

Constructive Conflict Methodology for stakeholder dialogues

Constructive Conflict Methodology is an overarching approach to the design of stakeholder dialogues on complex societal issues.

Stakeholder participation is generally seen as a necessary means to integrate divergent problem perceptions and various sources of knowledge in policy processes on environmental and ecological issues. But how to design a stakeholder dialogue in such a way that divergent problem perceptions are included meaningfully? Constructive Conflict Methodology aims to facilitate learning in stakeholder dialogues^[1]. Constructive Conflict Methodology's learning effect was evaluated in a stakeholder dialogue on energy from biomass in the Netherlands. Constructive Conflict Methodology (CCM) starts from the notion that most environmental problems, such as strategies for climate adaptation or sustainable

energy, are unstructured or wicked^[2]. Unstructured problems are characterized by (scientific) uncertainties, and a diversity of (conflicting) values at stake. Stakeholder dialogue is a means to structure the problem, i.e. to improve the understanding of how different stakeholders perceive and define the problem and its potential solutions.

The focus on constructive conflict rather than consensus seeking is underlined by empirical research that shows the value of diversity and conflict for group problem solving and learning^[3,4]. CCM consists of four steps and relies on the use of specific social science methods to support each of the steps within the methodology (see Figure). Q methodology^[5,6] was for instance used to select stakeholders on the basis of their perspective rather than their affiliation.

CCM was applied in the Biomass Dialogue, a stakeholder dialogue on energy from biomass in the Netherlands. A quasi-experimental evaluation approach showed that, as a result of taking part in the Biomass Dialogue, participants better understand and acknowledge the diversity of perspectives on biomass.



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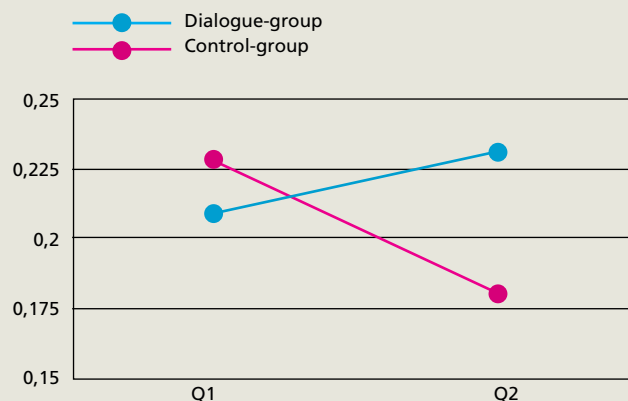
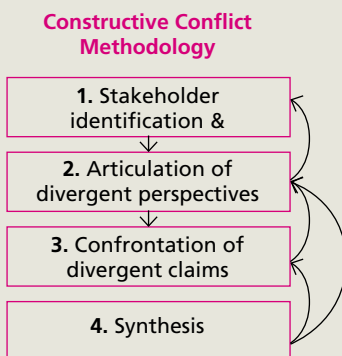
PROJECT IC08 PRObing a method to Facilitate the Interactive Linking of Expert knowledge to Stakeholder assessment (PROFILES) ME04 An integrated framework to assess spatial and related implications of increased implementation of biomass delivery chains.

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FIGUUR 1 (left): Constructive Conflict Methodology aims to facilitate learning in stakeholder dialogues on complex societal issues
FIGUUR 2 (right): The application of Constructive Conflict Methodology in the Biomass Dialogue resulted in a significant learning effect