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Conflict and conflict mediation at work
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- Today
1. Conflict in organizations: destructive?
 2. Perspectives on conflict & mediation
 3. Task, Relation and Process conflicts
 4. Hierarchical conflicts & Leadership
 5. Conflict in the team
 6. Peacemaking
 7. Managerial third party behavior
 8. Mediation by third parties
 9. Mediation in top team conflicts
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Primates learn doctors how to solve conflicts



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The art of reconciliation



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Fascination for conflict

"Except God and love, no theme has received more attention in world literature than conflict..."
(Arnold Rapoport)

... And 75% of literature is about a combination of those three...

Q1: what do you find fascinating about conflict?

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Intra- en Interpersonal conflict

Karen Horney: our inner conflicts

Strong link between inner and social conflict

Recent WHO study: in an average year 1.6 mln die as a result of violence. Of these 55% were suicides.

How do stress and conflict in the workplace influence each other?

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Conflicts: Objective and/or Subjective?

Lawyers economists and sociologists often define conflicts in terms of an 'objective' analysis and 'objective' outcomes.

A classic approach is the Marxist perspective of class conflict'. Different Neo-Marxist theories (workers, women, black) elaborated on that; the repressed group internalizes values of the dominant group, and therefore is not aware of conflict, that does exist.

Most psychologists focus on the subjective experience: cognition, perception, and emotions.

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Conflict: working definition

- Pratic: Perceived divergence of interest, a belief that the parties' current aspirations are incompatible.
- **Conflict between two parties if at least one of the parties is frustrated or hindered by the other.**
- Conflict management: Any behavioral response to the frustration, and response on that response.
- Cognitive and/or Affective
- Subjective: there doesn't have to be an objective ground (At least) one party feels frustrated
- Conflict management is different from conflict experience

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Six perspectives on conflict & mediation

Level/

- Intergroup
- Intragroup
- Interpersonal
- Individual

Perspective

1. Intercultural
2. System
3. Rules
4. Social exchange
5. Social constructivist
6. Psycho--dynamic

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1. Intercultural perspective

- Explaining conflict as a clash between different cultures
- Behavior of individuals and groups is viewed from (partly subconscious) differences in vision, values, norms and behavior

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1. Intercultural perspective

Assessment:

- Are there cultural differences between the conflict parties?
- To what extent does social Identity play a role in the conflict?
- Do the parties represent cultural groups, or see themselves as representing a cultural group?

Mediation:

- What do the parties think of mediators?
- What are the expectations and norms about mediation?
- Create common framework

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2. Systems perspective

How do the parties depend on each other? How do they function in the system?

Family therapy, family structure, also in organizations

Conflict between two individuals is seen in a wider context, taking into account the roles and learned patterns.

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2. Systems perspective

Assessment:

Explain or understand the behavior of conflict parties based on the system in which they function

Family system / Group culture

- Conflict is part of the identity of the group: conflict groups

Mediation:

Focus on the surrounding system for interventions to get to a sustainable solution

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3. Rules perspective

Assessment: analyzing conflict based on rules

- Are there rules in place? What are they? Does everyone follow the rules?
- What are the regulating mechanisms for dealing with conflict and social interaction, and why do they not always work?
- How could the rules be changed to solve and prevent conflict and better govern behavior?

Mediation:

Focus on rules, regulations and agreements

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4. Social Exchange perspective

Economic analysis of conflict

Assumption: the basis of behavior is self-interest

Social exchange: there is a constant exchange or holding back of resources

Aggression is used as an instrument

Simulations are used to study strategic behavior

Famous example: "Tit for tat" strategy

The Godfather

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4. Social Exchange perspective

Assessment

- Analyze the conflict in terms of profit for the parties and strategic importance, including aggressive behavior, threats and abuse of power.
- What are the parties offering each other?

Mediation:

- Pointing out the interdependence of the parties. How will an agreement serve the self-interest of both parties?

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5. Social Constructionist perspective

How do we approach reality?

- Reality is objective
- Reality is subjective (personal experience)
- Reality is intersubjective (the social process is essential for the creation of a social reality)
- Reality is a combined process of social construction and collective interpretation

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5. Social Constructionist perspective

There is no 'objective' outsider

- All involved (also 3d parties) influence the situation
- What you do or don't do influences the construction of reality by the parties
- Assessment = intervention
- Personal preferences, assumptions and interpretations determine your actions, and thus influence the meaning of the conflict

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5. Social Constructionist perspective

Assessment:

- Is there a shared reality for both parties?
- What is that shared reality? How dynamic is it? How can we influence that reality, including from the outside?

Mediation:

- How do the mediator and the mediation contribute to creation of a new, shared reality for and by the parties? (Narrative mediation)

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6. Psychodynamic perspective

Analysis of conflict from the point of the individual, subconscious influences on behavior and subconscious mutual influences (e.g. Freud, Jung, etc.)

Key concepts:

- Aggression and fear
- Displacement
- Projection

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6. Psychodynamic perspective

Analysis of conflict from the point of the individual, subconscious influences on behavior and subconscious mutual influences (e.g. Freud, Jung, etc.)

"self-perpetuating vicious circles in adult neurotic conflicts" (Karen Horney)

Key concepts:

- Aggression and fear
- Defense mechanisms: avoid threats & protect ego
- Displacement, Projection

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6. Psychodynamic perspective

Seven Sins...

- Vanity
- Greed
- Lust
- Jealousy
- Gluttony
- Anger
- Laziness



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6. Psychodynamic perspective

Exploring your own shadow



"We are not enlightened by neglecting our own dark side, but by exploring it"

(Jung)

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6. Psychodynamic perspective

Defense mechanisms

Different reactions that try to ward off or lessen anxiety (protect the ego) by various (unconscious) means:

- displacement
- reaction formation
- repression
- rationalization
- projection



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6. Psychodynamic perspective

Assessment:

- Analyse the conflict by focusing on personality, the subconscious needs and interactions between the parties
- What role do ego-defense mechanisms play and how does that show?

Mediation:

Focus on personal barriers, creating greater self-awareness and empowerment of the parties. And greater understanding of underlying dynamics.

Interaction between the parties

Mediation in the conflict

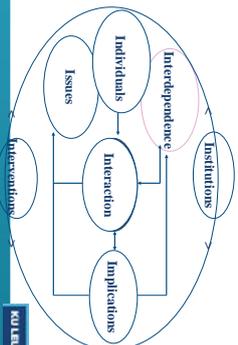


An example

Of three friends.....

Running a consulting business

7-1 model for conflictdiagnosis



7-1 model of conflict analysis

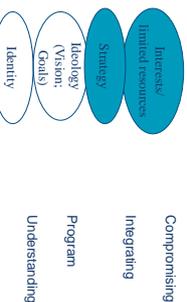
- What is the conflict about? (issues)
- What parties are involved? (individuals)
- What is the relation of parties? (interdependence)
- How do parties interact? (interaction)
- What are the implications? (implications)
- What is the context? (institutions)
- What regulation mechanisms? (interventions)

Structural aspects of conflict

7-1 model of conflict analysis

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| What is the conflict about? | Issues |
| What parties are involved? | Individuals |
| What is the relation of parties ? | Interdependence |
| What is the context? | Institutions |
| What regulation mechanisms? | Interventions |

Issues & Approach



Individuals

General:

- Who are the parties involved?
- What are their characteristics?
- What motivates them (in the conflict)?
- What differences foster conflict?
- What do they have in common?

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Individuals

Personality promoting conflict

- Conflict prone personality
- Social – Value orientation
- Neuroticism & Dogmatism
- Narcistic personality

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Interdependence

- The amount of interdependence (how strong linked)
 - GOAL: competitive/ cooperative / mixed
 - WORK: serial / linear quality
- The type of interdependence
 - GOAL: competitive/ cooperative / mixed
 - WORK: serial / linear quality
- Differences in interdependence (power)

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Interdependence and Power

Societal values (power difference; Hofstede)
Societal, organizational and group structures

Roles
Hierarchy

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Sources of Power

Formal position
Information & Access to information network
Survival value
Replacement
Skills
Reference (charisma)
Reputation
Personal characteristics

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Strategies of Empowerment (C3)

Structural Changes
change in interdependence
separation
participation (in decision making)
Personal Conditions
Therapy / coaching/ peer support
to raise self awareness & personal image
Personal Competencies
Training & coaching to develop competencies
Coaching to develop self-efficacy

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Institutions

- Conflict imbedded in organization: organized competition
- Complexity
- Hierarchical levels & coordination
- Role uncertainty/ role conflicts
- Shared Culture & Values
- Change(s)
- Working conditions/ labor relations

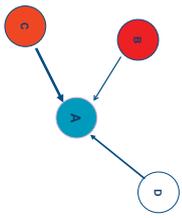
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Role theory

- Different roles
- Scripts for role behavior
- Role senders/: expectations
- Own role perception
- Conflicting roles (internal); identity, competencies
- Conflicting expectations (between senders)
- Conflicts between sender and self
- Role (un)clarity
- Role negotiations

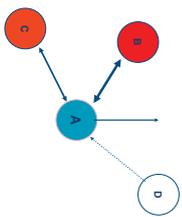
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Role theory



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Role theory



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Interventions

- Existing Norms
 - within the system (formal & informal)
 - Outside the system (f.e. unions, court)
- Rules and Procedures
- Available Third Parties
 - within the system (formal & informal)
 - Outside the system (f.e. unions, court)

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Process aspects
of
conflict

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Interaction

- What is the strategy of the parties?
- What tactics do they use?
- How do they respond to each other?
- What changes in behavior did take place?

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Interaction

- What is the history of this conflict?
- Who has done what?
- What were the critical incidents?
- When did the conflict escalate?

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Implications

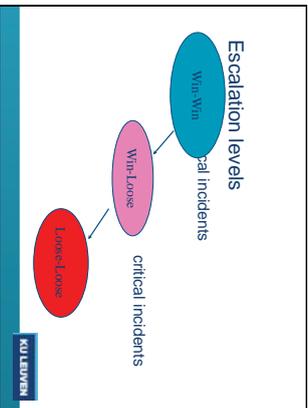
- What are the effects of the behavior and interaction of the parties?
 - For the development of the conflict (issues, parties)
 - What is the level of escalation?
 - What are the outcomes
 - For the individual parties
 - For their relation (short and long term)
 - For the system/ their environment
- Do (some) parties benefit from the conflict?

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Escalation

- Three stages in conflict:
 - Escalation: can get on at different levels
 - tendency to become worse
 - Stalemate: situation where further escalation is too costly for both parties
 - Settlement: ripeness of the conflict; parties become authentic ready to constructively solve the conflict

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- ### Escalation levels (Glasl)
- 1 Attempts for cooperation with frictions
 - 2 Polarization; style of debate
 - 3 No words, but actions!
 - 4 Care for image and coalitions
 - 5 Personal attacks; loss of face
 - 6 Threatening strategies are dominant
 - 7 Destruction or sanctioning-potential of other party
 - 8 Destruction of the other party
 - 9 Total destruction and self destruction
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Exercise Conflict diagnosis (process)

Choose one Conflict:

Your aim is to make a diagnosis applying the process model presented:

- (1) What is the escalation in the conflict in your (or ended in)?
- (2) What is the sequence of events in this conflict?
- (3) What were escalating events and what were de-escalating events?
- (4) What was the actual behavior of parties and what drives the attitudes?
- (5) What can contribute to a "burning stalemate" situation and eventually settlement?

Total time: 45 minutes

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Exercise Conflict diagnosis

Choose one Conflict:

Your aim is to make a diagnosis applying the 'Z' model presented:

- (1) what does the problem owner want with the conflict? And expect from the analysis?
- (2) Analyse the core and process of escalation; what critical incidents are there?
- (3) Analyse the core and process of escalation; what critical incidents are there?
- (4) Analyse underlying structural causes; look at the interdependence structures.
- (5) Integrate the analysis into a model (picture).
- (6) Discuss what helped the problem owner and see if you can derive practical tips of action based on your analysis.

Evaluate what models are helpful and/or difficult in the process?

Total time: 45 minutes

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What is essential to know in conflict diagnosis?

What do you ask a friend who is telling you his conflict?

What do you ask yourself when you face a conflict?

What are for you the most important questions?

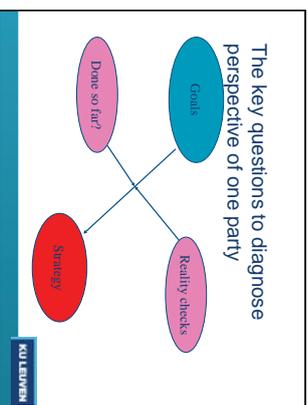
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How to diagnose? The art of questioning.

Steps in diagnosis:

- rapport
- unfreezing or blowing of steam?
- what (implicitly) social contract do we have?
- open or directive questions?
- (implicit) diagnostic models we use

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Four questions

What do you really want ?

Is this realistic?

What is needed to get there?

What have you done so far; and what can you do from here?

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Role theory

- Different roles
- Scripts for role behaviors
- Expectations of role senders(s)
- Own role prescriptions
- Conflicting roles (internal), identity, competences
- Role conflicts
 - Conflicting expectations (between senders)
 - Conflict between self and senders
- Role overload
- Role un clarity

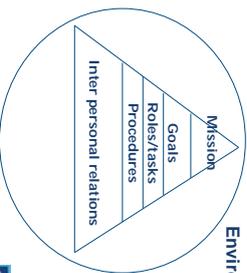
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Role theory: interventions

- Individual*
- Role clarification
 - Role separation/ rejection
 - Negotiate role prescriptions (solution focused)
 - Appreciation (cognitive /emotionally focused)
 - Competence development
- Social / team/group*
- Role negotiations with role senders
 - Role negotiations between role senders
 - Organizational
 - Role descriptions and clarification
 - Reduction internal role conflicts
 - Competence- development /management development

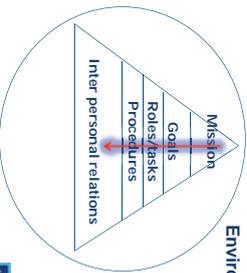
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Team Effectiveness Model (Dyer)



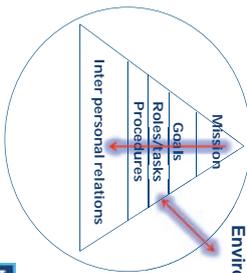
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Team Conflict Model



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Team Conflict Model



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Stages in Group Development

- 1 *Forming*: Inclusion and dependency (do I want to be part of this group? Am I accepted?)
- 2 *Storming*: open conflict and counterdependence 'kill the leader!'
- 3 *Norming*: development of productive norms, rules, role clarity
- 4 *Performing*: Productive teamwork
- 5 *Adjourning*: continuance of the team?

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Conflict issues differ in each stage

- 1 *Forming*: who can be part of this group? What are the goals and what do we want to be?
- 2 *Storming*: leadership, who sets the norms?
- 3 *Norming*: who takes up what roles, how do we communicate? Standards for performance?
- 4 *Performing*: Innovate? New challenges?
- 5 *Adjourning*: Who continues?

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Conflict Behavior differs in each stage

- 1 *Forming*: Friendly, covert
- 2 *Storming*: Open, indirect, coalitions
- 3 *Norming*: Open discussions and compromising
- 4 *Performing*: Solution oriented, shared
- 5 *Adjourning*: Avoiding

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1 Realistic conflict theory

Conflict explained from real conflicts on interest

- Groups have aspirations and claims on the same limited resources
- Comparison with other groups : 'they don't deserve to be better off'
- Legitimation to fight the perceived injustices

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2 Social Identity Theory

- Identity is a personal and social construction
- Group identity can be created and strengthened by both internal and external dynamics
- We are often shifting from one identity to another.
- Creating multi-identities helps to cross group borders
- Boundary spanners are members of two (rivaling) groups, creating bridges
- Formalize this role (for example in politics)

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2 Social Identity Theory

- Social identities are created easily
- Animal Party
- Fight for animal rights

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5 Interventions Preventive

- Create bridges
- Prevent weak ties
- Enforce boundary spanners

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6 Interventions Preventief/ Curatief

- Promote cooperation and open dialogue
- Create superordinate goals
- First focus on structural changes (situational/ legal), more than cognitive/emotional change

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6 Interventions Curative

Cognitive (challenge negative stereotyping):

- Perspective change, role reversal
- Create common goals & common success
- Problem-solving workshops

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