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State building on Mars: A model of real life relationships and values

Game Structure

Ukrainian civic activists played a game of colonizing Mars, in an attempt to experience the complexity of state building and social justice in developing an ideal society and its government.

The USAID/ENGAGE activity implemented by Pact ran an innovative social experiment, simulating "State-building on Mars." Over 120 participants from across Ukraine from a variety of civil society organizations, through negotiations and common decision-making process, established an ideal society and its government colonizing the remote Red Planet. They played the role of founding fathers through several rounds of this multiplayer game, designed and prototyped by Pact and partners to build a functional and socially effective state from the ground up. Participants adopted state legislation, elected a Prime Minister, initiated and conducted public discourses on crucial issues analogue to a transitional society.

Social groups were selected to be represented in the game structure that was modeled after State-Building as a Two-Level Game by Daniel Lambach of the German Institute of Global and Area Studies in Hamburg. Replicating this model, participants were put in situations that demonstrate inclusive state-building during the multiple rounds of voting for Martian legislation.

Groups were randomly divided into twenty social groups (ecologist, scientists, minorities, students, elite, PwD, Media etc.). Each group has starting conditions measured in points, the amount of points could be changed based on laws that come into effect? (104 ordinal and 20 Superlaws) and general conditions defined by Game Masters and Prime Minister. Every law has some advantages for one groups and disadvantages for another. If a group obtains 61+ points it can propose a Superlaw from a special additional list (20 items) and if a group has 101+ points it can write their own Superlaws and propose for voting.

Each group chooses their own laws. Five of the laws that have the most votes, but no fewer than three votes, will be enacted. There are six rounds of voting during the game. The Game Master is a group of five people who analyzes results of voting and sets up conditions based on the impact of new laws. The Prime Minister is a person elected from participants in the fourth round and has a right to use two initiatives without voting per round.

Analytical approaches

The method of triangulation is based on direct observation, participants' feedback, game masters' feedback, game matrix analysis and recorded voting data was used.

Game Process: Lessons Learned

The first learned lesson is that on the first round the main constitutional rule of the game was violated: in reality came 6 laws instead of 5. Hence, in an ideal world if all teams choose the most rational design it would be the alliances of three groups, because it allows them to adopt 3 laws for such group per round. We had20 groups or 6 triplets, that allows them to adopt 18 laws per round or 108 laws during the game. The total number of laws (excluding Superlaws) is 104, hence all possible laws could be adopted despite any external factors.

During the game only 27 ordinal laws were adopted: in other words the Mars society realized only a quarter of its power and possibilities. Why did this happene? The reason is because the backend people counting voting points manually had made personal judgements in addition to making counting mistakes resulted in the first protest campaign for changing the list of adopted laws and a second protest against Game Masters and MC. The comparison between the affected laws (Game) in the game and the real voting without any counting mistakes (#noKivalov) can be seen in Charts 1a and 1b below.

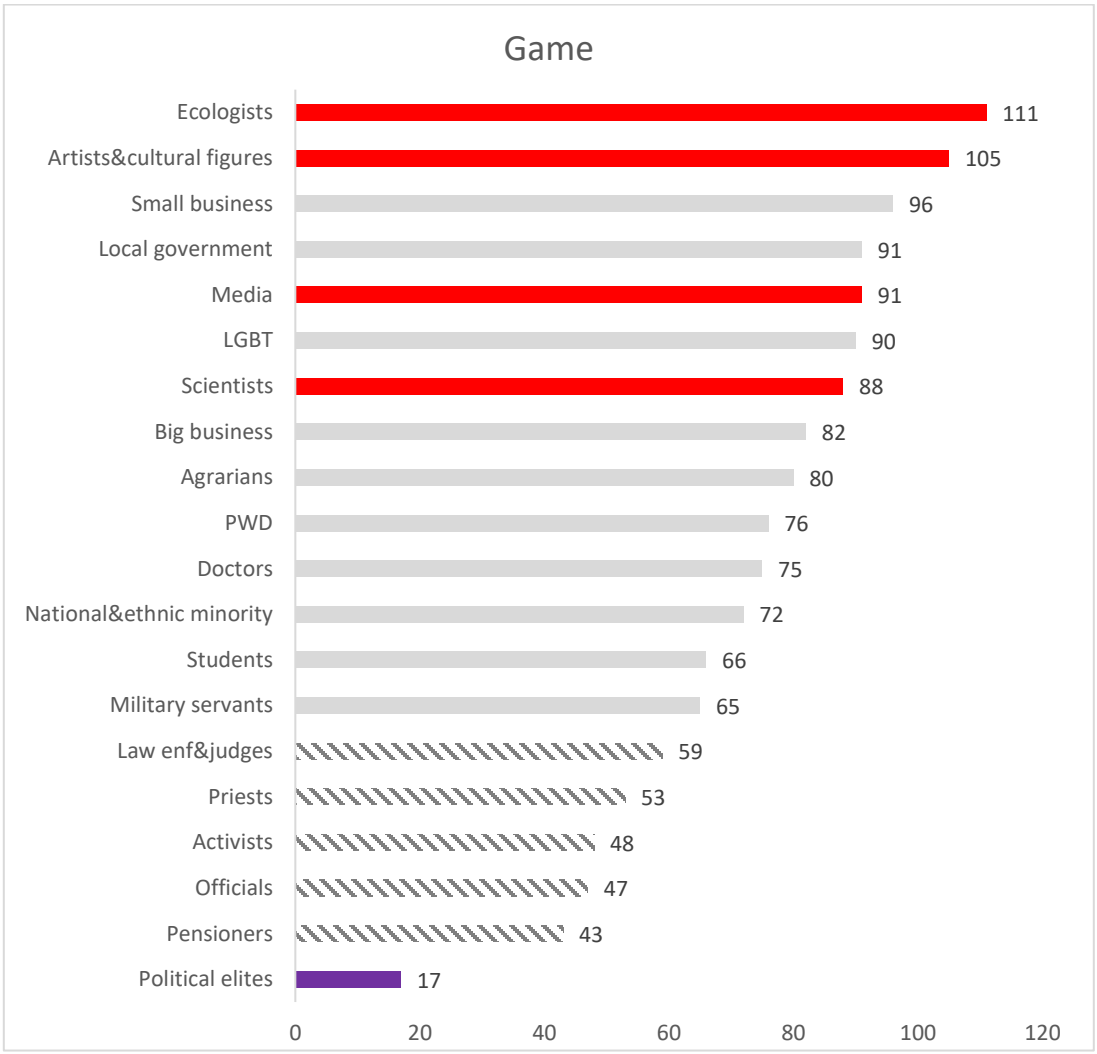


Chart 1a. Results calculated and presented during the Game

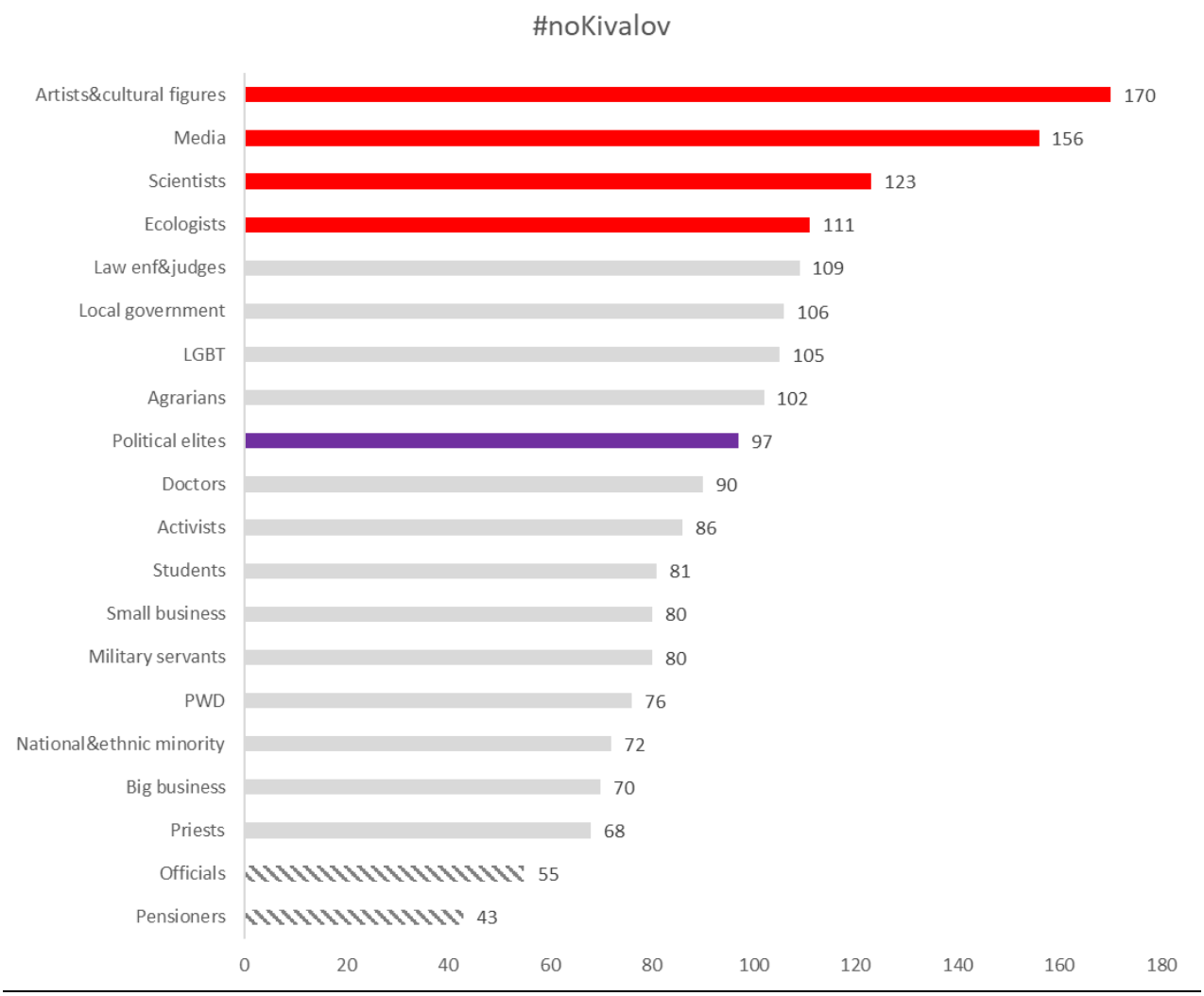


Chart 1b. Results without calculation mistakes.

As we can see the results are dramatically different and the wrong calculation influenced a dynamic of some participants and that is also mentioned in many participants' surveys.

The second lesson. Participants were not listening to the rules of the game, during the announcement they were looking in cards and playing with tables. Partly it was because of bad sound in some areas of location.

The third lesson is that game design only benefitted a few groups. And this benefited groups has advantage on other groups and it potentially influence on game dynamic. In the table below the mentioned groups are highlighted in yellow which has minimum negative impact whatever they wish to do.

Table 1. Points balance

Group	**Balance**	Total negative points	Total positive points	# negative laws	# positive laws	Total influential laws
Activists	188	-109	297	17	22	39
Military servants	186	-33	219	4	12	16
Scientists	176	-46	222	7	16	23
PWD	159	-7	166	1	12	13
Local government	154	-11	165	2	10	12
Political elites	151	-88	239	13	20	33
National&ethnic minority	151	0	151	0	10	10
Ecologists	148	-31	179	4	10	14
Media	146	-7	153	1	9	10
Small business	145	-133	278	21	20	41
LGBT	142	-16	158	2	10	12
Agrarians	131	-4	135	2	7	9
Artists&cultural figures	108	-37	145	5	9	14
Students	107	-26	133	5	7	12
Pensioners	101	-45	146	7	9	16
Doctors	99	-21	120	4	8	12
Officials	95	-61	156	12	12	24
Law enf&judges	93	-64	157	12	10	22
Priests	85	-25	110	3	5	8
Big business	68	-141	209	23	16	39

After the final round all groups had high scores with points above 75 points (maximum 111, minimum 17).

Influence of Alliances

In addition to the point balance also was disbalance in number of predesigned alliances, that influenced on participants' behavior. As it was noted by observers and Game Masters participants started their interaction looking at scores of laws, not on sense. Table 2 is sorted by the number of alliances on win-win strategies. So the alliances were built on the game predesign base mostly.

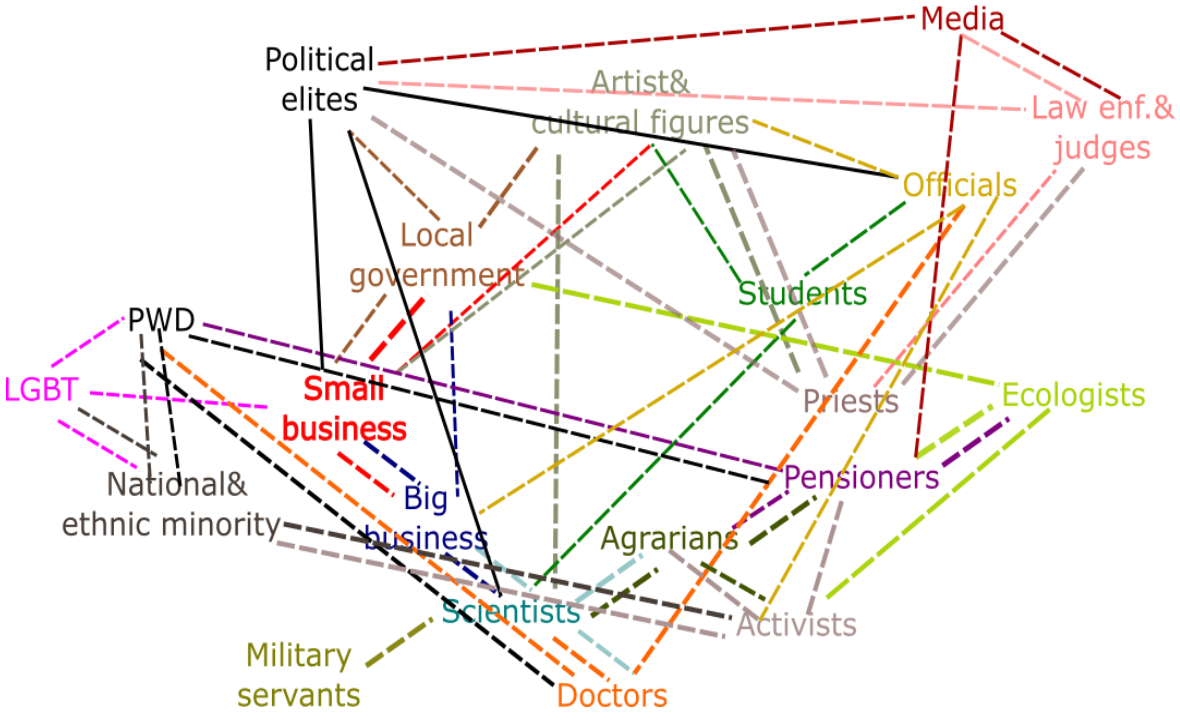
As we can see the maximum points of potential alliances (15 of 20) have two groups andthe only group with minimum alliances is the Military servants which had an alliance with one group. That influenced game dynamic and only Game Masters decision provide some game points for Military servants group.

In addition protentional predesigned alliances are visualized for top 3 (from point perspective) allies on picture 1.

On chart 2 it is easy to see that the group of Military servants is excluded by game design. In Picture1, you can see that most groups had two-way relationships with at least one other group. Only political elites is the only group with one-way relationships.

Table 2. Alliances win-win

Group	Potential	Win-Win 100%	Win Share	Positive points	Negative points
Ecologists	**15**	**9**	**60%**	**270**	**-110**
Political elites	15	4	27%	603	-176
Small business	14	6	43%	595	-157
Scientists	14	6	43%	374	-141
Activists	14	8	57%	303	-92
LGBT	**13**	**8**	**62%**	**403**	**-83**
Pensioners	**13**	**8**	**62%**	**266**	**-74**
Artists&cultural figures	12	7	58%	267	-46
Agrarians	**11**	**10**	**91%**	**268**	**-51**
Doctors	11	6	55%	202	-63
Big business	**10**	**6**	**60%**	**407**	**-136**
Media	10	3	30%	262	-110
Local government	10	4	40%	367	-78
PWD	**10**	**6**	**60%**	**283**	**-102**
Officials	10	2	20%	311	-110
Law enf&judges	9	6	67%	290	-108
National&ethnic minority	8	4	50%	306	-42
Priests	**7**	**6**	**86%**	**150**	**-30**
Students	4	2	50%	62	-58
Military servants	1	0	0%	20	-112



Picture 1. Game alliances (top 3)

Explanation: Dotted lines for example between National&ethnic minority and PWD demonstrates two way alliance. Solid line from Ecologist to Activist – one way alliance.

Participants behavior

Note: here and below all group and participants behavior description and analysis is related to only participants in the exact event on Nov 28, 2018 and cannot be extrapolated to any other groups or people.

The game represents real attitudes and values of participants to state-building and life issues. For example, communication relations based on real-life not on game roles. The first part of the game (3 rounds) was mostly focused on small group interests even MC and gamemasters strongly influenced on shifting to consensus based decisions, at the same time from the very first round some groups started to talk about unity and decisions for common interest.

Game Masters made an intervention related to war conflict with other state, and the second time the same was done regarding pensioners discrimination that resulted in protests.

During the game was a group of observers who made notes related to game process. Observers mentioned that if people has or had some relations in real life it effects on game process. In other words participants made alliances based on trust firstly and secondly on common interest.

From what is described above we can say that participants behavior was not congruent: they were publicly saying one thing but on practice – doing another. It was hard to have other behavior in voting alliances because all voices were public and groups periodically check how their allies voted.

It is interesting to observe values and communication messages in the Prime Minister (PM) rally. During the game all participants demonstrated their empathy and sharing values of groups which they are representing (inclusion to the group was a random process). Despite the values of each group mostly all candidates mentioned in their messages: economy, security, coalitions, education. But due to the game situation economy was not the issue, hypothesis here proposed by game masters is that candidates' behaviors like political candidates in real life - use populism.

Picture 2. World cloud of main Prime Minister rally candidates' messages

The rally was done in two steps and in the PwD representative PwD won. In real life this lady is affiliated with political party – Narodnyi Rukh, and due to the game design PWD had 10 potential win-win allies that also influenced. Very interesting moment was in period when PM have to select laws and despite the rhetoric for coalitions and transparency she by her own started to choose laws. At one moment some participant came to PM and show the list who voted for her and said: "Please do not forget what groups voted for you". Her answer was: "I remember all of them" and it resulted to kickback from PM to her voters.
Only in next rounds because of Agrarians group PM started consultations with other and it was easy to see two groups during negotiation period, one – Agrarians, other – PM group.

Group tactics:

General group tactic was to build alliances based on scorecards and with moto not to betray your partner. Scientists group due to the game design and internal strategy choose tactic of small steps. From three voices for three laws one should go to the law that gives maximum bonuses for group and two – for other groups. This strategy helped to achieve better than average results among all groups.

The group of Agrarians had a lot of influence to the whole Mars' community partly because of game design but also personal skills of group leaders also affected on it. And at the end of the game (5^{th} round) for lowering the level of criticism from other groups. Agrarians used their option to write a personal law which taken some game points from them. In other words they have done some sacrifice for community had.

Group of PWD used their activities mostly for creating effective alliances and despite not very large scores, bit most of their allies had more the average scores and they had PM – representative of PWD group. This tactics demonstrate the strength of networks even if it consists from not the most nominal influencers.

Summary

So what?

- The SOM Game provide opportunity to explore on a practical the level of competences among activists
- Only external common problems can be a motive to unite
- Democratic values, integrity and unity are more popular behaviors among participants
- Alliances were based on previous experience (trust is first motivation factor)
- The game is designed to represent real life attitudes and values of citizens actively partaking in state building and reforming societies. Pact received overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants and have been requested already to take this simulation exercise to all oblasts of Ukraine. Participants have proactively offered to host this or an iteration of this role play exercise in their communities.
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What to do better:

1. Sound – participants could not always hear what was going on. In some cases it was because of internal group discussions, in other casesit wasbecause of general sound hardware.
2. Tablets and software for voting – during at least 3 of 6 rounds in different game periods there were problemsproblem with voting, calculations of voices, and presentation of final results.
3. It is better to announce "borders" of the game. During lunchtime there was non-ecological behavior by participants and some groups were punished by gamemasters for that.
4. In the debriefing session after game, Game Masters conclusions were not enough and some change and more participatory format should be done.
5. Better define Game masters roles
6. Have two or more "unexpected" scenarios designed for facilitating game dynamic
7. Pretest of tablets, software for eliminating technical issues.
8. Balance the game: some groups should have bigger number of protentional allies.
9. Rules should be immutable: if in the constitution mentioned no more than tree laws, hence only three laws should be adopted in one round.