Governing MPAs: a guide to getting the balance right

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Background

It is widely recognised that the management of MPAs involves a combination of both top-down and bottom-up approaches, but what does this mean? There are several books and manuals concerning the science of MPA management and providing frameworks for evaluation, but these are predominantly written from a natural science perspective and do not consider this question in sufficient depth to provide detailed guidance on MPA governance approaches to practitioners. Much of the existing guidance on managing MPAs draws on the wider management processes literature, whereby various clearly defined stages are recognised from objective setting through to evaluation, with feedback loops to promote adaptation. Such approaches are important and the developing manual '*How is your MPA managed?*' will make a key contribution to disseminating 'good practice' in this respect.

In order to explore the question - 'what does combine top-down and bottom-up approaches to MPA governance mean? - the marine protected area governance (MPAG) workshop was held in Mali-Lošinj,Croatia, 12-16 October 2009 with financial support from UNEP's Marine Ecosystem Unit (Division for Environmental Policy Implementation) and organisational and additional financial support from Dr Peter Mackelworth and his colleagues at Blue World. This workshop involved 25 participants and was focused on 17 case studies from around the world. A further 3 case studies are also being analysed as part of this project (total of 20).

Governance as a balancing act

This project focuses on a key challenge: providing for meaningful stakeholder participation in MPA decision-making processes whilst also providing for the fulfilment of strategic marine biodiversity conservation objectives. It is premised on the view that the successful governance of MPAs essentially involves addressing basic conflicts between conserving biodiversity and exploiting marine resources. There may be 'win-win' synergies between these objectives but the reality is that most MPAs have to address such basic conflicts and that the main reason MPAs may not be effective in achieving biodiversity conservation objectives is that they lack the capacity to address such conflicts. Whilst the involvement of direct and indirect users of MPAs (stakeholders) is rightfully widely regarded as a key priority, it must also be recognised that in order to address such basic conflicts there often needs to be a balance between the steering, if not controlling, role of relevant authorities and the devolvement of authority to stakeholders. If an appropriate balance is not achieved there are risks that the vested interests of certain stakeholders will influence MPA management decisions to the degree that the strategic biodiversity conservation obligations are undermined.

This partially devolved mode of management, whereby the relevant authorities and stakeholders collaborate in reaching and implementing MPA decisions through partnerships, is often referred to as 'governance' or, in the context of protected areas and natural resource management, as 'collaborative management'. There is a growing literature that analyses issues related to MPA governance and/or collaborative management but there has not yet been a comprehensive and systematic analysis that

focuses on 'getting the balance right' between providing for meaningful stakeholder participation in MPA decision-making processes whilst also providing for the fulfilment of strategic marine biodiversity conservation objectives.

Many studies are implicitly focused on demonstrating the merits of a particular element of governance, be this:-

- community-based management informed by local knowledge and achieved through cooperation;

- economic incentives &/or the assignation of property rights;

- controlling role of the state informed by expert knowledge and enforced through law.

The study will take a wider approach, recognising that most elements or approaches have their merits and that a given governance regime will involve a combination of approaches. It is premised on the recognition that successful governance of MPAs involves a careful balancing act in relation to various challenges:-

Top-down approach	----∧----	**bottom-up approach**
Science-based approach	----∧----	Faith-based approach
Use of 'expert' knowledge	----∧----	Use of local knowledge
Biodiversity conservation objectives	----∧----	(Sustainable) resource exploitation objectives
Precautionary approach	----∧----	Pragmatic approach
Environmental justice	----∧----	Social justice

Aims of the study

The study is focused on collating 'good practice' in addressing the challenge of successfully governing MPAs in various contexts, success being judged on the basis of 'getting the balance right' through an appropriate **combination of governance approaches**. It recognises that MPA practitioners around the world are engaged in 'getting the balance right' on a day-to-day and year-to-year basis, and a variety of 'good practice' combinations approaches will have been developed that are appropriate to the context of a given MPA. The study will systematically compare and analyse a representative range of MPA case studies from around the world, with the aim of:-

- identifying examples of such good practice in terms of which combinations of governance approaches are effective in addressing the basic conflicts in the context of a given MPA;

- assessing their transferability to other MPA contexts;

- producing a guide to different approaches to governing MPAs and how they might be combined.

A key focus of the study will be to assess which combinations of management structures and approaches appear to represent good practice in terms of 'incentivising' effective MPA governance by actually addressing conflicts. Incentives will be analysed using categories such as the following:-

Economic incentives:
Green marketing, property rights, benefits internalisation, diversification, compensation, etc

Interpretative incentives:
Education, awareness raising, role of the media, etc

Knowledge incentives:
Increasing scientific certainty, collective learning, scientific arbitration panels, etc

<u>Legal incentives:</u>
Legal enforcement, decision-making platforms, role of authorities, legal interventions, enforcement on rogue/incoming 'freeriders', etc;

<u>Participative incentives</u>
Participation in decisions and management, respect for local traditions, promoting equity, access & justice, etc.

The authors and case study participants will collaborate to develop and flexibly apply a governance evaluation framework based on these categories of incentives in a variety of contexts. This will enable the identification of appropriate combinations of governance approaches and incentives that are effective in 'getting the balance right' and are thereby effective in addressing the challenges of achieving strategic marine biodiversity conservation objectives whilst providing for stakeholder participation. This project could therefore be considered as representing a **qualitative meta-analysis** to assess what represents good practice in MPA governance, recognising that 'good practice' will be a combination of different governance approaches/incentives that are appropriate to the context of a given MPA or network of MPAs.

It is stressed that the purpose of the study is not to develop an auto-evaluation framework for MPAs as this has already been achieved through the manual '*How is your MPA doing?*' Instead, the key purpose will be to:-

- seek examples of good practice in effectively governing MPAs

- analyse their transferability to different contexts

- collate different approaches to such good practice

- inform the development of a manual on MPA governance.

This will complement the manual '*How is your MPA doing?*' and the forthcoming manual '*How is your MPA managed?*' A key challenge for MPA networks is ensuring compliance through enforcement and this manual will therefore also complement the manual on '*Establishing MPA Networks*'.

The Next Steps

The consultation yielded a great deal of support for the proposal. The following case studies have been agreed as the foci of this study:-

Case Study MPA name	*Country*	*Case Study Coordinator(s)*
Great Barrier Reef Marine Park	Australia	Jon Day, GBRMPA
Chumbe MPA	Tanzania	Sybille Riedmiller
Ha Long Bay World Heritage Site	Vietnam	Bui Thi Thu Hein, IUCN Vietnam
Great South Bay Preserve, Long Island, NY	USA	Jay Udelhoven & Carl LoBue, The Nature Conservancy
Wakatobi, Karimunjawa (Indonesia) & Tubbataha (Philippines) MPAs	Coral Triangle	Stuart Green, Alan White (TNC), Angelique Songco, Stuart Campbell (WCS) , John Claussen, Julian Clifton & Marivel Dygico
National Marine Sanctuaries	United States	Liz Moore, Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, NOAA

California MPAs under the MLPA	United States	Mark Carr & Emily Saarman (UCSC)
Pirajubaé Marine Extractive Reserve & Baleia Franca Environmental Protection Area	Brazil	Leopoldo Gerhardinger (ECOMAR), Heitor Macedo & Melissa Vivacqua
Seaflower MPA	San Andres Archipelago, Colombia	Elizabeth Taylor (CORALINA), Mark Baine (IDB Consultant), Marion Howard (Brandeis Univ.) & Annette Kilmer (IDB)
Galápagos Islands Marine Reserve	Galápagos Islands, Ecuador	Veronica Toral, Consultant, Galápagos Islands & Alex Hearn, UC Davis
Isla Natividad MPA	Baja California	Wendy Weisman & Bonnie McCay, Rutgers University
Sanya MPA, Hainan	China	Wanfei Qiu, UCL
Cres-Lošinj Special Zoological Reserve	Croatia	Peter Mackelworth, Drasko Holcer & Caterina Fortuna (Blue World)
North-East Kent/Wash & North Norfolk Coast European Marine Sites	England	Tom Roberts & Peter Jones, UCL
Darwin Mounds Marine Special Area for Conservation	England	Elizabeth De Santo
Os Minarzos Marine Reserve	Galicia, Spain	Lucia Perez (independent) and José Pascual-Fernández (University of La Laguna)

The following timeline has been followed:-

End of January 2009	Finalised list of case studies
End February 2009	Agreement of 'case study analysis framework'
March - June 2009	Undertake case studies
May 2009	Presentation/discussion of preliminary results at workshops at IMPAC2 conference
June - September 2009	Further case study research, compilation and analysis of the findings
October 2009	International workshop to discuss the case studies and develop good practice guidance
March 2010	Publication of technical report to inform the development of a manual (phase 2)