



# Managing conflicts in ecosystem uses

The science and art of getting conflicting groups and individuals to agreement in multi-stakeholder workshops

## Why?

Human survival depends on natural resources – in the short and in the long term. The question is how we can manage short term ecosystem uses so that biodiversity and other ecosystem services will be with us in future generations as well.

Quite often answering this question brings out opposed interests amongst ecosystem users and sometimes it may lead to serious conflict. Examples abound: The reintroduction of predators such as the lynx, the wolf, the bear or the sea eagle in various parts of Europe enrages sheep farmers and sometimes hunters; the exploitation of wood and minerals in the forests of central Africa tends to create social, cultural and biological disruptions, the destruction of the elephant's habitats being only one of them; the agricultural use of fire to fight pests – such as ticks – in central America may engender neighborhood conflicts when fires spin out of control; water and habitat conservation laws for rivers in France and Spain shock farmers that have been using this water for irrigation. More examples can easily be named.



Ongoing and unmanaged conflicts usually do not help biodiversity or the protection of ecosystem services. If humans cannot come to agreements as a group, they will act individually or in small antagonistic interest groups. The results may be overexploitation, poaching, irreversible biodiversity loss, but also increased economic cost (through the loss of ecosystem services), reduced quality of life and sometimes armed conflict.

When actors do manage conflicts – which means not only that they reconcile interests but also that they build trust based on mutual understanding, respect and support – they tend to find pathways for systemic and sustainable ecosystem use.

## What this training is about

Managing conflicting ecosystem uses in a given area – often around a specific species or resource – may have to be a long term affair and need to last for decades if not for generations. The effectiveness of management depends on many factors such as the availability of physical resources



(office space, equipment, budgets etc.) as well as the ecosystem and other technical knowledge of the manager.

Part of this technical knowledge is **how to set up effective workshops with the various affected and involved parties when some of them are in conflict.**

This is what we are concerned with in this training course.

### Overall content: Human qualities plus workshop design and facilitation knowledge

You cannot manage conflict if you do not know what effects conflict has on yourself, how you respond to conflict as a person and how – on a personal level – you can effectively deal with conflict. As a conflict manager you will be exposed all the time to tensed and potentially conflicting situations. In metaphorical language we could say that sparks will fly around you frequently. You must then be able not to confound the water can with the oil canister. In these situations you are challenged on a personal level.

Therefore, a part of this course is devoted to learning about managing conflict inside of you and also about conflict preventing or reducing interaction. Introspective methods such as meditation, relational techniques such as Non-Violent Communication, but also personal qualities of the conflict manager – such as congruence, empathy and positive regard - will be part of this course. Besides the various workshop design and facilitation tools that you will learn, these approaches may well become your biggest assets for successful conflict management – even beyond a specific workshop.



Humans in conflict often have opposed – and distorted - visions of themselves and their antagonists. The consequences can be dramatic.



### Specific objectives and topics

The course will cover the following topics and learn objectives:

- Get a clear understanding on **what conflict is and what not** (for example it is not a mere differences of objectives) and which role individual personality plays in this.
- **Overcome the manager's (potential) fear of confronting existing conflicts** and become mentally and technically prepared to put potentially “undiscussable issues” on the table, if necessary for moving forward.
- Improve **your own capacity to constructively deal with conflict** once you find yourself in it. This includes the management of conflict within yourself but also communicating with other persons that are in conflict with you or vice versa.

- Adopt a **helpful stance** that can prevent conflict and that – if it occurs nevertheless – safeguards your ability as a conflict manager to properly do your job during the workshops (and beyond).
- Learn about the **different levels of escalation and complexity** that conflict can develop and **the consequences** of this for you and your potential interventions. Become aware when a workshop may not be appropriate anymore or when you would have to rely on outside help.
- Know **tools to quickly analyze a given conflict situation** including the actors and their interests, the issues, the given level of escalation, the actors' history (and its effect on the present), and their readiness to address existing issues
- Learn to use a **design model for designing conflict resolution workshops**
- Know tools and techniques to build into a workshop and how to apply them during a workshop so that you can manage conflict among various parties.

## For whom is this training?

This training is for people who work with multi-stakeholder groups around (potentially) conflicting ecosystem uses: They maybe academics that sometimes have to set up workshops for such groups, eco-system or natural resources managers, or NGO representatives that need to manage stakeholder platforms around these issues.

## Methods

We try to see you and your needs. We will not bombard you with dry information but involve you from the beginning by making an effort to integrate your expectations into the course as well as any other needs you may have. We aspire to a creativity inducing atmosphere.

As a consequence, the training uses a wide range of pedagogical methods that have proven effective with a penchant to experiential learning: Group work on the participants' own cases, situational simulations and role plays, peer feedback on these experiences, modeling of facilitation and conflict management by the trainer, plenary dialogue, as well as additional theoretical and experience-based input from the trainer. At the end, participants usually tell us that they did not see the time pass and that nevertheless they absorbed a lot of new knowledge which they feel inspired to use and to combine in new ways.



Participants of a facilitation training in Switzerland enacting a difficult situation



## Additional practical information

**Length:** This is usually a five-day training starting on Sunday evening (6 pm) with a dinner and sharing of expectations to Friday midday (ending with lunch). There will be some group activities in the evening that will be also quite important for your learning so please do not burden yourself with too much work for this phase.

**Training course manual:** All trainees will receive a substantial course manual with the description of all the activities and contents plus additional information

**Cost of training:**

**Number of trainees:** 10 – 16

**If you are interested:** Please contact us by Email ([yorck.von-korff@flow-ing.fr](mailto:yorck.von-korff@flow-ing.fr)) or telephone (+33 (0)6 6 74 88 64 04). We will be happy to send you a **detailed agenda** that also includes **more specific objectives and topics** for every day of the training.

## Trainer



**Yorck von Korff**, PhD in political science. Trainer, facilitator, mediator and consultant for participatory processes. For 18 years Yorck has designed and facilitated multi stakeholder workshops in international cooperation, ecosystem and water management, scientific cooperation, intra-organizational change as well as urban and land planning. He has published various articles in scientific journals on participatory processes. Yorck is based in Montpellier France and works locally as well as internationally

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