

ROLE OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

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INTRODUCTION

Environmental conflicts, socio-environmental conflict or ecological distribution conflicts (EDCs) are social conflicts caused by environmental degradation or by unequal distribution of environmental resources. Parties involved in these conflicts include locally affected communities, states, companies and investors and social or environmental movements; typically environmental defenders are protecting their homelands from resource extraction or hazardous waste disposal. Resource extraction and hazardous waste activities often create resource scarcities (such as by overfishing or deforestation), pollute the environment, and degrade the living space for humans and nature, resulting in conflict. A particular case of environmental conflicts are forestry conflicts, or forest conflicts which "are broadly viewed as struggles of varying intensity between interest groups, over values and issues related to forest policy and the use of forest resources". Frequently environmental conflicts focus on environmental justice issues, the rights of indigenous people, the rights of peasants, or threats to communities whose livelihoods are dependent on the ocean.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The study is stated as "Role of Conflict Management in Environmental Conservation".

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Conflict: Conflict could be defined as a felt struggle between two or more interdependent individuals over perceived incompatible differences in beliefs, values, and goals, or over differences in desires for esteem, control, and connectedness.

Conflict management: Conflict management is a philosophy and a set of skills which help individuals and groups to interpret and deal with conflict in a better manner as it occurs in all facets of their lives (Moran, 2001).

Environmental conservation: Environmental Conservation is the practice of preserving the natural world to prevent it from collapsing as a result of human activities, such as unsustainable agriculture, deforestation and burning fossil fuels.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- ▶ To understand the Role of Conflict Management in Environmental Conservation.
- ▶ To understand the Key skills of conflict management in Environmental Conservation.

CAUSES OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONFLICTS

The origin of environmental conflicts can be directly linked to the industrial economy. As less than 10% of materials and energy are recycled, the industrial economy is constantly expanding energy and material extraction at commodity frontiers through two main processes: Making exploitation of existing sites more efficient through investments or social and technical innovation. EDCs are caused by the unfair distribution of environmental costs and benefits. These conflicts arise from social inequality, contested claims over territory, the proliferation of extractive industries, and the impacts of the economic industrialization over the past centuries. Oil, mining, and agriculture industries are focal points of environmental conflicts. Environmental conflicts can be classified based on the different stages of the commodity chain: during the extraction of energy sources or materials, in the transportation and production of goods, or at the final disposal of waste.

EJATLAS CATEGORIES

Its aim is “to document, understand and analyse the political outcomes that emerge or that may emerge” from ecological distribution conflicts.

- ▶ Biodiversity conservation conflicts:
- ▶ Biomass and land conflicts (Forests, Agriculture, Fisheries and Livestock Management)
- ▶ Fossil Fuels and Climate Justice/Energy
- ▶ Industrial and Utilities Conflicts
- ▶ Infrastructure and Built Environment
- ▶ Mineral Ores and Building Materials Extraction
- ▶ Nuclear
- ▶ Tourism Recreation
- ▶ Waste Management
- ▶ Water Management

ECOLOGICAL DISTRIBUTION CONFLICTS

Ecological Distribution Conflicts (EDCs) were introduced as a concept to facilitate more systematic documentation and analysis of environmental conflicts and to produce a more coherent body of academic, activist, and legal work around them. EDCs arise from the unfair access to natural resources, unequally distributed burdens of environmental pollution, and relate to the exercise of power by different social actors when they enter into disputes over access to or impacts on natural resources. For example, a factory may pollute a river thus affecting the community whose livelihood depends on the water of the river. The same can apply to the climate crisis, which may cause sea level rise on some Pacific islands. Ecological conflicts occur at both global and local scales. Often conflicts take place between the global South and the global North, e.g. a Finnish forest company operating in Indonesia, or in economic peripheries. Although there is a growing emergence of conflicts in Europe, including violent ones. There are also local conflicts that occur within a short commodity chain (e.g. local extraction of sand and gravel for a nearby cement factory).

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Ecological distribution conflicts have given rise to many environmental justice movements around the globe. Environmental justice scholars conclude that these conflicts are a force for sustainability. Globally, around 17% of all environmental conflicts registered in the EJAtlas report environmental justices 'successes', such as stopping an unsustainable project or redistributing resources in a more egalitarian way. Movements usually shape their repertoires of contention as protest forms and direct actions, which are influenced by national and local backgrounds. In environmental justice struggles, the biophysical characteristics of the conflict can further shape the forms of mobilization and direct action. Finally, the 'collective action frames' of movements emerging in response to environmental conflicts becomes very powerful when they challenge the mainstream relationship of human societies with the environment. These frames are often expressed through pithy protest slogans, that scholars refer to as the 'vocabulary of environmental justice' and which includes concepts and phrases such as 'environmental racism', 'tree plantations are not forests', 'keep the oil in the soil', 'keep the coal in the hole' and the like, resonating and empathizing with those communities affected by EDC.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

A distinct field of conflict management called Environmental Conflict Resolution focuses on developing collaborative methods for deescalating and resolving environmental conflicts. As a field of practice, people working on conflict resolution focus on the collaboration, and consensus building among stakeholders. An analysis of such resolution processes found that the best predictor of successful resolution was sufficient consultation with all parties involved. A new tool with certain potential in this regard is the development of video games proposing distinct options to the gamers for handling conflicts over environmental resources, for instance in the fishery sector.

KEY SKILLS FOR CONFLICT MANAGEMENT in ENVIRONMENT CONSERVATION

- ▶ Self-awareness: acknowledge our own biases and think about how our actions may be perceived in different contexts
- ▶ Do not ignore power imbalances between stakeholders in a conflict, and actively look for weaker/less visible stakeholders
- ▶ Use our own power positively, by giving voice to weaker/less visible stakeholders
- ▶ Use your communication skills
- ▶ Active listening is particularly important.

CONCLUSION

Environmental conflicts, socio-environmental conflict or ecological distribution conflicts (EDCs) are social conflicts caused by environmental degradation or by unequal distribution of environmental resources. Frequently environmental conflicts focus on environmental justice issues, the rights of indigenous people, the rights of peasants, or threats to communities whose livelihoods are dependent on the ocean. Environmental conflicts can complicate response to natural disaster or exacerbate existing conflicts.

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