Creating Environmental Stakeholder Profiles: A Tool for Dispute Management

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In Israel, the same governmental bodies and environmental organizations appear repeatedly as environmental disputants. Irrespective of the conflict, they usually hold consistent perspectives and positions. This research offers a methodology for identifying values frames and creating stakeholder profiles to assist negotiators and disputants in finding common ground or trade-offs in resolving disputes. The profiles enable stakeholders to couch their interests and arguments in language (or frames) understandable to other stakeholders. They enable interveners to steer discussions toward trade-offs or reframing of issues. The research is based on interviews with 160 stakeholders in nine Israeli environmental disputes at national, regional, and local levels.

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Background and Rationale

In this age of technological advances, urban and industrial expansion, and energy development, environmental disputes have escalated in complexity. Such disputes incur considerable environmental and socio-economic costs, as well as conferring widespread benefits. The disputes that arise over the distribution of such costs and benefits are typically multifaceted, embracing a wide range of political, economic, aesthetic, socio-cultural, psychological, and scientific considerations. Their management and/or resolution requires striking a dynamic balance among conflicting interests, priorities, values, and assessments of risk, in the face of high levels of uncertainty. The spillover effects surrounding many of these disputes cross geographic and temporal boundaries, adding further layers of complexity.

In most environmental conflicts, stakeholders do not act as individuals. Usually their personal values mirror the interests and positions of agencies, public organizations, or special interest groups with which they identify (Bryan, 2003). These agencies, organizations, and groups can be said to have values frames that are shared by most of their members. Robbins (1991, p. 681) defines organizational culture as “a system of meanings shared by the organization’s members, which differentiate it from other organizations . . . [and that] this shared system of meanings is a system of the qualities that the organization values.” Although research findings are not unanimous on this point, there is a strong consensus that organizations reflect shared systems of meanings. Even in the absence of a single unifying culture, cohesive subcultures are to be found (Frost, et al., 1991).

To understand the dynamics of disputes, it is important to identify and understand the common value-based perceptions (which we term “profiles”) embraced by the participating dispute groups or parties and their subgroups. The profiles developed in this study were created by analyzing the values frames held by stakeholders. The utility of this approach for each of the stakeholders lies in their resulting ability to couch interests and arguments in a language (or frame) understandable to other stakeholders. For interveners, such understanding facilitates their ability to share the discussion in ways that could lead to trade-offs or reframing of environmental issues. Peterson (2003) has pointed to the challenge posed by integrating diverse stakeholders into the policy dialog. Profiles can be used as a tool for facilitating such integration.

Within the Israeli context, public disputes are intensified by the country’s intimate human scale—everyone knows everyone, and the tangible stakes held by individuals in disputes are widely known. Disputes are also fanned by a politics of place stemming from strong historic and religious territorial attachments to local, regional, and national space. People strongly identify with political parties...
and movements; they also find expression in individual initiatives or through informal social, religious, ethnic, or class networks. The issues embedded within the conflicts are further sharpened by such universally interactive factors as personality, position, power, and precedent. In dealing with their differences over environmental disputes, Israelis struggle to maintain democratic values. At the same time, they wrestle with tensions between status quo and change, particularly as applied to the land and jurisdictional issues between Israeli Arab and Jewish communities or secular and religious Jewish communities.

Analysis of the stakeholders in a variety of environmental disputes at Israeli national, regional, and local levels reveals that the same governmental bodies and environmental organizations appear repeatedly as parties to the disputes. They usually hold similar perspectives and positions, irrespective of the nature of the conflict. Likewise, other stakeholder groups, such as developers, industries, or polluters, tend to hold predictably consistent and similar perspectives in their approaches to conflicts.

The focus of this article is the development of a methodology to identify values frames and create stakeholder profiles, in order to assist negotiators and disputants alike in finding common ground or trade-offs when negotiating a dispute. The data used in this research were derived from a multi-year research project funded by the Israeli Ministry of Environment. The project’s initial aim was to gain a better understanding of conflict dynamics by mapping the conflicts and analyzing how disputes are perpetuated through their interpretation, or framing, by stakeholders, other interested parties, and the media. (Some of the results of this project have been presented in Shmueli and Ben Gal, 2003a, 2004.) An outgrowth of the research was to provide the basis for developing a set of profiles of stakeholder frames or perspectives that can contribute to constructive intervention. Although the cases are Israeli-based, previous framing research has shown that the environmental framing typology that evolved from the Israeli cases has much in common with a typology that emerged in the course of a study of US environmental disputes (Lewicki, Gray, and Elliott, 2003; Shmueli and Ben Gal, 2004). We therefore believe that the methodology can be usefully applied to developing profiles of stakeholder groups in environmental disputes in US and probably other Western settings. A more basic use of the ideas put forth in this paper is in alerting practitioners to look for frame differences and ways to reframe productively.

In the next section, we discuss frames and their typology. The subsequent major section describes the process by which stakeholder profiles were created from the findings of nine Israeli environmental disputes. That section is divided into subsections: (1) descriptions of the nine case studies drawn from the national, regional, and local scales; (2) research methodology; (3) analysis of data; and (4) an example of how awareness of its organizational profile may influence management to reconsider policy.

**Frames and Framing**

The word “frame” can be used either as a verb (to frame) or as a noun (a frame). As a noun, a cognitive frame denotes the boundary within which the picture of an approach to an issue is displayed (similar to a frame placed around a picture or painting); it may be used as a tool for interpreting and understanding the perceptions and underlying objectives of various parties in the conflict. The nature of a frame is influenced by many factors that often exist prior to the conscious processing of information related to the specific disputes. These factors can be personal (i.e., beliefs, principles, personality) (Wondolleck, Gray, and Bryan, 2003), societal (i.e., culture or cultural structures such as laws and decision-making processes), or socio-personal (i.e., political orientation, organizational affiliation, needs, desires, or experience). As a verb, framing refers to the construction of frames, either from a simple reading of the situation or through a deliberative, analytic, or strategic process.

Each party to a conflict has his or her own perception and understanding of the agenda, the relevance of and priorities accorded to various issues, and the opportunities and risks involved with different choices (Elliott, 2003). This assemblage of factors can be considered a set of lenses, or filters, through which the different parties view the conflict, and is called the frame or conceptual frame. Thus, disputants are separated not only by differences in interests, beliefs, and values, but also in how they perceive and understand the world, both at a conscious and preconscious level (Elliott, Kaufman, and Shmueli, 2003; Gray, 2003). Some frames can significantly reinforce the intratability of a conflict by creating mutually incompatible interpretations of events (Elliott, Gray, and Lewicki, 2003; Lewicki, Gray, and Elliott, 2003).

The importance of framing concepts in understanding environmental conflicts and their currency has been addressed in a series of articles that appeared in the special issue of *Environmental Practice*, “Environmental Conflict
Resolution and Framing” (Environmental Practice, 2003). An essential aspect of conflict resolution is an understanding of the dynamic of conflict development based on the conceptual frames held by stakeholders. These frames strongly influence the positions taken by the involved parties. Knowing the nature of these frames enables one to draw conclusions about how they affect the course of the conflict and can be used to influence it.

To provide a deeper understanding of environmental disputes, we have constructed a series of frames (from interviews) designed to shed light on why a conflict exists, the importance of the issues in dispute, why the parties act as they do, and what direction mediation might take. Depending on the context, the frames may be used to conceptualize and interpret or to manipulate and convince. As the conflict unfolds, the evolving frames act as sieves through which information is gathered and analyzed, positions of the stakeholders are clarified (including priorities, means, and solutions), and mediation action strategies are developed. We describe next a typology of frames that help map environmental conflicts and are common to environmental disputes in Israel.

Frame Types

Based on an analysis of nine case studies at varying geographical scales, as well as the various approaches to framing in the literature, with particular attention given to Gray and Donnellon (1989) and Kaufman and Smith (1999), we created a tentative typology of frames that typically underlie the dynamics of environmental disputes. Using this typology, interviewees’ statements were sorted and coded to uncover patterns. Four major categories of frames were identified—values, substance, process, and phrasing (see Table 1), and definitions of their components were provided (for examples, see Table 2). (For a full discussion of this typology, see Shmueli and Ben Gal, 2003b, 2004.)

Values Frames

Values frames deal with the organizational purposes of society, the different factors that dominate the decision-making processes of the concerned parties, and the ways in which these parties view fundamental values. The frames are both personally and organizationally derived.

Substance Frames

Substance frames refer to the subject contents in conflict and how disputants relate to them. The three substance frames are:

• Expectations: hopes for fulfillment of vital interests;
• Issues: what are perceived to be the subjects of the conflicts; and
• Outcomes: positions or desired solutions.

Process Frames

Process frames represent attitudes of the stakeholders toward the structure of the dispute or framework within which it takes place—whether procedures have been fair and inclusive, how and by whom decisions have been made, and whether legal protocols have been adhered to. Process frames also reveal how parties perceive their own behavior, characterize the behavior of others, and assess relationships among the parties.

Table 1. Frames by categories typically appearing in environmental disputes (Shmueli and Ben Gal, 2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frames</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Law and legal rights, Complexity and uncertainty, Social justice/community, Economic, Ecological/environmental, Scientific/technical, Science as fraud, Comprehensive/policy-based, Practical/pragmatic, Risk aversion, Identification with organization, Public representation: Local interests, National interests, Future generations, Public understanding and participation (various degrees of accepting the public as a partner in decision making)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance</td>
<td>Expectations in fulfilling vital interests, Issues, Outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process</td>
<td>Characterization of: General framework or dispute structure, Own behavior and that of others, Relationship among stakeholders, Desires for structural changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phrasing</td>
<td>Win-win/Win-lose, Gain/loss (half full/half empty), Predictive sequencing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Expectations: hopes for fulfillment of vital interests;
- Issues: what are perceived to be the subjects of the conflicts; and
- Outcomes: positions or desired solutions.
Phrasing Frames

Phrasing frames deal with the way in which the parties express the issues to reflect their desired outcomes of the conflict. For example, do the terms used indicate an approach of win–lose, mutual gain, or predictive sequencing?

Creating the Stakeholder Profiles: Research Approach

This section describes how we developed the stakeholder profiles—based on interviews with 160 stakeholders in nine environmental disputes at national, regional, and local levels in Israel—by identifying and analyzing the frame characteristics of the various stakeholder groups.

Case Studies: Disputes at the National Level (Siting Issues)

The Dudaim Waste Disposal Site

The case of the Dudaim Waste Disposal Site involves the opposition of local and district authorities and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to the siting of a national infrastructure facility. Their overriding concern is fear of environmental damage to the future development and the quality of life in metropolitan Beer Sheva (the main city of the Israeli southern periphery).

The Transnational Toll Highway (Road 6)

A north–south highway is projected to extend from Nahariya in the north near the border with Lebanon to Beer...
Sheva in the south of Israel, making its greatest impact on Metropolitan Tel Aviv, the Central Coastal Plain district, and Metropolitan Haifa. The first stretch, from Gedara in the south to Hedera in the center, is now operational. This project has triggered substantial opposition from local communities and authorities, as well as from district authorities and NGOs, with some support from the Ministry of Environment. The conflicts are over issues such as loss of open space, the potential for scattering land uses alongside the highway, possible impact on national transportation policy, fear of environmental degradation, and feelings of inequity by minority communities (both Israeli Arab and poorer Jewish) as to the siting of routes and interchanges.

Expansion of Ben-Gurion International Airport

Opposition of the local community, the local government authority, and NGOs to expansion of Ben-Gurion International Airport is reinforced by some Ministry of Environment concerns. Opponents of the expansion cite the noise and over-concentration of development in the Tel Aviv area and the country’s Central Region and the benefits of development of an alternative airport in the south. Secondary issues are the limitations on local urban development that airport extension would impose, as well as risks from air pollution and radiation.

Case Studies: Disputes at the Regional Level (Resource Management and Pollution Abatement)

Management and Development of the Tel Aviv Area Coasts

Demands for tourist, residential, and commercial development along the Tel Aviv shore raise complex, multi-issue disputes. These are waged over erosion of the coast, loss of coastal resources and fears of negative effects on the existing urban fabric, competitive land uses, and negative synergies with other proposed developments and public property rights. The stakeholders include planners and developers, multi-layers of government, and NGOs.

Pollution Abatement of the Lower Kishon River Basin

The Kishon River, which passes through the Haifa metropolitan region, has been environmentally abused for years, is deeply polluted, and is today the focus of passionate dispute among a number of interest groups. Chemical and petrochemical companies are the main sources of pollution. The sewage and industrial wastewaters of eight municipalities and three regional councils, until recently pollutant contributors, are now filtered through a waste treatment plant (although accidental spills still occur). The Ministry of Environment decided that the solution was to have the industries build a pipeline, which would carry treated industrial wastewaters directly into Haifa Bay on the Mediterranean, rather than being discharged into the Kishon. Environmentalist and user groups were strongly opposed, unwilling that the Kishon cleanup be at the expense of Haifa Bay.

Case Studies: Disputes at the Local Level (Mixture of Siting, Pollution Abatement, and Development versus Preservation)

Location of an Existing Henhouse

A rural residence was built near an existing henhouse. Although odor and noise problems had been anticipated, solutions were not provided in a timely fashion.

Suburban Train Station

A debate developed between local residents and the Railways authority. Noise reduction was the subject of the debate.

Proximity of Quarry to Residential Communities

A conflict stemmed from the desires of both a quarry and the neighboring community to expand. Expansion of one hindered the other, however.

Village Expansion onto Natural Reserve Lands

A debate developed between residents and the local authorities over the degree of a village’s expansion. The debate also involved the location of a new development. The entire area is environmentally sensitive.

Research Methodology

Interviews with stakeholders were conducted using an open questionnaire protocol with two sections. In the first section, interviewees were asked to describe the conflict, the
issues that they felt needed to be addressed, and their views of possible solutions. The second section focused on the process and procedures by which the interviewees felt the issues were being (or should be) treated. Analysis of these interviews was the basis for developing the broad frame categories (values, substance, process, and phrasing). The analysis was conducted using Grounded Theory techniques (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1990), as well as limited use of Content Analysis methods (e.g., Bauer, 2000).

Analysis of Data

Stakeholders’ statements were transcribed and initially coded (Miles and Huberman, 1994) in a preliminary coding frame system developed by the authors. The system was then refined through identifying themes in each statement and by assigning them to the appropriate frames (see Shmueli and Ben Gal, 2003a, for detail). For example, in the Duda'im conflict (Gasul and Shmueli, 1999), a statement by local residents of Beer Sheva (“We do not agree that the country’s garbage be dumped on us”) was coded under “social justice” (see definitions in Table 2). In other examples, the statement by environmentalists that “[w]e can’t get an expert’s opinion to support us because all experts in this area are working for the entrepreneurs” was coded under “science as fraud,” and the statement, “One must compromise between what can be done and what is sought as the best,” by a Ministry of Environment interviewee, was coded under “practical/pragmatic.”

The coding was not only verbal, but also contextual. That is, the appearance of a word (“money” or “economy,” for example) did not necessarily indicate an economic frame. The outcome was the frames typology presented in Table 1. Table 2 provides definitions of the values frame components.

Stakeholders with similar interests were grouped together. This allowed not only for identification of common interests (regardless of differences in positions) but also for analytical clarity. The six groups identified were entrepreneurs (developers or industries, depending on the type of dispute), national government ministries/authorities, regional government agencies, local government authorities, environmental nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and local residents/users.

The profiles that were developed revealed a consistency of values for both the general stakeholder groups and the individual organizations for which sufficient data were accumulated. In creating the profiles, we took these data into account, as well as the geographical setting and scale of each conflict (see Figure 1).

The following general findings and cross-comparisons are instructive. Figure 1 presents the frequency of a frame’s appearance in stakeholders’ statements and indicates the “values profile” of each group. [A frequency of 1 (100%) means a frame was identified in statements made by interviewees from that stakeholder group in all the cases in which members of the group were interviewed.]

The findings highlight the emphasis that each group places on a particular set of values frames, distinct from the frames emphasized by the other groups. Entrepreneurs are highly concerned with economic goals and scientific/technical perspectives, whereas the frames “identification with organization” and “law and legal rights,” as well as the economic frames, are most salient for the Local Government Authorities. For National Ministries, scientific/technical frames are dominant, whereas Regional Agencies, which also focus on scientific/technical values, emphasize law and legal rights as well. The social justice/community values frame is uppermost among Local Residents/Users, and the ecological/environmental frame, along with science as fraud, are the primary concerns of the Environmental NGOs. Figure 1 and Table 3 summarize the similarities and differences in framing among the various stakeholders.

Table 3 indicates that the economic frame that influences the behavior of Entrepreneurs seems to be of little consequence to Environmental NGOs and National and Regional Authorities. Furthermore, the ecological/environmental frame that is so dominant among Environmental NGOs seems to be of only moderate importance to any governmental body, irrespective of level. This is particularly surprising because the Ministry of Environment, which operates at the regional as well as national level, was a stakeholder in all the disputes analyzed. (This finding is dealt with in more detail in the subsection, “Example of an Organizational Profile.”) The social justice/community frame, which is the dominant value for Local Residents, is only a minor consideration for the National Authorities.

The values frame profiles for government agencies vary with scale. At the national level, Ministries hold similar values frames among themselves (e.g., Ministries of Interior, Environment, Housing and Construction, Health, Transportation, Infrastructure, and the Israel Lands Authority). Thus, in the Israel Transnational Highway dispute, the three central National Ministries involved share the scientific/technical frame:

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I don’t act as an elected public representative and I owe the public nothing. My view is purely technical; all the statistics regarding projected traffic volumes show that the existing roads do not have adequate capacity, the Highway is a necessity. (Ministry of Transportation)

In order to advance the proposals, positions expressed by professional environmental experts must be voiced [not public environmental activists]. (Ministry of Environment)

We use outside experts from various fields and then base our traffic volume on their projections which were carried out at various stages throughout the project. (Ministry of Interior)

Government District Agencies also hold consistent values frames in the various cases studied. Governmental National and District bodies alike give the highest priority to the “scientific/technical,” “law and legal rights,” and “com-
plexity and uncertainty” frames. (“Law and legal rights” has a relatively stronger standing at the regional level than at the national level.) But the District Agencies also place social justice/community values in the forefront, often leading to their taking overall positions that are markedly different from those of their own National Ministry. This is exemplified in the Dudaim landfill case. While the scientific/technical frame is the dominant value for these two levels of governmental bodies, the District Agencies differ from their Ministries in that the social justice value drove them to take a different stance on the siting of the national landfill. Excerpts from interviews reflect the similarities and differences of the two levels:

**National Ministries/Authorities:** “The technology exists and the District Planning and Building Board and the public can technically monitor all environmental impacts of the proposed national landfill in such a way that (1) all negative environmental impacts can be prevented, and (2) it will have no negative effect on the future urban expansion of Beer Sheva [the metropolis of the Negev]” (scientific/technical frame).

**Government District Agencies:** “The technology exists [for an environmentally safe landfill], we just have to identify it” (scientific/technical frame; note it is the same as national-level frame).

“The Negev is weak and does not get what it deserves—both in terms of leadership and in terms of its ability to influence national decision. Residents feel continually discriminated against and under the impression that the Negev is the ‘garbage dump’ of the country” (social justice/community frame; note it has a much higher ranking than at the national level).

Comparing the values frames of Local Authorities with those of the two higher levels of government reveals substantial differences. Local Government bodies are not branches of national ministries; they are politically different entities with their own agendas. Such values as identification with the locality, economics, and representation of local interests are high priorities for them. In the Dudaim case, the Local Authorities (those located near Beer Sheva) displayed a strong economic frame, expressed as follows:

Garbage is an excellent, profitable business. The nature of the current conflict is economic. Beer Sheva wants money: opening Dudaim will force Beer Sheva to close its dump and pay higher tipping fees to Bene Shimon [the adjacent regional council within whose boundaries Dudaim lies] for the use of Dudaim. If the National government had offered compensation up front to Beer Sheva the conflict would have been avoided. Money solves everything, particularly here (economic frame).

In the Ben-Gurion International Airport case, the Regional Authorities took positions closer to that of the Local bod-
ies, as reflected in their relatively stronger commitment to law and legal rights:

It was very important that the Airports Authority [entrepreneurs of the disputed plan] recognize its obligation to compensate the residents living in the area (law and legal rights frame).

Emphasis on the economic frame by the Local Authorities may well stem from the fact that when it comes to receiving national funding for project implementation, they are at the end of the line. In most cases, the National Authorities set the policy but contribute inadequately to the overall project costs. This is also demonstrated in the Airport case, when Local Authorities use both the economic and the law and legal rights frames to phrase their basic interests, e.g.:

Fair compensation must be made to residents suffering from the noise of the airport, and this must be done without dragging feet and unnecessary delays;

and

There must be a reduction of damage to residents’ properties and to the amount of land confiscated.

In the Tel Aviv coastal management case, the economic frame is at the forefront for the Local Authority (City Council). National zoning permits the construction of hotels but prohibits residential housing along the coast. As a member of the Tel Aviv City Council put it,

Land prices in Tel Aviv are very high. Since the State does not give incentives for hotel building and tourism, the municipality, in order to help the entrepreneur, enables him to sell rooms in the hotels as condominium housing units.

Example of an Organizational Profile: The Ministry of Environment

The six groups permit identification of the cross-cutting values frames common to a number of organizations. They also bring into focus the priorities of individual organizations, through a detailed organizational profile. As with the group profiles that emerge from values frames, organizational profiles are developed through the analysis of the frequency with which a particular body’s members express specific values. The Ministry of Environment’s values profile is offered as a case in point. Figure 2 presents the frames that appear in its profiles, at both the national and regional levels.

For more than 80% of those interviewed at both levels, the scientific/technical frame is dominant. “Representing national interests” and little or no “concern for future generations” are also values the two hold in common. While the ecological/environmental frame is fairly strongly valued by the National Ministry (although well behind the scientific/technical frame), at the District Agency level other values frames are more salient than the ecological/
environmental. The “representing local interest” and “risk aversion” frames are not expressed as values at either of these two governmental levels.

There is clear dissonance between the national and regional perspectives regarding the ecological/environmental value. The dissonance is even more pronounced in the higher rankings that district agencies accord social justice/community and complexity and uncertainty, and the greater skepticism they have about the validity of scientific proof.

One question that arises is whether this dissonance reflects a lack of clarity in the national-level policies, a failure to make those policies clear to the regional agencies, or a closer association of the regional staff to values held by local stakeholders. Another question is, What other forces influence Ministry of Environment regional agency operations, in order to account for the dissonance in values frames between the two levels of government?

The Ministry of Environment’s organizational profile was first presented to its leadership in the course of a preliminary report by the authors on a conflict assessment of the Kishon River dispute—a project also commissioned earlier by the Ministry (Shmueli, 2003; Shmueli and Ben Gal, 2001). When the profiles of all six groups were compared, Ministry of Environment leaders expressed surprise that the gap between their ecological/environmental and scientific/technical frames was so great and that social justice had such a low ranking.

This may have been partially responsible for a modest reframing of the Ministry’s values and substance frames in the Kishon River dispute. Initially, the dominance of the scientific/technical frame had influenced the Ministry to focus on finding the best available technology that is economically feasible (BATE) for determining emissions standards and thus the quality of the effluent discharge. This in turn had led to the Ministry of Environment’s decision that the best solution was a pipeline diverting treated waste from industrial holding tanks directly to the sea, bypassing the Kishon River. The Ministry’s pipeline decision was supported by industry (Entrepreneurs) because it was compatible with the economic frame, which is highest ranking for them.

In reframing the dispute, the Ministry of Environment accorded greater priority to the ecological/environmental values frame by changing the sequencing of steps to be taken in arriving at the decision. Quality of the discharge became the starting point. This then influenced the Ministry’s position on emission standards and choice of discharge destination. Such a shift to values closer to those of the Environmental NGOs and Local Residents/Users may foster greater trust and confidence in the environmental groups, something that has hitherto been lacking in the relationship. The impact of the Ministry’s change in thinking and actions was gradual, and over time a number of additional factors no doubt came into play as well. Three years later, however, in the summer of 2004, the Ministry announced through the media the abandonment of the pipeline solution, without signaling its future course.

The Ministry of Environment’s altered position in the Kishon negotiations may have been the result of its having been made aware of its organizational values frames in comparison to those of the environmental group stakeholders. Its subsequent reframing of these values has contributed a fresh approach to its environmental mission in this particular case.

Conclusions

In illustrating how the framing approach may be usefully applied in the resolution or amelioration of environmental disputes, we have emphasized real-world issues. The tools that are presented are intended to be of value to practitioners dealing with such disputes. The findings from the nine Israeli case studies were used to identify the various types of frames and frame categories and to apply the framing process to the creation of stakeholder profiles. In adopting the stakeholder profile approach, practitioners may find its greatest utility in alerting them to frame differences and guiding them to reframe contentious issues in positive ways.

Profiles can be used in two ways. Once the various stakeholder group profiles are presented and discussed with the involved parties, the profiles may facilitate negotiations leading to trade-offs or reframing of environmental issues. Lowering the adversarial tone of the discussion and furthering the search for mutual gains can facilitate the management of dispute negotiations.

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In addition, an in-depth study of a stakeholder group’s profile can be transformative for a particular organization. The process involves individual discussions and group workshops. An investment of such time and effort should help guide organization leaders in adjusting the priorities of existing frames, as well as in developing new ones.

The development of stakeholder profiles presented in this article is no panacea. The research involved in creating
such profiles is time-consuming and complex. The interviews need to be carefully designed and then refined through feedback from those interviewed. Moreover, the interviewees need to be selected so that they are as representative as possible of the stakeholder organization’s goals and values.

Through the use of profiles, the various stakeholders in a dispute become more aware of their own values frames and are better able to read those of the other parties. They can couch their own interests and arguments in language understandable to other stakeholders and propose measures that to some degree take opposing interests into account. This in turn can lead to better management of dispute negotiations and open doors to successful resolutions. Such awareness is a valuable first step in the conflict resolution process.

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Note

1. Grounded Theory is a qualitative research approach for identifying categories and concepts that emerge from the text (“grounded” in the data) and linking the concepts to substantive and formal theories.

References


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