OVERCROWDING DILEMMA

Role-playing game with different groups of stakeholders that highlights the need for empathy to reach agreements for the common good.

Learning experience

Topic

Destination development,
social media and communication

30–45 min

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Participants

- Know that the problems of overcrowding must be approached from a multifaceted and participartory perspective

- Understand the need for empathy and a spirit of negotiation and consensus to reach agreements for the common good

- Are able to define the problems of overcrowding

- Are able to analyse the causes of overcrowding in terms of the objectives of different social actors and prioritise them

- Are able to change perspectives and develop empathy with "the other" as base for negotiation and reaching consensus

- Are able to develop actions for problem solving

Suitable for
outdoor sport instructors
(and course participants)

(Practical sessions)
Theoretical lessons

(Outdoor F2F)
Indoor F2F
(Digital)

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Materials needed

- A visual element to present the case for overcrowding

- Paper and pen for each group

- A grid or "summary" board that allows to visually see the differences between the objectives pursued by the different social agents and to score the "ability" to empathise between the different groups

Preparation

Try to sensitise the participants with an image of overcrowding in a natural environment known (loved) by them.

Example: Make them close their eyes, imagine the idyllic landscape, in solitude, touching the water with their fingers, listening to the silence broken only by the soft murmur of the boat gliding across the water... when suddenly! They open their eyes and see this image. Houston! We have a problem!

Activity instruction

The educator describes the case study (that is beyond the carrying capacity) and the moral dilemma. Tell the group that the most important representatives of the different stakeholders will be involved to discuss the problem.

Then, the group gets divided into sub-groups of two to four people and is each given a role to represent a group of stakeholders: for example sports tourism service companies, hydroelectric company, users or local sports clubs, town council, hotels, local environmental group etc.

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1. Round: Ask them to specify the five most important objectives and to define an order of priority of the activity according the group they represent in that area. Give them a short implementation time (critical advocacy method) to try to bring out the most emotional discourse possible within the group. Keep this document.

2. / 3. / 4. … Round: After defining the objectives for their own group, ask them to "put themselves in the other's shoes". Let them write down (on another sheet of paper) the objectives they consider to be those of other groups we have set up, one after the other.

See pictures in appendix for explanation.

When this is completed, you can bring together and share the objectives of all stakeholder groups and compare the ability to empathise with the "other's" problem and their objectives.

If a proposal of objectives from the second round (for the other groups) matches the objectives of the stakeholder from the first round, they are given one point. If the objective is also presented with the right priority, the group gets two points.

Example: one group represents the hotels. In the second round they try to imagine what the objectives e.g. of the environment group are, in a third round they write down the objectives for the sports clubs etc. If those objectives match with those, the original (first round) environment group noted, they get scores etc.

The group with the most points and therefore best empathy for other stakeholders wins.

Reflection and discussion

Following the debate and the results of scores, a discussion on short and medium-term solutions should be facilitated.

In addition, it is important to highlight the need to consider a multifaceted analysis of a complex reality to develop solutions for the common good.

A conclusion can be made by trying to establish some minimum short-term action objectives for each of the social agents once they have empathised with the needs and the look of "the other".

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Potential variations

- The choice of the case as well as the stakeholders should be chosen according to the interests, biases, motivations, different ages and prior knowledge of the participants.
- If the situation is not clearly beyond carrying capacity, you can give the task to write down the positives and the negatives associated with the image from the perspective of each sector, or/and differentiate between social, environmental and economic factors.

Background knowledge

Background knowledge on understanding carrying capacity of certain environments can be helpful.

Key words

#overcrowding
#change of perspectives
#working together

Source

Inspired by "priorities" board game

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Materials

Visual Explanation

Round 1

Service operators:	Environmentalist:	Hotels:	Sport clubs:
1. Objective	1. Objective	1. Objective	1. Objective
2. Objective	2. Objective	2. Objective	2. Objective
3. ...	3. ...	3. ...	3. ...
4. ...	4. ...	4. ...	4. ...
5. ...	5. ...	5. ...	5. ...

Service operators · Environmnetal Party · Hotels · Local sport clubs

Round 2

Sport clubs want:	Service operator:	Environmentalist:	Hotels:
1. Objective	1. Objective	1. Objective	1. Objective
2. Objective	2. Objective	2. Objective	2. Objective
3. ...	3. ...	3. ...	3. ...
4. ...	4. ...	4. ...	4. ...
5. ...	5. ...	5. ...	5. ...

Service operators · Environmnetal Party · Hotels · Local sport clubs

Round 3

Hotels want:
1. Objective
2. Objective
3. ...
4. ...
5. ...

Sport clubs:
1. Objective
2. Objective
3. ...
4. ...
5. ...

Service operator :
1. Objective
2. Objective
3. ...
4. ...
5. ...

Environmentalist :
1. Objective
2. Objective
3. ...
4. ...
5. ...

Service operators

Environmnetal Party

Hotels

Local sport clubs

Scoring system

Service operators want:
1. More expensive
2. Limit unguided tours
3. Longer rentals
4. Nature conservation
5. More natural sites

Service operators want:
1. More expensive
2. Longer rentals
3. Limit unguided tours
4. More guests
5. Exclusive rights

Same objective + same order -> 2 points

Same objective, different order -> 1 point

Different objectives -> no points

Service operators

Environmnetal Party

Visual Example for Kayaking

Composite image of Pont d´Arc, Gorges de l´Ardèche, France, July 2021

Photograph by Natacha de Mahieu

The collaged image of the Pont d'Arc, a large natural bridge in Ardèche, south-east France, was made from photographs taken over a period of 80 minutes at the height of the tourist season. The final result is made from 100 images. De Mahieu's calls her photo series "Theatre of Authenticity" as they reveal the reality behind Instagram posts where people promote themselves in remote natural areas. "It is a commentary on how social media can transform places into must-see destinations – an influencer's Instagram post can open the floodgates".

Liu, R. (20. Aug. 2022). Wish you weren't here: the photos that show an hour in the life of 'quiet' tourist hotspots. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2022/aug/20/how-beauty-spots-would-look-if-tourists-all-visited-at-once-in-pictures