

Methodologies for Mediation in Socio-Environmental Conflicts

Turiño García, María; Majadas Ayuso, Hugo; Majadas Andray, Julio; Sampedro Ortega, Yolanda; Sánchez Fabian, José Ángel

Fundación Entretantos

maría@entretantos.org

ABSTRACT

The confrontational situation surrounding the Iberian wolf shows that it is a festering social conflict in which polarization poses a clear risk, both for the conservation of the species and for the survival of extensive livestock farming and the future of the rural world.

Faced with this situation, Fundación Entretantos worked to bring together different people linked to social organizations related to extensive livestock farming, conservation, the cinegetic sector, rural development, university and environmental management, forming a multi-sectoral group called “Grupo Campo Grande”. Work was carried out sequentially on the basis of the needs that were generated, with such positive results that a Conflict Observatory was set up.

Methodologically, the success of this process has been fundamentally due to the work instruments developed. Thus, at the beginning of the process, semi-structured interviews (individual and group) were conducted with stakeholders in the conflict, news about the conflict broadcast in the media and social networks were analysed, and a discourse analysis was developed with all the information collected and generated. These analyses made it possible to define a series of topics arising from the arguments of the conflict and to develop a working mechanism that allowed the use of these topics as a mediation tool. In addition, a sociogram of the stakeholders in the conflict was developed, with whom we worked directly to define barriers and red lines and to implement consensus.

The result of this process is the "GCG Declaration", a document of agreements between the parties that sets out seven major groups of reflections, consensus and recommendations for the management of the conflict between the wolf and extensive livestock farming. Since its publication, almost two hundred people and entities have publicly adhered to the Declaration, which can be consulted in Spanish and English on the website www.grupocampogrande.org.

INTRODUCTION

In most conflicts related to the coexistence between extensive livestock farming and wildlife, solutions are complex, and the rapprochement of positions requires a deep understanding of the agents involved and affected by the conflict and the development of socio-environmental mediation initiatives that involve these agents, allowing them to expose their positions and listen to and understand other different positions.

A socio-environmental conflict, such as the one involving the wolf and extensive livestock farming, is a conflict that, although it concerns problems related to the environment, is fundamentally social in nature. These conflicts arise from different perspectives on how humans should relate to their environment. Perspectives that, in the case of the wolf-human conflict, arise from the livestock, conservation, hunting, scientific, technical and political sectors... In short, from a complex ecosystem of very different views and perceptions that, at the beginning, are hardly compatible with each other. Faced with this situation, the use of social mediation methodologies such as the one presented here is probably the only possible way to intervene. And it is important here to emphasising in the fact that we are talking about intervention, not solutions, since solutions are difficult to achieve in a conflict such as this one, and it is more appropriate to talk about bringing positions closer together and establishing collectively generated management measures.

In this sense, the process and development that led to the formation of the *Grupo Campo Grande* and the generation of a declaration with proposals for the management of the conflict between the Iberian wolf and extensive livestock farming in Spain is presented here.

RESULTS

The Declaration of the Campo Grande Group towards the coexistence of the Iberian wolf and extensive stock-raising is the most evident and significant result of this process. The result of a novel methodology for conflict management and multiple mediation processes, this document structures its proposals around 7 axes which, in turn, derive from the red lines identified in the conflict: the evaluation and compensation of damages, economic instruments, damage reduction, population control, censuses, the legal status of the wolf and tourist exploitation.

Each axis, in turn, includes observations resulting from the work carried out by the motor group, agreements and recommendations for the management of the conflict; thus, a total of 20 specific agreements and 30 specific recommendations are included in the document.

At present, 25 organisations and 157 individuals have already adhered to the Declaration. This adherence, by the philosophy of the document itself, implies support for it and the process by which it has been developed, even if not all of the proposals included in the declaration are subscribed to.

The value of this result is based, fundamentally, on the fact that it is the result of mediation, of approaches between opposing positions and of collaborative and participated work. The nature of this document thus, proves that the development of appropriate social mediation methodologies and an approach to conflict based on dialogue and empathy can generate approaches even between positions that, initially, seem irreconcilable. Despite the multiple arguments in the conflict, stereotypes, clichés and toxic discourses surrounding the conflict, it is possible to bring positions closer together and reach agreements that facilitate the management of a socio-environmental conflict as complex as the human-wolf conflict.

THE PROCESS

The process by which the *Grupo Campo Grande* came into being, dialogue was generated, the first agreements were reached and the lines of work in the conflict were determined began in 2015 and continues today. Looking back over its development, the following milestones can be distinguished:

INITIAL DIAGNOSIS

The identification of the agents involved in the conflict begins and a diagnosis of the initial situation is carried out, identifying the different discourses surrounding the conflict, with special attention to toxic discourses.

MOTOR GROUP

A national discussion group is set up including conservationists, extensive livestock farmers, hunters, researchers, representatives of agricultural organisations and mediation experts.

MEDIATION & RESEARCH

The group starts working on the coexistence between wolves and extensive livestock farming. Red lines, stakeholders, needs, priorities, etc. are identified and the first agreements are reached through mediation.

DECLARATION

After two years of work, 2018 saw the publication of a document resulting from negotiation and mutual understanding with the consensus reached by the group.

THE PROCESS CONTINUES

The work does not end with the declaration. The *Observatorio Campo Grande* was set up and social research and advocacy work continued to improve the coexistence between the wolf and extensive livestock farming.

CONCLUSIONS

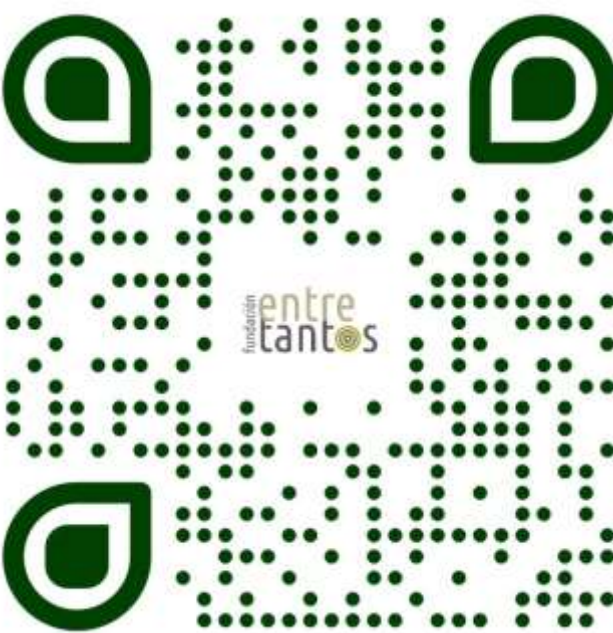
The nature of this process, its results, its political and social impact and its applications for conflict management are a clear example of how a socio-environmental vision is increasingly necessary for the treatment of environmental conflicts.

Social mediation and participation tools are currently some of the most relevant tools for managing human-wolf conflict, as well as many other conflicts involving human-wildlife coexistence. Therefore, the generation of knowledge in this field and the creation of new and innovative social mediation tools are necessary actions for an adequate management of our relationship with the environment from a holistic and integral perspective.

In short, it is necessary to continue advancing from this perspective and to recognize the importance of the social perspective in environmental studies, the fundamental role of the people who coexist with wildlife and the need to contemplate the multiple positions and perspectives that are generated around a socio-environmental conflict.

TO LEARN MORE

Fundación Entretantos website



Observatorio Campo Grande website



Read the complete declaration (English and Spanish version)

