

Moving from Conflict to Consensus in Small Groups

Building Bridges to Better Decision-making

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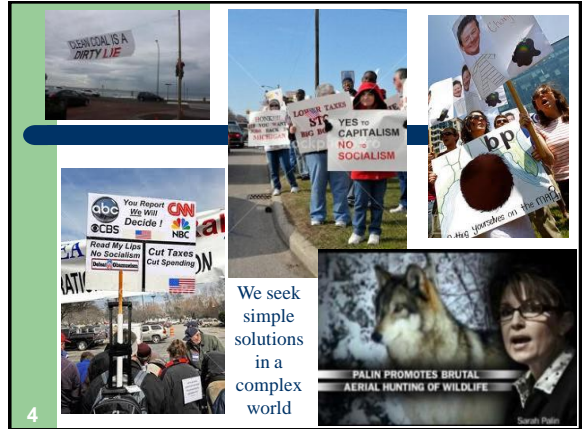
It seems like we are surrounded by conflict!

- What causes it?
- How can we work with it?
- How can we resolve it?



Americans are trained to be contentious!

- Shock radio
- Opinionated "news"
- "Social Media"



We seek simple solutions in a complex world

Jackson Hole Daily
Wolf protest draws 200 to downtown Jackson
By Cory Hatch, Jackson Hole, Wyo. | March 22, 2010

Roughly 200 outfitters, ranchers and sportsmen crowded Center Street on Saturday to rally against wolves, a predator they say is ruining the state's elk population and threatening livestock.

The rally also drew a small number of wolf supporters who held posters with slogans such as "I Love Wolves" and "Wolves Need a Voice, Not a Gun."

Protesters gather at a rally Saturday on Center Street in downtown Jackson to demand that the government reduce the wolf population in Wyoming. Photo by Brady J. Borer/Jackson Hole Daily.

Idaho County Citizens Plan To Protest "Wolf Plague" During Republican Bus Tour
October 20, 2010

Too little and too late is how Idaho County citizens view Governor's and County Commissioners' efforts with wolf disaster.

Kootenai, Idaho—Citizens of Idaho County and other counties will hold a rally and protest to mark the arrival of the Republican Tour Bus on its scheduled stops in both Kootenai and Kamiah with Governor C.L. Elton, Lt. Governor Bret Latta, Secretary of State Ben Yearsley, Attorney General Lawrence Wasden, and others, including 1st Congressional District candidate, Raul Labrador, and legislative and county candidates, aboard.

Wolf protest, Patn Watts, right, of Coconino, Idaho displayed her sign just across the parking lot from pro-wolf hunt folks at Idaho Falls & Coconino Game in Coeur d'Alene on Friday. Photo: Phoenix2010

Close to home

Theresa Olivas of Clariston takes a picture Wednesday of oil refinery equipment as it is parked along U.S. Highway 12 near Orofino on Wednesday. Hundreds of travelers stopped throughout the day to take photos like Olivas, who said she had seen it in the news but couldn't believe how big it actually was.



Does anybody listen to us?

- Legislation mandates public involvement
- People don't trust how decisions are being made
- People don't feel they are being heard
- People are looking for better ways to become involved

Why do we want to listen to the public?

Social Goals:

1. Educating the public
2. Incorporate public values into decision making
3. Increase the substantive quality of decisions
4. Foster trust in institutions
5. Reduce conflict
6. Make decisions cost effectively

Beierle, T.C. 1999. Using Social Goals ...

Why is it so hard to make decisions in a group?

- Sometimes the wrong people are involved.
- We have different goals.
- Our values clash.
- We perceive differences.
- We fail to listen.
- We don't communicate well.
- We are trained to mistrust!

How to involve the right people

- Ensure the diversity of interests affected are included.
- Include those with veto power & those who have authority to represent their group.
- Allow interest groups to choose their own representatives.
- Select people willing to listen, negotiate, compromise & communicate.
- Select a group that is well balanced.
- Limit the size of the group.

(10 works great... 15 works... 20 creates work!)

Sometimes our goals clash...

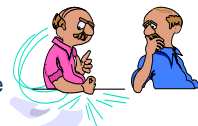


- Does everyone understand why we are meeting?
- Are some people trying to solve different problems?
- Do we have any hidden agendas?

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Sometimes our values clash...

- Values are deeply held.
- We are *suspicious* of people with different values.
- We cannot simply change people's values!
- People can only work together when they share some common values.



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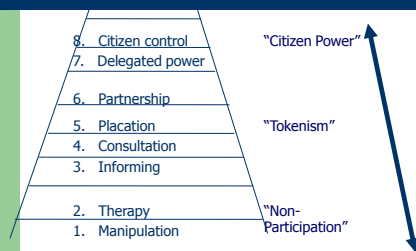
Perceived differences can be as important as real differences...

- Our perceptions = our reality.
- Misperceptions foster mistrust.
- We can't change our perceptions unless we listen.
- People can't listen unless they speak briefly & concisely!
- It takes time!



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Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation



Arnstein, S. (1969) Ladder of Citizen Participation. Journal of American Planning Association, 35(4).

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Building bridges... Some Tips and Techniques

1. Select the right people.
2. Agree to some rules of conduct.
3. Use transactive or collaborative decision-making.
4. Avoid voting.
5. Use a positive approach to address issues.



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1st Step: Select the right people...

- Diversity
- Veto power
- Good listeners
- Good communicators
- Good negotiators
- Good compromisers
- Good representatives



How? "Allow interest groups to choose their own representatives."

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Step 2. Agree to how you will conduct business...

All members should agree to:

- Represent & report to their constituency.
- Work as a team.
- Give people a chance to speak.
- Focus on ideas & issues, not on people or their personalities.
- Work towards consensus.
- Speak concisely & listen without interrupting.
- Discuss & resolve problems within the group.
- Other?

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Step 3. Use transactive or collaborative decision-making

- Small groups
- Face-to-face dialogue
- Mutual learning occurs
- A series of small transactions & compromises will lead to big decisions.
- Mutual understanding & support will result.



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Friedmann's Theory of Transactive Planning

Transactive Planning

(Friedmann -- UCLA)

- A series of small transactions and compromises will lead to big decisions.
- Mutual understanding & support will result.
- Political Marketplace (Caulfield -- Colorado State Univ.)
- Veto Power (can be expressed in many ways)
- Viable Political Coalitions

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Ed Krumpke -- Building Consensus

Step 4. Avoid Voting...Work towards Consensus!

- Voting makes sub-optimal decisions! (49% may still disagree...)
- Voting polarizes people. Voting pits winners against losers.
- Voting fosters politics rather than collaboration.
- Decisions we all agree on are more likely to be carried out. (A marginal favorable vote is seldom implemented).
- How? Use the "4 levels of support" to reach consensus.

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Four levels of support to reach consensus

1. I can easily support the action.
2. I can support it but it may not be a preference.
3. I can support the action if minor changes are made.
4. I cannot support it unless major changes are made.

"I agree to discuss level 3 & 4 concerns before positions are made firm."

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Use positive approach to identify issues & set goals

- NEPA has got it wrong! ("Scoping to identify issues")
- Don't start by identifying issues first!
 - Issues focus on the negative
 - Polarizes members & leads to stereotyping other members
 - Pits one group against another
 - Issues often have a narrow focus
 - Short sighted--"hot" issues may overlook long-term problems
- Do use the "round robin of values."

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Step 5: Use “Round-Robin” to Identify Values

“People can only work together when they share some common values.”

- Each member silently writes list of what they like or value about the subject of discussion.
- Go around the group, ask each member to present one value from their list – repeat until all values are displayed.



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Use “Round-Robin” to Identify Threats to Their Values

- Next, each person silently writes potential threats to these values.
 - Go around the group, ask each member to present one threat from their list (repeat until all threats are displayed).
 - Now people understand what's behind negative feelings...
- This paves the way to start developing goals & objectives to address the problems or threats.



Threats = Issues

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Building Bridges to Better Decision-making

Summary:

- Create an atmosphere of mutual respect & trust.
- Foster listening, dialogue, and mutual learning.
- Build upon shared values & small success.
- Create partners for future actions.



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Requirements for Collaborative Planning



Transactive planning requires special skills.

- Average of 20 meetings over 2 to 4 years
- Lots of time required for preparation
- Leader must be perceived as impartial and open
- Sufficient baseline data are seldom available.

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Conclusions

Research shows Advantages of Collaboration

- Improved mutual learning by managers & citizens.
- Improved transfer of knowledge over time.
- Acceptance of divergent viewpoints.
- Greater shared commitment to agreed upon actions.
- Way less expensive than litigation!

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Conclusions

Research: Advantages



- Expanded & Enriched Public Input
 - 80% said collaboration had positive impact on public's image of the Forest.
 - 100% of Participants said collaboration was a valuable use of their time.
- It's Trackable and Traceable – This was a key value to the public.

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Appreciative Inquiry – A Totally Positive Approach to Change

- Most change processes are based on problem-solving processes.
- We start by asking "what's the problem?"
- When we do that, we focus energy on what we want less of and work to "fix" things.
- *Appreciative Inquiry* is based on a different set of assumptions.

David L. Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva. 1986. *Appreciative Inquiry in Organizational Life*. Research in Organizational Change and Development, Vol.1, pages 129-169.

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5 Assumptions of Appreciative Inquiry

1. You create more effective organizations by focusing on what you want more of, not what you want less of.
2. Whatever you want more of already exists, even if only in small quantities, & people can build upon this.
3. It's easier to create change by amplifying the positive qualities of a group or organization than by trying to fix the negative qualities.

<http://www.appreciative-inquiry.org/index.htm>

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5 Assumptions of Appreciative Inquiry

4. Through the act of inquiry we create the social realities we are trying to understand.
5. Getting people to inquire together into the best examples of what they want more of creates its own momentum toward creating more positive organizations.

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Appreciative Inquiry Steps

- What is your dream?
 - Silently generate your dream for what a perfect future would look like . . .
- Share your dream . . .
- What would have to happen to get you to this desired condition?

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The Hidden Secret of A.I.

- When people focus on telling you what they want in an ideal situation . . .
- They automatically incorporate their knowledge of the problems . . .
- And their dream includes the solutions!

Instead of, "I hate those idiots that have a junk yard at the entrance to town!"

They say, "It would be wonderful if people entering town saw a beautiful sign & a kiosk with an overlook & flowers . . .

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Thank you!

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