Supporting collaboration and strategies for mutual benefits in biodiversity conflicts: building on Common Ground

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Biodiversity conflict: the importance of underlying human relationships
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Biodiversity conflict: conflict that emerges when the interests of two or more parties towards some aspect of biodiversity compete, and when at least one of the parties is perceived to assert its interest at the expense of another.

White et al. 2009
Collaboration: the importance of Common Ground

Collaboration is considered
• An **emerging process**.
• Parties come together to **raise an issue**, 
• **Define the problem** in question,
• Then as a combined group **act collectively**, 
• **Sharing the consequences** of their actions.

Bouwen and Taillieu, 2004   Selin and Chevez, 1995
Collaboration: the importance of Common Ground

Commonalities
Commitment
Interdependencies

Common Ground
Common concerns, knowledge and beliefs that people express toward environmental management in their region
A shift in scientific approach

- Top down approach
- Single discipline
- Scientific knowledge
- Technical solutions
- Divergent opinion
- Single issues
- Short term output

- Participatory approaches
- Interdisciplinarity
- Integrate larger social context
- Negotiation and discussion
- Common Ground
- Wider context
- Support adaptive learning capacity

Gibbons et al., 1994, Giller et al., 2008, Patterson et al., 2003, Robinson, 2006
Research questions

• How do we identify Common Ground amongst actors?

• How do we map issues and contextualize concerns across actors?

• How might a Common Ground process enhance management of biodiversity conflicts?

• How does the pursuit of Common Ground enhance collaborative approaches more widely in conservation biology?
Study area: Calakmul, Southern Mexico

- Reserve of 723 185 ha created in 1989
- 114 ejidos, 25000 individuals from recent migration with different cultures, different activities and interests

Ericson, 2006; Haenn et al. 2014  Rodríguez-Soto et al., 2011
Methods and Analysis

- 26 open interviews with representatives in the region:
  
  *Which environmental issues are of concern in your organization?*

- Content analysis of the interviews

  Point of view < Opinion < **Concerns (fine category)** < **Subject (coarse category)** < Process

- Creation of common ground matrix.

  Common ground: the extent to which individual issues overlapped each other among actors

- Cluster analysis and non-metric multidimensional scaling

- Mapping issues related to their level of common ground and perceived importance
Actors’ positions show heterogeneity

Fine category

Coarse category

NG: Non-Govermental Organisation
GI: Governmental Institution
EG: Elected Governmental representative
PG: Productive Group

- No apparent cluster
- Different position of actors according to the level of classification

Non-metric multidimensional scaling analysis
Issues should be contextualized according to their importance and common ground (CG)
Strategies for mutual benefits

- Natural Resource dependent activities
- Human-animal interactions
- Biodiversity Loss

Biodiversity Loss
Human-animal interactions
Natural Resource dependent activities

Mean importance

Fine category
Coarse category

Monitoring and evaluation
Technical improvement
Animal impacts
Approaching Biodiversity conflict through a wider context

- Common ground informs us about an actor’s position regarding other actors and informs an approach to collaboration:
  - Organizational boundaries do not translate to groups that share the same assumptions:
  - Looking at the wider context avoids creation of sub groups and allows us to take into account individual heterogeneity across the different groups.

- Looking for solutions across the different issues allows us to address at the same time social and environmental concerns and to find solutions for mutual benefit.
Developing an agenda that can foster collaboration

- Collaboration success relies on the acceptance and will of the actors involved
- Sequencing of events is crucial because early events alter the context of future decision making
- The process helps us proceed through successive cycles of collaboration and elaborate a shared knowledge base while building trust and social learning.

Adapted from Marshall et al., 2007  Austin et al., 2011  Davis and White, 2012
Conclusion: a shift in researchers’ position

- Academics offer the potential to speed up collaborative processes by providing a more productive starting point, looking for Common ground and making this knowledge available to others.

- The research process itself is important as it allows actors to reflect on their position and build confidence in their will to participate toward collaboration.

Patterson et al. 2003    Giller et al. 2008
Conclusion: a shift in researchers’ position

“To match our capacity to provide answers with our willingness to listen to others”
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