

**Tomorrow never dies: performing a ‘premortem’ on Belgian industry-fisheries science partnerships**

Sebastian S. Uhlmann, Ruben Theunynck, Arne Kinds and Kim Sys

Industry-science partnerships frequently fail due to a lack of transparency, economic incentives, unclear communication, distrust or diverging perceptions of the problem in the first place. To facilitate a project's success, we propose the ‘premortem’ method used in psychology and applied in the business world to imagine the most spectacular failure of a project, by mapping the reasoning to explain why it has gone horribly wrong. Using such prospective hindsight, more clearly structures the outcome and contributing factors, than thinking up a multitude of scenarios of ‘ifs’ and ‘maybes’. Further, it does allow participating parties not to hold back constructive criticism due to loyalty issues. Performing such a premortem, we have identified for both ongoing and proposed Belgian industry-science partnerships some potential shortcomings in the design and implementation. The VALDUVIS project involves the development of an indicator-based sustainability assessment tool for fishers that draws upon logbook, auction sale slips and at-sea monitoring records to evaluate environmental, social and economic sustainability. Within the ongoing survival project, scientists board commercial vessels to collect data about discard welfare and associated stressors. The electronic monitoring project proposes the use of camera technology to monitor catches of sole in the Irish Sea to complement traditional fisheries-dependent data collection by observers. The premortem method may be a useful tool in the project planning phase to improve success rates of industry-science partnerships.

Keywords: beam-trawl fishery; co-operative research; North Sea; premortem decision-making

*Contact author: Sebastian S. Uhlmann, Institute for Agricultural and Fisheries Research (ILVO), Ankerstraat 1, 8400 Oostende, phone: +32 59 569897, email: [sebastian.uhlmann@ilvo.vlaanderen.be](mailto:sebastian.uhlmann@ilvo.vlaanderen.be)*