

Student handout 5.5

Summary: what can we learn through these games?

1. Development of a community: a sequence of problems and solutions

PROBLEM	SOLUTION
How can we survive?	We must draw on the natural resources we have – fish.
How can we settle our conflict by overfishing?	1. We need a concept of sustainability. 2. We need a framework of rules to organise our processes of communication and decision making.
1. How do we define sustainability?	We need a balance between several goals. In effect we must produce as much fish as the stocks can deliver without being depleted, so as to ensure stability for the future. We must share the output fairly.
2. What kind of rules do we need?	In designing our framework, we must make a choice between different principles – introducing a state, or developing a network of equals.
How do we prevent the abuse of power?	Too much power must not be placed in the hands of one person. Constitutions apply the following means: checks and balances, rule of law, giving human rights the status of civil rights, limiting periods of office, referenda, cantonal and federal autonomy, free press and media.
Who decides what framework of rules we get?	All of us together. We draft frameworks, and then make a choice and vote on it.
How do we organise this process fairly and efficiently?	We set up an agenda. We need a special framework of procedural rules that we have to agree on beforehand.

2. Conclusions

1. Politics is an effort to master problems that affect the well-being and survival of the community. Institutions, such as frameworks of rules, are tools to solve problems. If they do not serve their purpose well, they can and should be changed.
2. Conflict is always part of social and political life. While conflict cannot be eradicated, it is possible to control its disruptive potential.
3. The design of the fishing game and the decision-making game work like models. They come pretty near to historic reality in describing the development of a community as a series of problems and solutions.
4. Reality differs from the games in two important respects. First, we do not have such exact data on our natural resources as are available in the game. Second, democracies do not have democratic roots. Democracy and human rights are not established through conferences, but through conflict.