

# Styredagen

## Making Organisational Conflict Productive

By

**ADOPTING A HEALTHY  
CONFLICT PERSPECTIVE (HCP)**

## The Underlying Theme

**å være forberedt**

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## The Story Line

**Managing conflict within INGOs:**

- What is the landscape?
- What could be?
- How to get there?

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## Background

Disruptive external forces are adding to the internal pressures in INGOs adding to the potential for conflict.

Being forewarned and well prepared can bring substantial benefits.

Understanding the landscape of organisational conflict in INGOs and translating into action can aid effectiveness and resilience.

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## The Study

**Landscaping: e-survey + Interviews**

**Respondents:** 108 from 23 countries; 60+% Head office, 15% countries, 20% observers

**Roles:** Board 5%; CEO/VP/Directors 53%; Managers 19%

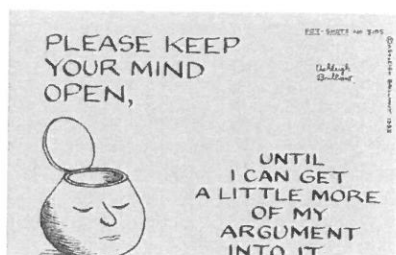
**INGO Types:** Coalitions 6%; Umbrellas 8%; Confederations 16%; Federations 33%, Single entities 35%

**Country outreach:** 1-20 = 34%; 21-50 = 34%; 51-100 = 21%; >100 = 8%

**Mission:** HR+D = 29%; CLTD = 23%; Finance = 13%; Sector = 10%; Advocacy = 8%; Relief = 7%; CD/Training = 6%; HR/Law = 5%

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### Some Results



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### Nine Headline Findings

1. Organisational conflict is a commonplace feature of INGOs with moderate to severe effects.
2. By and large, INGOs do not cope well with conflict in the first instance, with outcomes that are seldom sustained.
3. A strong capability to respond to organisational conflicts is seldom seen.

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### Nine Headline Findings

4. In the years to come, organisational conflict is more likely to increase than decrease.
5. A key downside of conflict is observed as reduced organisational effectiveness.
6. Properly managed conflict can and do produce a wide range of 'upsides'.

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### Nine Headline Findings

7. Conflict management usually lacks formal systems, relying on ad hoc approaches.
8. Efforts to make conflict productive are seen to be worthwhile, significant and even dramatic in their potential effects.
9. Creating a healthy conflict perspective (HCP) within an INGO is a better way forward than an overly formal conflict management system.

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### What is a Healthy Conflict Perspective (HCP)?

A healthy conflict perspective in an INGO:

1. Is an intentional and sustained orientation that treats 'disharmony' and normal or desirable part of organisational life.
2. Provides institutional support for individuals and groups to work with conflict.
3. Enables the productive and constructive outcomes of conflict to be enhanced and the destructive impacts to be minimized.

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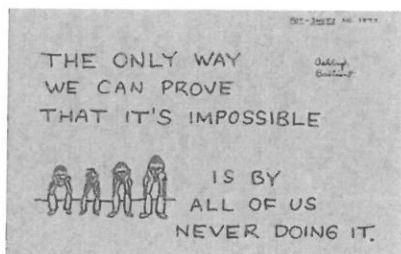
### Creating a Healthy Conflict Perspective

Respondents' comments, other studies, our experiences and interviews point to three organisational areas for establishing an HCP:

- Leadership
- Culture
- Processes

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## Organisational Change



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## HCP Needs a Conflict Competent Leadership

- Be the example
- Destigmatize conflict as a topic
- Avoid avoidance: take responsibility
- Show strong, sustained commitment to HCP
- Showing humility is a strength
- Emphasise inclusion
- Respect the psychological contract
- Have periodic 'barometers'



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## HCP Needs An Open and Inclusive Organisational Culture



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- Have known spaces, places and moments for dialogue outside of formal meetings and routines
- Mutual trust is worked on and valued
- Honesty about divergent ideas and interests is the norm
- Differences in views are treated as an asset and not as disloyalty

## HCP Needs Effective Conflict Processes

- Aim for transformation of a conflict to an 'upside' condition, not resolution back to the status quo ante
- Work on the principle of fairness with processes that generate respect for the outcome (as painful for some as that may be)
- Don't over-specify steps or stages – just pre-set enough to show a practical way forward
- Designate a first port of call for advice
- Have a clear communication policy, strategy and practice



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## To Sum Up

- The INGO conflict profile is not a "crisis" but is an important issue nonetheless. Ignoring is ill-advised.
- Interviews and survey comments show people are quite interested in a change.
- Remedies are not off the shelf.
- Multiple benefits are there to be gained.
- Establishing a Healthy Conflict Perspective in an INGO is not rocket science – yet will take a real, sustained commitment.
- Though not commonplace, our interviews show that it is achievable.

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## HCP

Let us meet uncertain futures well prepared

Thank You

(comments welcome - alan@alanfowler.org)

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## The GATE Workshop

Norwegian NGO Conference 2015

## It's all about Information



## GATE Principle and Elements

CHALLENGES TO CSO EFFECTIVENESS  
Connecting Organisation and Contexts



## GATE Under Pressure

CHALLENGES TO CSO EFFECTIVENESS  
Increased Expectations and Demands



## GATE and Alignment

CHALLENGES TO CSO EFFECTIVENESS  
Increased Expectations and Demands



## GATE in Practice

### Discussion:

- To be effective, for each GATE element who needs what information, when?
- What are we looking for in terms of alignment?
- What might cause misalignment?

### Exercise

For your organisation, on the sheet provided  
please assess alignment for each combination  
of GATE elements.

Feel free to refer to the Checklist.

Be prepared to share your scores with ideas about  
what could be improved.