

# **conflict** analysis

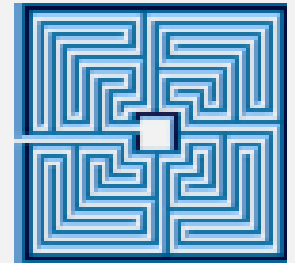
## ***A TUTORIAL***

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*use your “page down” key*



# conflict analysis

- **Who might wish to use this tutorial?**
  - People working in complex conflict situations...
  - Journalists reporting on conflicts...
  - Anyone wanting to understand a conflict better...
- **Why?**
  - Get tips on how to explore various angles of a conflict astutely...
  - In volatile or violent conflict situations conflict analysis can help you stay safer ...
  - Get ideas about possible positive interventions...
- **What?**
  - See some easy-to-use tools for conflict analysis...

# Basic Conflict Analysis

1. reports the truth: ensures *truth* and *avoids false balance*
2. identifies *perspectives* of all *stakeholders*
3. goes beyond obvious conflict symptoms to the *issues*
4. explores the *sources* and *effects* of the conflict
5. considers the *historical and social context*
6. examines the *escalation* or *de-escalation* of the conflict
7. examines stakeholders' *options* and their *implications*
8. analyzes *possibilities for peace and attempts at negotiation*
9. uses an *effective style and medium* for reports

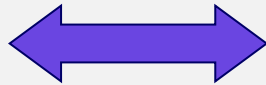
# 1. First: Report the Truth

- Truth matters: Ensure truthfulness by carefully fact-checking with impartial sources.
- Avoid “false balance” and “both-sides-ism.”
- When important to report falsehoods *avoid amplifying false information*. Use the “**truth sandwich**”:
  - ***Start with the truth***. The first frame gets the advantage.
  - ***Indicate the lie***. Avoid amplifying the specific language if possible.
  - ***Return to the truth***. Always repeat truths more than lies. (George Lakhoff)

# 2. Two sides to the story?

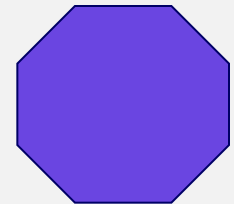
- **Two-sided thinking**

- results in polarized – and incomplete – analysis.



- There are usually **more than two sides.**

- Check out all the important stakeholders to find out about **all sides** (whether or not all sides have equally legitimate views)



# What is a stakeholder?

- Anyone *with a stake* in a given negotiation or conflict or its outcome
- Anyone *affected directly or indirectly* by a negotiation or conflict or its outcome

# Parties and Stakeholders: What's the Difference?

- Parties are persons or groups *directly involved* in a conflict or a negotiation
- Stakeholders are *all* persons or groups:
  - who can *make or implement* relevant decisions
  - who can *block or sabotage* decisions or their implementation
  - Who are *affected directly or indirectly* by decisions or their implementation (including voiceless or vulnerable persons or groups and including women and men)

# 3. The issues . . . beyond the pole

**Beyond the tip of the iceberg: Most of the story is beneath the polarized tales of the obvious parties. . .**

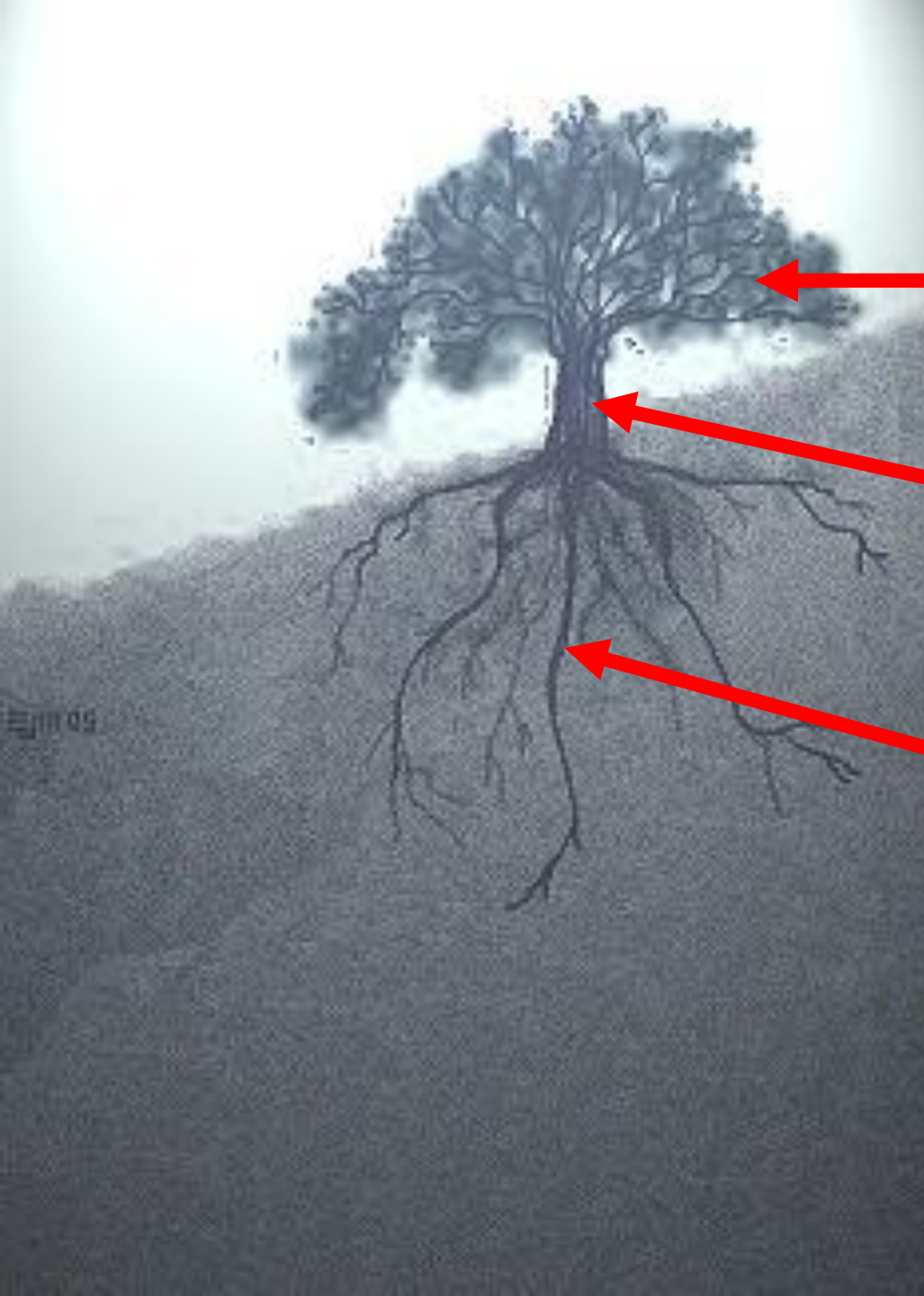


Look for **stories of cooperation or reconciliation** in the midst of conflict.



Consider how **traumas**, historical or recent, are affecting the stakeholders.





# The story is more than the dramatic foliage

- Look beyond the **symptoms** of the conflict (**leaves**)
  - look for symptoms of peace and cooperation
- Examine the **issues and sub-issues** (**trunk and branches – connecting the roots to the leaves**)
  - consider issues on which parties have negotiated peacefully.
- Probe the **sources** of the conflict (**roots**)
  - look for reasons for any peaceful or cooperative activities.
- Is there more than one “tree”?  
**Don't miss the forest for the trees**  
... **consider the historical context.**
  - The forest may contain as much or more peace as it does conflict.

## Some Roots of Conflict

- **Facts:** Are there conflicts over data or its interpretation? Is there legitimate conflict over evidence asserted in support of facts?
- **Interests:** Do parties have conflicting interests or needs?
- **Values:** Are there important religious, social or cultural values at stake for any of the parties?
- **Relationships:** What are the historical personal, social or political relationships involved?
- **Structures:** What is the role of institutional, economic or social structures?

## ...and Some Roots of Peace

- **Facts:** Are there areas of **overlap or consensus**?
- **Interests:** Do parties have **common or complementary** interests or needs?
- **Values:** Are there any **common values**?
- **Relationships:** Are there any **positive or reconciled relationships** between people in conflicting groups?
- **Structures:** Is anything **working well**?

# 4. The context

- Historical, political, legal and cultural **context**

*(Note: That includes international human rights issues.)*

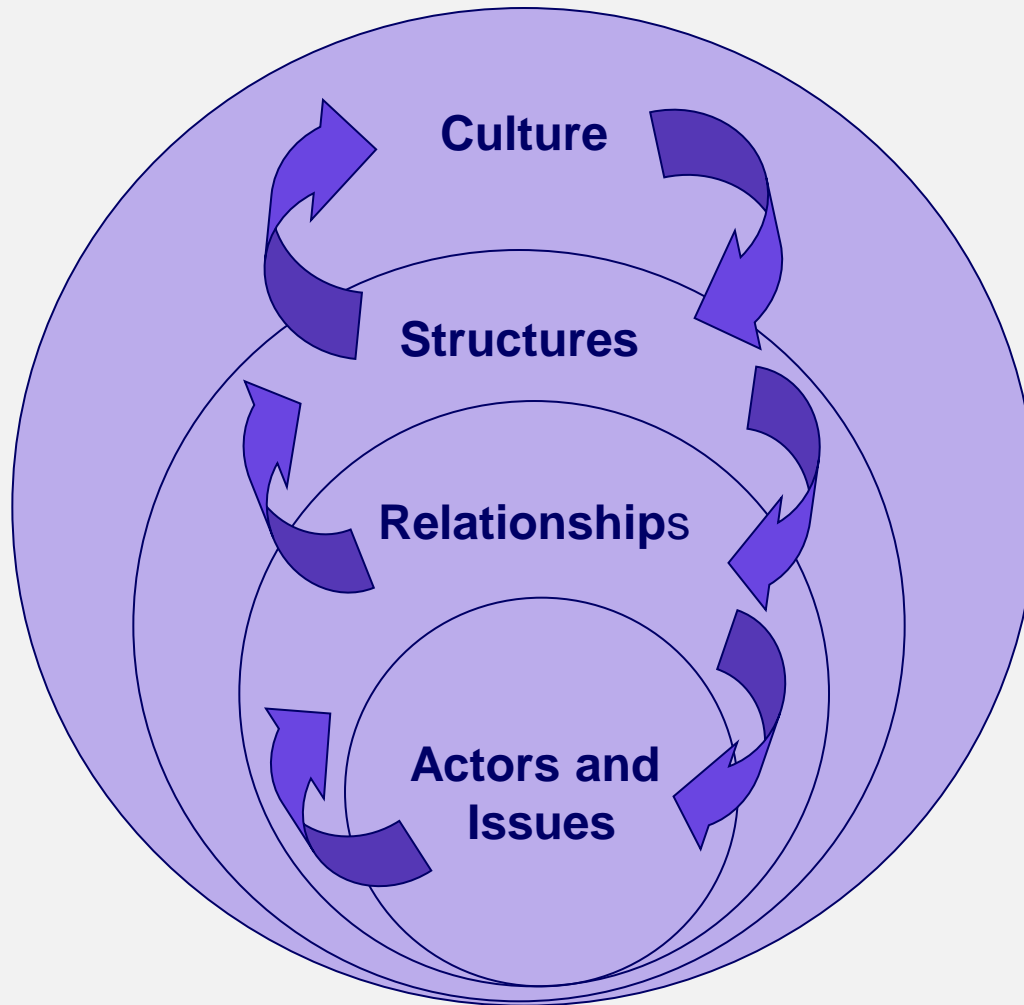
- History of the stakeholders' personal, social, and political **relationships**

# 6. Understand the context:

## Create a timeline

- Include the key events in the history of stakeholders' relationships.
- Include past historical events and **traumas** that are still retold in the stories or legends of each stakeholder.
- Use sources from each stakeholder group (written, oral) to ensure you have all the important historical perspectives. Ask how the stakeholders know what they believe to be true.
- Don't forget to ask whether there are any histories of **cooperative or peaceful** relationships... and get the details.

# The context



- **Actors and issues are not isolated.**
- **Conflict (and peace) occurs within relationships. What relationships are relevant?**
- **What institutional, economic and political structures are relevant?**
- **What cultural factors are relevant?**
- **How are actors, issues, historical relationships, structures and cultures interacting?**

# Needs and Interests...

- Go beyond polarized **positions** to understand parties' and stakeholders' **needs** and "**interests**" that motivate people to take particular positions.
  - **a position**: *a government takes a position that a factory be closed to eliminate effluent discharge into a river. The factory may take the position that it should continue to operate.*
  - **the interests**: *government interests may be safe water, regional prosperity, reelection, citizen wellbeing, continued approval from supporters, international reputation. Factory owners' interests may be business profits, international reputation. Common interests of government, factory owners, workers' and citizens may be safe water supply, jobs, prosperity.*

# Not just *opposing* needs or interests...

- Find out about about common concerns...
- Find out what resources each stakeholder has that others may want or need...
- Find out how dependent the parties and stakeholders are on one another for what they want or need...



# Consider the needs of *all those affected* . . .

- **Welfare:** nutrition, water, air, protection against elements and disease . . .
- **Security:** safety, avoidance of violence. . .
- **Autonomy:** choice about beliefs and associations, occupation, spouse, way of life, ability to influence decisions that affect self, family or group.
- **Identity:** purpose and meaning, justice, belonging to a family, group or community, dignity. . .

 . . . How are traumas – historical or recent -- affecting stakeholders?


# . . . and human *capacities*

- What may be diminishing or enhancing people's capacities to *flourish*?
  - Consider inequalities in capacities or resources...
  - Consider who has choices or lack of choices in the situation...
  - Don't forget issues of culture, gender, environment, when considering what people need to fulfill their capacities...

# Which brings us to . . . relationships

- Not just interpersonal relationships . . .
- Also consider the **social, group and gender relationships**
- And the **political relationships**.
- Don't forget to consider **historical changes in relationships**... don't forget to find out about what was happening in **better times (or worse times)**.


# and “structures” . . .

- Is it a “structural” conflict?
  - Does the conflict have roots in entrenched historical economic or social structures that are now being challenged?
  - Are any ingrained institutional or societal rules or practices that are at the root of the conflict?
    - Historical patterns?
    - Laws, regulations?
    - Ingrained ideas or habits considered “normal” by powerful groups?
    - Cultural or religious norms that affect different people in different ways such as women, children, men?
    - Environmental issues?
-  Find out whether there are any other social structures or institutions that work well (or a bit better).

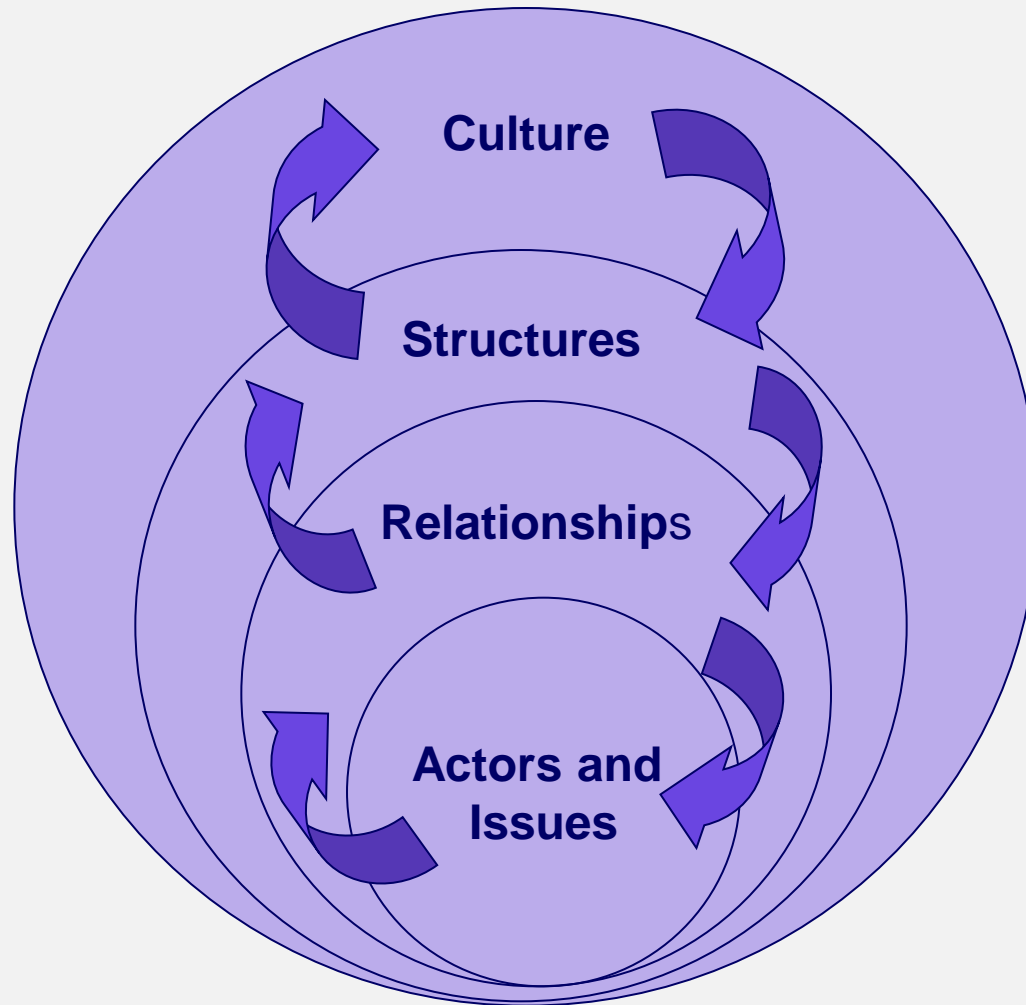
# and culture . . .

- “Culture” is not associated just with **national origin, race, language or religion** but also with **education, age, gender, economic status, class, recency of immigration, sexual orientation, disability, occupation, political ideology, traumatic histories.**
- Members of identifiable cultural or occupational groups are quite diverse. There is usually a **variety of perspectives within each group.**
- **All cultures are always changing.**
- Consider differences in **world views** that lead people to see and explain events differently. Different people may give **different meanings to the same event.**

# Do cultural differences really *cause* conflict?

- Many people with great differences address their problems successfully together...
- People in conflict tend to notice, emphasize or even create differences...
- Look beyond the obvious cultural, religious or gender differences – investigate *historical* relationships, traumas, inequalities, systematic injustices, distribution of resources...
-  ... Look for evidence of successful relationships among those who are different. Ask what makes those relationships successful.

## What is the relevant context?



- **Actors and issues** are not isolated.
- **Conflict (and peace)** occur within **relationships**. What relationships are **most relevant**?
- What institutional, economic and political **structures** are **most relevant**?
- What **cultural factors** are **most relevant**?
- How are actors, issues, relationships, structures and cultures interacting?

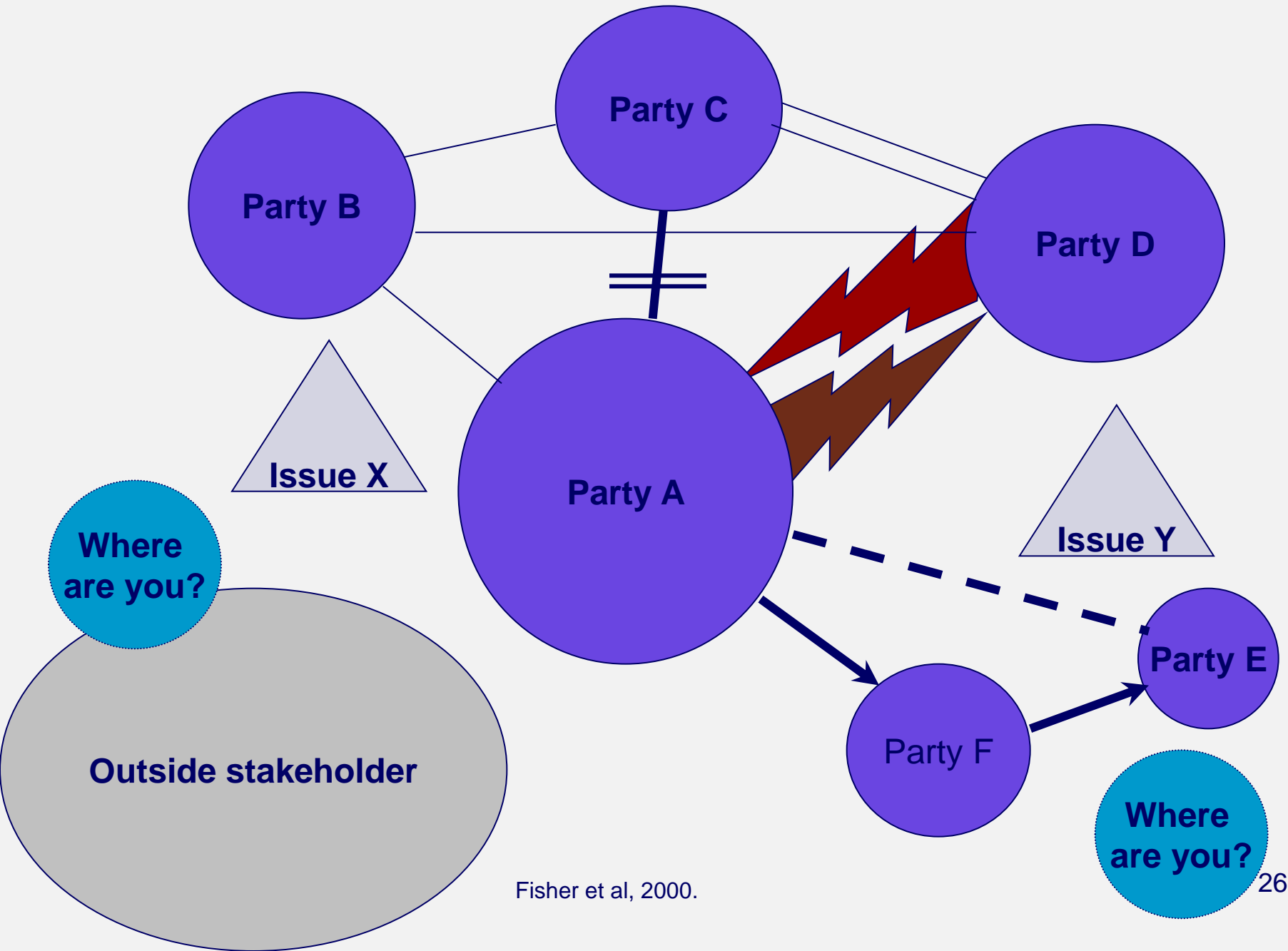
# Relationships?

- **Consider**
  - Relationships between individuals
  - Relationships *within* and *between* groups, families, organizations, communities
  - Gender relations
  - Political relationships
- **Consider**
  - Current relationships
  - *History* of the relationships including *traumas*
- **Consider**
  - Current and historical power dynamics in relationships
- **Don't forget**
  - Consider the **good relationships!** Ask **what makes them good?**

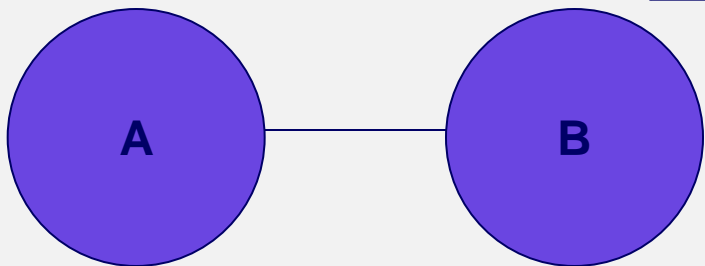
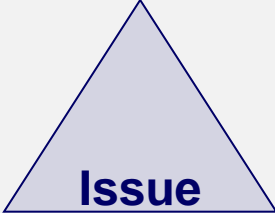


# Make a “Conflict Map”

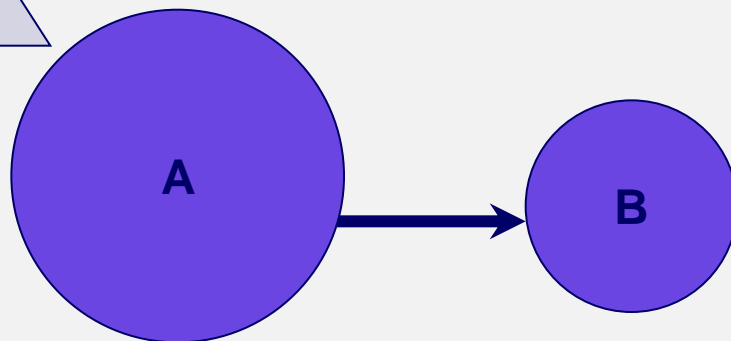
- **What is a “conflict map”?**
  - A tool for understanding relationships involved in a conflict
- **Why take time to create a conflict map?**
  - Use to help identify all stakeholders...
  - Assess stakeholders’ relationships...
  - Assess power dynamics...
  - Identify and assess alliances...
  - Identify and carefully evaluate some possible entry points for investigation or intervention...
  - Assess intervener relationships with stakeholders...
  - Assess your own position and level of detachment regarding issues and actors...



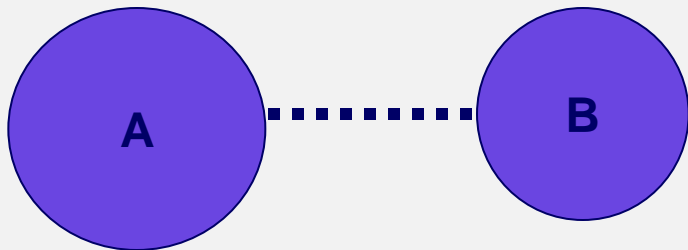
Fisher et al, 2000.



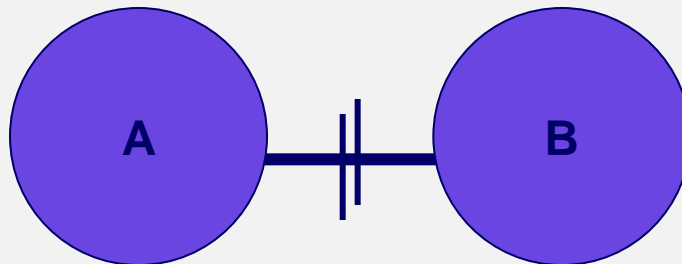
**relationship**



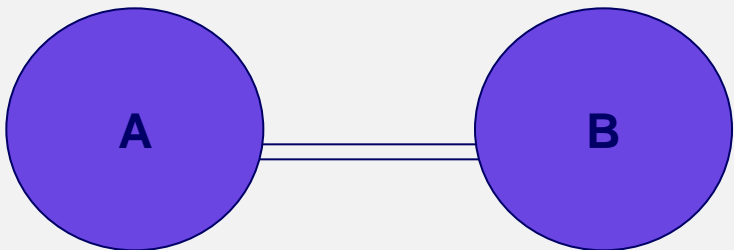
**direction of power or influence**



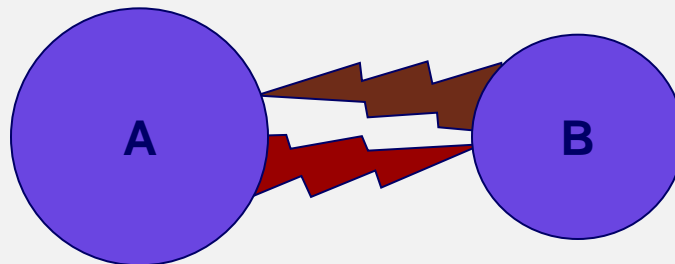
**intermittent relationship**



**broken relationship**



**alliance**



**Tension, discord or  
traumatic conflict**


Adapted from Fisher et al,  
2000.

# 7. How are things changing?

- Is the conflict
  - Escalating?
  - Deescalating?
  - Stalemated?
- How are relationships changing?
- Are any alliances shifting?

# Is the conflict escalating or deescalating?

Less constructive

- 
- **Violence escalates, sometimes to the point of “contagion.”**
  - **Physical attacks and violence occur.**
  - **Polarized groups may form on either side.**
  - **Verbal attacks and descriptions of the other may include dehumanization or demonization.**
  - **Parties react and retaliate...hostile exchanges may increase.**
  - **Parties talk only through third parties.**
  - **Direct communications become less frequent, less accurate, less respectful.**
  - **Parties blame one another for the problem.**
  - **Parties talk *together* about the issues.**

More constructive

# 7. What might happen next?

- What are the parties' various **options**? Do they have more than one option?
- What are the implications of each option for all stakeholders? Will the next steps escalate or deescalate the conflict? Are there possible **triggers** that could cause escalation of the conflict or renewed **trauma**?
- What are the possible interventions, negotiations, solutions?

# Stalemate?

- Is the conflict “**ripe**” for intervention to encourage negotiation or resolution?
- A state of “ripeness” occurs when all parties realize they have reached a “**mutually hurting stalemate**” in which both *realize* their options are limited, and both *realize* they have no power to improve their position by retaliating. (Zartman, 2003)
- Are any **third parties** on the scene influencing the situation or intervening? Are any of these interventions helpful? Consider more than just official actors. What is happening behind the scenes? Don't forget about women's interventions.

# 8. Can the issues be negotiated?

Generally speaking, disputes are **easier** to resolve:

- the fewer the parties,
- the more they have in common,
- the fewer and more clearly defined the issues,
- the more resources or options,
- the more commitment to resolve,
- the less important the issues are to the parties,
- the more superficial the dispute,
- the more willing parties are to equalize power or use power fairly,
- the less publicly controversial the dispute.



# 9. The report...

- *Even the presence of a reporter has an effect. Interactions with stakeholders and reporting do affect the conflict... The question is how?*
- What is the *purpose* of the report? Are reporters considering the “*do no harm*” principle.
- Are reporters considering their choices of *forum, style, depth* of reporting.
- Are reporters considering *what happens after they submit* their report. How will the report affect things?

# Diagram Credits

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- **Roots of Conflict** (slide 8) drawn from Christopher Moore's "circle of conflict" (see references).
- **Context Image** (slides 11, 19) adapted from Maire Dugan with ideas from Johan Galtung and John Paul Lederach (see references)
- **Conflict mapping diagrams** (slides 22, 23), adapted from Simon Fisher et al (see references).

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