

Protecting Blue Horizons

Support for the moderator of the role play

Introduction

Human activities are the major cause for what has been recognized as a biodiversity crisis, namely the rapid and widespread loss of animal and plant species. The magnitude of this crisis is such that scientists now talk about a 6th Mass Extinction but, unlike previous extinction events, which were caused by natural phenomena, the current crisis is completely driven by anthropogenic causes. It is thus important to spread knowledge and raise awareness about the issues because we depend on biodiversity in ways that are not always apparent or appreciated. Biodiversity assures the functioning of ecosystems and their services to humans such as provision of clean water, plays a crucial role in human nutrition through its influence on world food production and provides reservoirs for the biological and the pharmacological sciences (WHO).

In this context, delegates from 196 governments sought to address this grave biodiversity crisis through international negotiations under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) was adopted at the 15th Conference of Parties (COP15) to the CBD in December 2022. This historic Framework, which support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, sets out an ambitious pathway to reach the global vision of a world living in harmony with nature by 2050. The GBF declares 4 global goals, the Kunming-Montreal Global Goals for 2050, and 23 targets, the Kunming-Montreal 2030 Global Targets.

In particular these targets include the “effective conservation and management of at least 30% of the world’s lands, inland waters coastal areas and oceans, with the emphasis on areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functioning and services”, or the “restoration [...] on at least 30% of degraded terrestrial, inland waters, and coastal and marine ecosystems” (cbd.int). These targets now need to be operationalized by translation into national legislation and regulations to develop their benefits. In this context, Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) represent one important measure to reduce the causes of the biodiversity loss.

MPAs: why are they so important

MPAs are geographically distinct zones which aim at safeguarding the biodiversity through habitat protection, maintaining marine ecosystem healthy or restore them to a healthy state for the supply of ecosystem products and services. In these areas human activities such as resource extraction and intensive fishing, particularly those heavily affecting habitat and ecosystem integrity, are not permitted or at least drastically reduced.

Although these protection measures, when implemented, have demonstrated to be an effective tool to restore and repopulate marine areas, disagreements and conflicts of interest are often around the corner, especially when some people’s livelihoods depend directly and perhaps even exclusively on extractive activities. Therefore, debates about siting and the degree of protection needed to achieve biodiversity and ecosystem objectives for human safety can help find solutions that minimize environmental and social trade-offs.

A role play to make a Marine Protected Area work

The role play is an interactive activity during which the participants impersonate people affected and interested in the MPA. It allows to confront different perspectives and views and even address conflicts and find solutions which should preferably be equitable for everyone. It allows to see problems or situations from different perspectives. The goal incarnate stakeholders with different views to deliberate about how to make a Marine Protected Area work. The game will be set in a fictitious country and allow local adaptations as required.

If you are short of first-hand experience in your place, you might wish to make up a relatively simple case: for example, assume an area in the coastline of an island, where an MPA has being planned. In this area, overfishing, particularly from destructive bottom trawling, pollution, and invasive species strain the ecosystem so the MPA is needed in order to protect fish and octopus nursery areas and allow the juvenile individuals to grow. Please adjust to your context and give the same info about the fictitious place to work on to all stakeholder in the role play.

Draw a map of the imagined area on a piece of cardboard/large index card (or drawn in the sand, or use the generic model of a fictional area provided) to place in the middle of the participants. This will make it easier to visualize the implications of each person's position. You can also use a map of your area if you live near the coast or use a map of a coastal region nearby.

However, there is already competition for space between small-scale and industrial fishers, marine wind farm investors wanting to construct an offshore farm, a tourism developer, a municipality, the manager of the planned MPA, two NGOs active in marine protection (one with a focus on marine mammals (or turtles in warmer climes), the other concerned with general habitat protection), the municipal sewage plant which would have to add a cleaning stage to its process to reduce pollution pressure. You can modulate the stakeholders to match as closely as possible the number of participants and any scenarios in the vicinity or of common knowledge.

Two objectives are pursued: 1) strengthen listening skills and respectful deliberation; 2) development of consensus, despite diverging views, to make the MPA work thanks to as broad-based consensus as possible. If a large majority finds a way, but only one or two stakeholders oppose, this is also an acceptable result. If the very existence is at stake, particularly if it concerns already disadvantaged rights holders, such as artisanal fishers, either a second round can be planned, time permitting, or a general recommendation be added to look into transitional safeguards.

The aim is to engage all participants in the exercise, provide the opportunity for everyone to talk and listen to the voice of everyone else in the conversation. Additionally, the experience will stimulate curiosity for future in-depth study.

A role play can provide positive outcomes because it encourages listening practices, cooperation, negotiation, and it helps to stimulate empathy. During the role play it is important to create a safe environment for the conversation and require a respectful and positive attitude from everyone.

The stakeholders

There are diverse and sometimes contrasting positions concerning the MPA. For the sake of this role play, participants will impersonate different stakeholders, namely the natural scientist, the social scientist, the Director of the Marine Protected Area, the artisanal fisherman, the industrial fishing company, the local tourism company, an NGO engaged in ocean protection, and act out and articulate different positions. Participants be given briefing sheets for each character, allowing them to understand and identify with the stakeholder. The characterization is the result

of a series of interviews conducted with real professionals in a set of different fields and additional literature research.

Your role as the moderator

We suggest that you allocate at least 2 hours to the role play. The timing below is for about 2h, but if you can stretch it to three hours, it will be more engaging. After a short introduction, the deliberation should be at least 1 hour. We recommend that at least 45 minutes at the end are used for debriefing to digest the exchange and enable learning to take place. In order for the participants to be able to express a meaningful and rich argumentation, we suggest to deliver the profiles sheets if possible one day before the deliberation, so everyone can already reflect on the points he/she wants to defend. We recommend the moderator to be actively present in the conversation to make sure that every character is equally represented in the conversation and that nobody takes over during the conversation.

As moderator, make sure you can elicit at least at the end a recognition that an MPA is needed and that within the protected zone there should at least be a core where destructive activities such as bottom trawling are prohibited. **Consensus is sought, but not at the expense of sacrificing the core protection concern** e.g. of protecting key habitats, spawning areas.

Please collect the names, the e-mails and consent for photography in the info sheet provided.

During the debriefing, remember to carefully listen and possibly to take notes on how the conversation went. We proposed some questions to guide this process, but you are free to add some more. This will help you to retain the salient points, issues, emotions, and ideas that emerged during the deliberation according to the participants. Please share these feedbacks with *Mundus maris*.

From past experience, we think the following scheme may work well. An indicative schedule could look like this (if constrained to 2 hours, more time would be better):

1)	Welcome everybody! Briefly introduce the challenge and the objective of the role play to the participants (see Introduction); check whether all accept photos	5-7 minutes
2)	Deliver the stakeholder sheets and give time to read. If you can provide the stakeholder sheets beforehand and any prior introduction to the topic will give the participants more time for debate.	5-7 minutes
3)	Explain the Etiquette and repeat the objective	1 minute
4)	Stakeholders present themselves in an open circle. Two sentences per stakeholder.	3-5 minutes
5)	Discussion	50 minutes
6)	Harvest the results and have participants summarize consensus (either articulate the consensus orally or, better, have one/two participants write down the group consensus on a whiteboard); make sure that no existential threats to livelihoods are ignored. They can be signaled for either a second round or transferred to a public authority for exploring transition support.	5 minutes
7)	Thank everybody for the active participation and invite participants into the debriefing	1 minute
8)	Debriefing process, take notes if possible to get insights of learning and hints for improvements as well as how best to offer additional information. Feedback please to info@mundusmaris.org .	50 minutes

Etiquette for the participants

- 1) Take your time to think and reflect
- 2) Speak in a way that is respectful, honest, and inclusive
- 3) Listen together and respect everyone's time
- 4) Value the opinion of others
- 5) Contribute with your ideas
- 6) Try to be as realistic as possible
- 7) Remember the purpose of the conversation
- 8) Have fun!

Debriefing

The debriefing is focused on the learning process of participants. During the debriefing participants can reflect on the argument exchange, on the mode and attitudes, and help each other to digest any tension. Reflect on how they felt during the conversation. Participant are invited to reflect on the dynamics encountered and what they have learned during the process.

Some questions for the debriefing process could be:

- 1) What are the issues that emerged during the conversation?
- 2) What was particularly surprising for you during the conversation?
- 3) What challenges did you face taking on your role?
- 4) Was the debate successful for your character?
- 5) What was harder or easier than expected?
- 6) What led to the decision of taking on your role?
- 7) Which emotions did you feel during the game?
- 8) What could you have done differently?
- 9) If you had to do it again, would you change anything and if so, what?
- 10) What are the solutions you propose?
- 11) What is the most important thing that you learned from this experience?

We offer an information sheet with selected resources to learn more about experiences with MPAs and related issues.