degree to which a stakeholder's claims require immediate attention

Stakeholders possessing all three attributes are classified as "**Definitive Stakeholders**" and demand the highest priority. This model is highly effective in complex policy environments where many competing voices exist and not all can be accommodated simultaneously.

Steps in Conducting Stakeholder Mapping

Stakeholder mapping is not a one-time activity — it is a **cyclical, iterative process** that should be revisited throughout the policy lifecycle. The following six steps provide a structured methodology for conducting rigorous and actionable stakeholder mapping in any public policy context.



Step 1: Identify Stakeholders

Begin with a comprehensive stakeholder identification exercise. Use brainstorming, document review, expert consultation, and field research to compile an exhaustive list of all individuals, groups, and organizations that may have a stake in the policy. Cast the net wide — it is better to include too many at this stage than to miss critical actors.



Step 2: Collect Information

Gather data on each stakeholder's interests, roles, resources, and level of influence. Methods include interviews, surveys, focus groups, secondary research, and network analysis. The quality of the mapping depends entirely on the quality of information collected at this stage.



Step 3: Classify Stakeholders

Apply the chosen mapping tool (Power–Interest Grid, Salience Model, or Influence–Impact Matrix) to position each stakeholder visually. This transforms raw data into actionable insights and creates a shared reference point for the policy team.



Step 4: Analyze Relationships and Conflicts

Beyond individual positions, examine the relationships *between* stakeholders. Identify alliances, rivalries, dependencies, and potential flashpoints. Understanding the relational dynamics of the stakeholder ecosystem is crucial for anticipating coalitions and conflicts during implementation.



Step 5: Develop Engagement Strategies

Based on the classification and relationship analysis, design tailored engagement plans for each stakeholder group. Specify the communication channels, frequency of engagement, key messages, and responsible team members. Strategies should be differentiated — what works for key players will not work for the general public.



Step 6: Monitor and Update

Stakeholder positions are not static. As policies evolve, political conditions shift, and new information emerges, stakeholder dynamics change. Regularly review and update the map to ensure engagement strategies remain relevant and effective throughout the policy process.

Stakeholder Engagement Strategies

Once stakeholders have been mapped and classified, the critical next step is determining **how to engage each group effectively**. A single, uniform communication approach will almost never work — different stakeholders have different needs, priorities, and capacities for engagement. Tailored strategies are essential for building trust, managing opposition, and sustaining policy momentum.



Key Players (High Power, High Interest)

Strategy: Involve in decision-making. These stakeholders are central to the policy's success and must be engaged as genuine partners. Include them in policy design workshops, advisory committees, and formal consultation processes. Regular bilateral meetings, shared ownership of goals, and transparency about trade-offs are essential. Neglecting key players is the single most common cause of policy failure.



Opponents

Strategy: Negotiation and conflict management. Opponents must be taken seriously and engaged proactively — not ignored. Understand the root of their opposition: Is it values-based, interest-based, or information-based? Tailor the response accordingly. Negotiated compromise, mediation, and transparent grievance mechanisms are key tools. Unmanaged opposition can delay or derail policies.



Supporters

Strategy: Strengthen collaboration. Active supporters are valuable assets — they can advocate for the policy, mobilize resources, and help counter opposition narratives. Deepen these relationships through formal partnerships, shared platforms, and mutual recognition of contributions. Keep supporters informed and energized to maintain their engagement throughout implementation.



Public / Community

Strategy: Communication and participation. While individual community members may have low power, collective public opinion is a powerful force. Use accessible communication channels — town halls, social media, information campaigns — to maintain transparency. Participatory mechanisms such as public consultations and citizen feedback platforms strengthen legitimacy and democratic accountability.

Case Study: Indonesia's Subsidized Fertilizer Policy

To illustrate how stakeholder mapping works in practice, consider **Indonesia's Subsidized Fertilizer Policy** — one of the most significant and complex agricultural policies in the country. The policy aims to ensure that smallholder farmers can access fertilizers at below-market prices, thereby supporting food security and rural livelihoods. However, its implementation has historically been plagued by distribution inequities, misuse, and bureaucratic inefficiencies — challenges that stakeholder mapping can help address.

Key Stakeholders Identified

Ministry of Agriculture

Role: Policy formulator and regulator
Position: High Power — holds formal authority over subsidy allocation, distribution quotas, and policy design

Farmers

Role: Primary beneficiaries
Position: High Interest — their income and productivity are directly shaped by the subsidy structure and distribution effectiveness

Fertilizer Companies (e.g., Pupuk Indonesia)

Role: State-owned producer and distributor
Position: High Influence — controls supply chain logistics and production capacity, can significantly shape policy implementation

NGOs / Advocacy Groups

Role: Watchdogs and advocates
Position: Advocacy Role — monitor distribution fairness, report misuse, and amplify farmer voices to policymakers

How Mapping Helps

By mapping these stakeholders using the **Power-Interest Grid**, policymakers can derive the following insights:

- The **Ministry of Agriculture** is a "Key Player" — must be engaged directly in all policy revisions
- **Farmers** fall in "Keep Informed" or "Key Players" depending on their organizational capacity — participatory mechanisms like farmer cooperatives (GAPOKTAN) are crucial
- **Fertilizer companies** are "Keep Satisfied" — their operational buy-in is essential for distribution to function
- **NGOs** are "Keep Informed" — their monitoring role strengthens accountability and should be supported

The mapping exercise helps ensure **fair and efficient distribution**, reduces misuse of subsidies (a chronic problem in Indonesia), and creates accountability loops between government, producers, and end-users. It also surfaces hidden stakeholders — such as village-level distributors (kios resmi) — who are critical nodes in the supply chain but often overlooked in top-down policy design.

Challenges in Stakeholder Mapping

While stakeholder mapping is an invaluable tool, practitioners must recognize that it comes with significant practical and methodological challenges. Awareness of these limitations is essential for conducting honest, rigorous analysis and avoiding false confidence in the results.

Incomplete Data

Stakeholder mapping relies on the quality and completeness of available information. In many policy contexts — especially in developing countries or politically sensitive areas — data about stakeholders' interests, resources, and networks is scarce, outdated, or deliberately withheld. Analysts must acknowledge these data gaps and build in appropriate uncertainty when drawing conclusions.

Hidden Stakeholders

Some stakeholders deliberately remain invisible — either to avoid scrutiny, maintain strategic ambiguity, or because they lack the organizational capacity to make their presence known. These "hidden" or "latent" stakeholders can emerge unexpectedly during implementation and disrupt carefully laid plans. Robust mapping processes should include mechanisms to actively surface these actors, such as snowball interviewing and network tracing.

Power Imbalance

Stakeholder mapping processes themselves can reproduce existing power dynamics. Powerful actors dominate consultations while marginalized groups — often with the highest stakes — struggle to have their voices heard. Analysts must consciously apply equity lenses and use disaggregated data to ensure that low-power, high-interest groups are not systematically underrepresented in the final map.

Political Interests

In politically charged environments, stakeholder mapping can be used instrumentally — to legitimize predetermined decisions rather than genuinely inform policy design. Political actors may manipulate the mapping process to exclude opponents or elevate allies. Maintaining methodological rigor and independence is essential to ensure the integrity of the analysis.

Dynamic Stakeholder Positions

Stakeholder interests, power, and influence are not static. Electoral cycles, economic shocks, leadership changes, and shifting public opinion can radically alter the stakeholder landscape in a short period. A map that was accurate at the policy design stage may be dangerously outdated by the time implementation begins. Regular updates and monitoring are non-negotiable for long-term policy effectiveness.

Conclusion: Why Stakeholder Mapping is Indispensable

Stakeholder mapping is not merely a technical step in the policy process — it is a **foundational practice of good governance**. By systematically identifying and analyzing the actors who matter, policymakers can design interventions that are not only technically sound but also politically feasible, socially inclusive, and practically implementable.

More Effective Policies

Policies informed by comprehensive stakeholder analysis are better calibrated to real-world conditions, reducing the gap between policy intent and actual outcomes.

More Inclusive Processes

Mapping ensures that marginalized and low-power groups are not systematically excluded from decisions that affect their lives, strengthening democratic legitimacy.

Proactive Conflict Prevention

Early identification of opposition and conflict points allows negotiation and mediation to begin before tensions become entrenched and costly to resolve.

Sustainable Implementation

Policies built with broad stakeholder buy-in are more resilient to political change and more likely to deliver lasting impacts over time.

"Understanding stakeholders is not optional in public policy — it is the difference between a policy that works on paper and one that works in practice. Power, interest, and influence are the grammar of the political world; stakeholder mapping is the art of reading it."

Discussion Questions for Class

These questions are designed to help students apply the concepts from this lecture to real-world contexts. Use the theoretical frameworks discussed — Power–Interest Grid, Saliency Model, and Influence–Impact Matrix — as your analytical tools.

1

Why is Stakeholder Mapping Important?

Drawing on the concepts of power, interest, and influence discussed in this lecture: *Why is stakeholder mapping considered a strategic necessity — not just a procedural formality — in public policymaking?* What would happen to policy outcomes if this step were skipped entirely? Use at least two examples from Indonesia's policy context to support your argument.

2

What Happens When Key Stakeholders Are Ignored?

What are the potential consequences — political, social, and operational — of failing to identify or engage key stakeholders in a policy process? Consider both the short-term (policy design stage) and long-term (implementation and sustainability) implications. Can you think of a real-world policy case — in Indonesia or globally — where ignoring key stakeholders led to failure or unintended harm?

3

Apply the Power–Interest Grid to an Indonesian Policy

Select a current or recent public policy in Indonesia (examples: national health insurance / JKN, land acquisition for infrastructure, the new capital city / IKN, renewable energy transition). Identify at least five stakeholders, position them on the Power–Interest Grid, and explain the engagement strategy you would recommend for each quadrant. Be prepared to defend your classification choices.

- Students are encouraged to work in small groups for Question 3 and present their stakeholder maps to the class. This exercise simulates real-world policy analysis and prepares students for professional practice in government, NGOs, and consulting.