

ENVIRONMENTAL COLLABORATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION



August 2018

The Crossroads of Forestry, Ecosystem
Services and Wildlife

NOVA University Network Course Report

Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution (5 ECTS)

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Cover Photo: Juha Kotilainen

Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution

THE CROSSROADS OF FORESTRY, ECOSYSTEM SERVICES AND WILDLIFE

INTRODUCTION

Students, researchers and practicing professionals from 20 different countries gathered at the University of Eastern Finland in Joensuu, Finland, 20-24 August 2018, for the third NOVA (Nordic Forestry, Veterinary and Agricultural University Network) course on Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution. The course was organised in collaboration with the University of Eastern Finland (UEF), the University of Copenhagen, the University of Agder in Norway, the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU), and ALL-YOUTH and CORE research projects. Funding was provided by the Nordic Forestry, Veterinary and Agricultural University Network (NOVA) and the Strategic Research Council (SRC) at the Academy of Finland.

The action-packed week, led by Professor Irmeli Mustalahti (University of Eastern Finland) and Dr. Antti Erkkilä (University of Eastern Finland) with the help of the invited key international expert, Professor Mara Hernández (CIDE, Mexico) and several other experts, was filled with lectures, practice-driven exercises and other activities. The diverse group of people with different backgrounds was bound together by similar interests in environmental conflicts and collaboration. This year, conflict situations discussed in the course were related to the conflicting interests of the forest industry, bioenergy, tourism, fishing, harvesting wild berries and mushrooms, and landscape protection. Furthermore, students worked



FIGURE 1: COURSE PARTICIPANTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN FINLAND, JOENSUU CAMPUS (PHOTO: VARPU HEISKANEN)

on real-life conflict cases which were topical for the participants as well as on cases introduced in the course program.

The structure of the course

The course was designed around a framework of environmental collaboration and conflict resolution and drew from a spectrum of different possible interventions. The course progressed by introducing collaborative management and participatory methods, and continued with the theory and practice of collaboration, mediation and consensus building. This type of approach includes, at its core, elements from interest-based negotiation theory and builds on a collaborative model of consensus building.

This report gives an overview of the course methods and discussions as well as some reflections from the students and the experts.

THE DRIVERS AND DYNAMICS OF NATURAL RESOURCE CONFLICTS

Categorizing the reasons for natural resource conflicts is not a simple task. Through utilizing the students' own research cases, we learned quickly that there often are multiple aspects at play. Furthermore, even though we talk about environmental conflicts, there are usually human related issues behind them, which may even extend to the inter-personal level. Indeed, **behind most environmental problems there are socially related challenges that need to be addressed.**

However, while it may be difficult, conflicts can be categorized according to causes or by the ways different parties approach them. Conflicts can be caused by conflicting interests, information or relationships, which are generally issues that can be negotiated. On the other hand, there can be issues related to values, power and social structures, which may be difficult or almost impossible to solve. Environmental conflicts can also include factors from all the above categories, which can make them incredibly complex. Moreover, conflicts are



FIGURE 2: PROF. IRMELI MUSTALAHTI CATEGORIZING CONFLICT CASES (PHOTO: ANTTI ERKKILÄ)

not always a bad thing. They can even be seen as necessary and inevitable; injustices or other problems may be brought to light, and eventually lead to a better situation. They can provide an opportunity for change or for triggering coalition building for positive change. In this context, we can talk about conflict transformation. Conflicts have a role to play, but the prevention of violence should always be the priority as was emphasized in the lectures.

Dividers and connectors

Throughout the course, we were asked to think about the dividers and connectors in our own conflict cases as well as in the cases introduced during the course. **Dividers** are factors that divide the communities or the stakeholders in the case. On the contrary, **connectors** are factors that can bind the stakeholders together and which constitute local resources for peace. Both connectors and dividers can be systems and institutions, attitudes and behaviors, values and interests, and so on. This kind of analysis can help us plan our resource management strategy so as to avoid feeding into existing dividers and, instead, build on connectors. Along with dividers and connectors, a stakeholder analysis (also known as conflict analysis or situation analysis) plays a key role at the beginning of any kind of

conflict resolution process. The historical context of the society or the local community usually reveals the different and sometimes numerous causes that have triggered the current conflict.

Conflict transformation and collaborative approaches

The conflict transformation approach highlights the importance of addressing the underlying conditions which have played a role in the rise of the conflict. This approach can be seen as more comprehensive compared to traditional conflict resolution or management approaches, which have a narrower focus on reducing outbreaks of hostility. Conflict transformation attempts to understand the existing social structures and then change the destructive patterns. These approaches have produced several positive impacts, as Professor Mara Hernández elaborated.

For conflict transformation to be successful, it requires a collaborative approach to negotiations. Furthermore, for a long-term agreement to be possible, the real needs and interests of the parties need to be identified, rather than just their positions. During the course, many of the practical exercises touched on the challenges of negotiations and the key elements of a collaborative approach (more about them later). The so called seven elements are:

- **Interests:** knowing your and the other side's interests provides leverage for the negotiations
- **Options:** you should have as many options as possible for different outcomes
- **Alternatives (BATNA):** best alternative to negotiated agreement – if one party has a better alternative than the negotiated agreement, nothing stops it from leaving the table.
- **Legitimacy:** legitimate standards show to the other party that you are being reasonable
- **Communication:** asking the good questions and active listening
- **Relationship:** maintaining a good relationship increases goodwill
- **Commitment:** successful outcomes requires commitment from all parties

Conflict transformation attempts to understand the existing social structures and then change the destructive patterns

These seven elements should be seen as enabling conditions for a transformative approach, but they are not enough alone. Interventions to tackle and prevent socioenvironmental conflicts under a transformative approach should also consider:



FIGURE 3: PROF. MARA HERNÁNDEZ ON THE INEVITABILITY OF CONFLICT (PHOTO: ANTTI ERKKILÄ)

- A mindset that acknowledges that collaborative and advocacy efforts can be complementary rather than competing strategies, to avoid stigma against activists and other actors using disruptive strategies.
- A detailed understanding of conflict drivers and local resources for peace (dividers and connectors) to avoid unintended harm by exacerbating existing dividers, or missing opportunities to strengthen existing connectors.
- Cross-sectoral prioritization of violence prevention and reduction in public planning.
- Inclusion of all key stakeholders, particularly the most vulnerable.
- Understand and place interventions in “de facto” dynamics/rules/actors.
- Use external third-party interventions to assist inclusive negotiations, agreements & capacity building among local actors.
- Account for missing social functions, such as accountability and transparency mechanisms, in designing implementation and monitoring of agreements.

However, as Professor Irmeli Mustalahti reminded us, sometimes you need to have a realistic attitude towards the conflict. There are conflicts that have lasted for generations, and it is simply unrealistic to expect to solve them in one single process. Sometimes it may be enough to just make progress in one of the three aspects,



FIGURE 4: DISCUSSING WHAT CONFLICTS ARE RELATED TO 'THE EVERYMAN'S RIGHT' (PHOTO: RISTO LÖF)

substance, procedure or relations, and the process will already be called a success.



FIGURE 5: DR. TERO MUSTONEN EXPLAINING HOW THE TRADITIONAL FISHING METHODS WORK (PHOTO: RISTO LÖF)

EXCURSION TO ILOMANTSI

The intense week was split up by an excursion to Kivilahti village in Ilomantsi. The day included expert presentations and group exercises. After the powerful presentation by Dr. Tero Mustonen about the transformation of the Koitere lake area (environmentally and socially) and Dr. Timo J. Hokkanen's presentation about the North Karelia Biosphere Reserve, the class divided into four groups. The groups undertook a “fact finding mission” with different topics related to conflicts of interests in land use. The different cases that the groups studied also had some kind of local context, and part of the exercise included gathering information from the local representatives in addition to the experts. Indeed, this local versus expert dynamic was discussed widely in the reflections after the excursion.

The themes for the groups were:

- 1) Global interest, local realities: Paris agreement and bioenergy
- 2) Options for forest management – but whose?
- 3) Multi-purpose forest and overlapping interest
- 4) Does landscape protection conflict with the use of natural resources?

As may be evident from the names of the themes, the cases had multiple dimensions, levels

and interests, which compelled the students to consider the issues from many different angles. Furthermore, as discussed after the excursion, the conflicts are not always visible; they can be hidden or latent and discovering them requires well conducted assessments.

Local vs. expert knowledge

A valuable observation, discussed during reflections on the excursion, was the role of experts and locals in an environmental conflict. Traditionally, it has perhaps been all too common to ignore local people's knowledge or views in situations where "outsider experts" intervene in an attempt to solve the conflict. As local knowledge is rarely presented in the form of scientific language or numbers, its value can be underrated or even ignored. However, any kind of sustainable solution is rarely possible without including it into the process.



FIGURE 6: ENVIRONMENTAL EXPERTS, INCLUDING COORDINATOR OF THE NORTH KARELIA BIOSPHERE RESERVE DR. TIMO J. HOKKANEN FROM THE CENTRE FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TRANSPORT AND THE ENVIRONMENT, SHARED THEIR EXPERIENCES WITH THE STUDENTS (PHOTO: RISTO LÖF)

PRACTICAL EXERCISES

One of the key elements of the course was the practical exercises which were sprinkled over the course week. These exercises simulated real life negotiation situations and allowed the students to experience them and reflect on their own and others' behavior in different roles and cases. The exercises varied from simple one-on-one negotiations to the more complex multi-party negotiations. Here are some of the key lessons the students took home from these exercises.

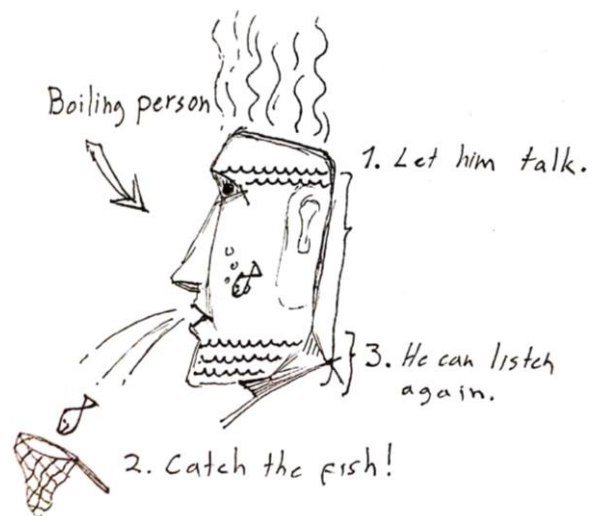
The importance of listening cannot be overemphasized. Conflict situations are frustrating and the feeling of not being heard is often behind this. People are often unable to listen to anything, rational or not, when they are emotionally fuming. This state blocks your ability to process any new information. In these situations, it may be beneficial to let the person



FIGURE 7: AT THE BEGINNING OF THE COURSE THERE WAS A NETWORKING EXERCISE WHICH DEMONSTRATED THE IMPORTANCE OF COLLABORATION AND TRUST BUILDING (PHOTO: ANTTI ERKKILÄ)

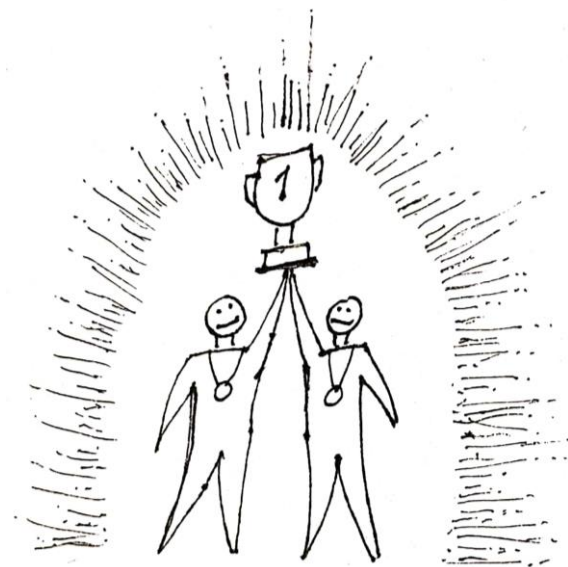
speak and just focus on listening. Active listening is a skill and hard work: you have to be able to pick up the key issues from the stream of consciousness.

Winning is not the same as being a winner. In fact, they are very different when it comes to interest-based negotiation. The "winner" mentality, where the goal is to gain as much as possible while others gain very little to nothing,



DRAWING 1: HOW TO DEAL WITH EMOTIONALLY FUMING PERSON: 1) LET HIM TALK. 2) LISTEN TO WHAT HE IS REALLY SAYING. 3) ONCE HE FEELS HE IS BEING HEARD, HE CAN PROCESS NEW INFORMATION AGAIN. (JUHA M. KOTILAINEN)

can often result in a situation where the total pot of benefits is much smaller than it would have been with the “winning” attitude, where you are looking for mutual benefits that can be accomplished together. Recognizing which interests are distributive and which ones are integrative is essential for this. This kind of collaborative approach will require willingness to collaborate, a proactive strategy to build mutual trust and generate a shared understanding that the solution should be beneficial for all parties, as well as active listening to understand the perspectives and priority needs of the other parties.



DRAWING 2: COLLABORATIVE “WINNING” APPROACH REQUIRES: 1) WILLINGNESS TO COOPERATE, 2) MUTUAL TRUST, 3) SHARED UNDERSTANDING THAT THE SOLUTION COULD BE BENEFICIAL FOR ALL PARTIES (JUHA M. KOTILAINEN)

Lack of preparation is one of the major reasons why negotiations end up in failure. If efforts have not been made to build shared understanding, first within the negotiating groups and next with the two (or more) parties, then achieving mutually beneficial agreements becomes significantly harder. In utilizing interest-based negotiation, it is important to know what the parties’ priority conditions are in order to be able to give in on the less critical issues. It should not be forgotten that often the best way to get what you want is to help others get what they want.



FIGURE 8: NEGOTIATION BETWEEN AN IMAGINARY ENERGY COMPANY AND FIRST NATION GROUP (PHOTO: ANTTI ERKKILÄ)

Negotiating in packages provides a number of advantages. While the traditional linear approach may be more orderly and suitable for solving smaller issues, there is a risk that the one item that cannot be resolved blocks the whole process. The package approach increases the chances of win-win outcomes because parties are more likely to get what they want. Nobody might like every point in the package, but it can prevent deadlocks if we manage to design a package that seems reasonable to everyone insofar as it reflects a genuine effort to include the priorities of all parties. This approach can also enable more creative solutions and demonstrate good faith of the participants because concessions are made. When dealing with complex issues, the approach can help to understand the big picture and all the links and connections.



FIGURE 9: ON A FACT-FINDING MISSION IN ILOMANTSI (PHOTO: ANTTI ERKKILÄ)

Expert & student presentations

The various expert and student presentations during the week added depth and addressed some more specific issues under the course themes. Sílvia Maússe Siteo told us about how the youth could mitigate conflicts in the case study from Mozambique and Tiina Jääskeläinen discussed the epistemological pluralism and geopolitics of knowledge in the Sámi context.



FIGURE 10: TIINA JÄÄSKELÄINEN DISCUSSING HOW THE TRADITIONAL LIFESTYLE OF SAMI PEOPLES IS BEING THREATENED BY VARIOUS PRESSURES (PHOTO: ANTI ERKKILÄ)

Professor Ismo Pölonen (University of Eastern Finland) focused on the role of participatory rights and legal aspects in conflict resolution and illustrated the subject with a forestry case. Forestry has a special place in Finnish society and it seems also to possess some special rights. This is of course due to historical reasons – the sector has shaped the Finnish economy in the past and it still has a lot of power, even if its role has significantly decreased.



FIGURE 11: VIOLETA GUTIÉRREZ ZAMORA DISCUSSING THE COMPLEXITY OF HER CASE STUDY IN OAXACA, MEXICO (PHOTO: ANTTI ERKKILÄ)

Dr. Jukka Tikkanen (University of Eastern Finland) discussed collaborative forest governance in Finland. He explained different participation theories and illustrated how they have been applied (or not) in practice in the context of Finnish forest governance. In his view, the purpose of the Finnish regional forest programs should be discussed, because currently their objectives do not include a wide variety of voices, but instead have a tendency to maintain the status quo with less input of environmental and social perspectives.

Conducting research in a conflict situation requires special sensitivity and addressing the ethics of intervention

Conducting research in a conflict situation requires special sensitivity and addressing the ethics of intervention. The potential consequences of research, sensitive topics and understanding different truths are some of the issues that need special consideration in these cases. Professor Jens Emborg (University of Copenhagen) lectured about this topic, and also presented a case study from Eastern Mau Forest, Kenya. Sensitivity may affect every stage in the research process from design to application in various ways. Related to the same theme, Violeta Gutiérrez Zamora (University of Eastern Finland) presented her research of land use conflicts in Oaxaca in Mexico, where she uses the environmental collaboration approach. This approach views the **environment as a potential element for peace building**. Her example elaborated well how the structural factors and historical context have contributed to the current situation of land use conflicts in the area.

Emma Luoma from the consultancy company Akordi, which specializes in consensus building and collaborative approaches in cases usually involving reconciliation of multiple interests, presented the consensus building process of strategic forest planning in Jyväskylä. The company worked as a neutral party and facilitator in the process. This recently finished and pioneered approach in Finland has produced good results, and it is likely to serve



FIGURE 12: THE CONSENSUS BUILDING PROCESS OF THE STRATEGIC FOREST PLANNING IN THE TOWN OF JYVÄSKYLÄ - KEY STAGES OF THE PROCESS (EMMA LUOMA, 2018)

as a practical example for the practitioners in the field. Emma explained how the collaborative negotiation process moved through carefully planned steps (see Figure 12), such as stakeholder assessment and joint fact-finding, and altogether 19 different meetings were held before arriving at the desired outcome.

Emma highlighted some of the key elements (several of which were familiar from the course material) behind the successful process. These were: inclusive participation and interest-based discussions, learning together (joint fact-finding), feeling of fairness and consensus-based decision-making, finding mutual gains and packaging solutions, and the growth of intellectual, social and institutional capital. This example case helped the class to see how the concepts from the course had been implemented in practice.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

As the course was closing, we finished with a round of reflection around the class. During the round, you could sense that the fact that environmental conflicts can be incredibly complex and sometimes even “unsolvable” had

been a key lesson for many. Completing a few courses is unlikely to give you the tools to solve every conflict you come across.

While this can even be a depressing revelation

“Searching for the origins of conflicts is just one example of a never-ending story. We can call it a science, an art or just a life...”

Rita Šilingienė, course participant

for some, it can be argued that these kinds of learning environments also generate a lot of hope. It shows that there are people who are genuinely interested in taking on these complex challenges and willing to take these lessons and apply them in practice. As Professor John-Andrew McNeish (Norwegian University of Life Sciences) noted, this field of research is still narrow, and we need people like you now more than ever – we should appreciate and sustain these connections we made with each other during the course.



FIGURE 13: PARTICIPANTS REFLECTING ON THE EXPERIENCE FROM THE EXCURSION AT KIVILAHTI VILLAGE, ILOMANTSI (PHOTO: KUN WOO RO)

More reading

Course reflection by Juha M. Kotilainen

Learning from our Failures and Successes: 30 Lessons about Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution. 18.10.2018

<http://www.collaboration.fi/2018/10/18/learning-from-our-failures-and-successes-30-lessons-about-environmental-collaboration-and-conflict-resolution/>

Course reflection by Emma Luoma

How to win together. 3.9.2018

https://akordi.fi/?page_id=1807&lang=en

Course at UEF news by Risto Löf and Antti Erkkilä

New tools for environmental conflict resolution. 30.8.2018

<http://www.uef.fi/en/-/uusia-tyokaluja-ymparistosovitteluun-ja-luonnonvarahallintaan>

Course at NOVA Facebook

The third NOVA PhD course on Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution. 5.9.2019

<https://www.facebook.com/novauniversity.org/photos/a.2574509962623339/2574510619289940/?type=3&theater>

Course series background by Antti Erkkilä

Nuoret, rauha ja turvallisuus -päätöslauselma kannustaa kehittämään myös paikallista konfliktien ratkaisua, 29.10.2018

<https://www.allyouthstn.fi/nuoret-rauha-ja-turvallisuus-paatoslauselema-kannustaa-kehittamaan-myo-s-paikallista-konfliktienratkaisua/>

Course organizers and experts

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International expert on mediation and dialogue

Prof. Mara Hernández, Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas (CIDE), Mexico

Nordic teachers

Prof. Jens Emborg, University of Copenhagen, Denmark

Prof. John-Andrew McNeish, Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU), Norway

Prof. Mikaela Vasstrøm, University of Agder, Norway

UEF teachers

Dr. Hilikka Heinonen
Prof. Teppo Hujala
Dr. Tero Mustonen
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NOVA
UNIVERSITY NETWORK

CORE

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Tapani Hämäläinen
Tiina Jääskeläinen
Emma Luoma
Karl-Peter Traub
Patricia Katar-Traub
Risto Löf
Reima Myyry
Eero Tuomisto
Ahti Weiijo
Violeta Gutiérrez Zamora

NEXT COURSE IN 2019

The next course in 2019 will be organised by the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU) and will be held at the University of Agder in Norway. Further info:

<https://www.nmbu.no/en/students/nova/student-s/phd-courses/course-series/node/32250>

Acknowledgements

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