



Protecting Blue Horizons

The artisanal fisher

One possible scenario: Along the western coasts of an island in the a temperate sea, a species rich ecosystem needs urgent protection. As a result, also the octopus population, a commercially important species for the local fishers can recover. Overfishing, particularly from destructive bottom trawling, pollution and invasive species, strain the ecosystems. In order to protect fish and octopus nursery areas and allow the juvenile individuals to grow, a Marine Protected Area is being planned.

NB Another scenario can be chosen for all to fit your context better, applicable to all. See fictional map or use a map of a coastal area close by to help visualise the conflict areas between different interests.

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. They are fundamental because they help to release the pressure on the habitats and on the species. Indeed, many human activities and all the phenomena linked to the climate change put a huge pressure on ecosystems. For this reason strict protection in this area have to be implemented and not negotiated.

Imagine being a small-scale, artisanal fisher living and working in this Sicilian coastal region. For you, the sea is your second home. Your livelihood depends on the sea and your future depends on the health of the ocean and its inhabitants. It is not just an **economic activity**, fishing is part of your **culture**. Your fishing methods have low environmental impact and produce high quality food.

An artisanal fisher has to deal with several big problems: **industrial overfishing**, marine pollution, and climate change are large-scale, but coastal constructions bringing space competition can be locally also very important. Artisanal fishers often suffer from economic and social instability because things around them change rapidly: the environment, the catches, the policies. The **loss of the job** is a sad reality that more often hit small-scale fishers in Europe and the local communities.

Conservation and restoration measures such as Marine Protected Areas can be controversial for you as a fisher: **beneficial** because it can be **a tool to invest for future benefits** because it gives time to the fish to reproduce and grow, and also their habitat becomes healthier and more resilient; **disadvantageous** in the short run because the MPA may prevent you to fish in a close-by area you worked in before. If you work outside the MPA, your income may drop initially, e.g. because you need to spend more on fuel to fish in a more distant area. You are aware of the importance of ocean protection, but at the same time you do not want to sustain lost income now, if you are not assured that you will reap the benefits of the MPA later.

You ask for **consultation** and **participation in planning and decision-making** because the establishment of the MPA and the way it will be managed affects you very directly. You need to see positive results from any sacrifices you need to make. You may accept some sacrifices now in exchange for good results later. Can the sacrifices now be diminished by temporary public support? Can you imagine complementary activities for additional income?

Fishers are often described as part of the problem, but the artisanal fishers are normally part of the solution for the future of the ocean. They usually produce high quality food, care for the environment they depend on. You will explain that you are the fifth generation of artisanal fishers and that it is in your best interest to protect an ecologically important area. However, costs and benefits must be fairly apportioned and your social and economic existence safeguarded. You will explain that your activity is not as impactful as industrial fishing, harmful sewage discharge, disturbance from offshore wind farming and underwater tourism. You will impress on other discussants the need to keep up low impact, artisanal fishing and the culture and ecological knowledge that goes with it for healing the ocean. You want to be recognized as a legitimate rights holder.