Communication
in State Forest Organizations

Experience from Germany

Gerhard Oesten
One of the objects of dispute between A and B: a 160 year old beech stand

- 3 ha - excellent site – beech optimum
- natural regeneration since 30 years
- stock volume 330 m³
- 70% regenerated, groups of planted Douglas fir on 10% 
- old trees: bad quality because of WorldWar II shrapnels
- high nature conservation value
- owner: community X
Information about A

• 60 years old;
• since 25 years head of the forestry office - responsible for approx. 20.000 ha;
• management of the community forest is official duties
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• understanding of sustainability:
  - continue harvest and regeneration;
  - ensure valuable timber production for future generations;
  - continue to add Douglas fir
Information about B

• 27 years old;
• since 2 years forest ranger, employed by the community (about 1.300 ha forests)
• by law complex assignment with two “bosses” –
  A is B's supervisor in forestry matters; mayor in disciplinary matters.
• understanding of sustainability:
  - stop harvest
  - justify a nature conservation reserve,
• lives in the village, is networked there and very much appreciated.
• involved with "Friend of the Earth" and "FSC".
Conclusion

The goal of their communication **should** actually be
- bindingly agree further treatment of the stand
- occur with the same words and arguments in the community
- maintain a trusting, open, respectful relationship

**Instead,**
- problematic emotionally charged communication
- A's mistrust that B speaks "differently" in the village than in staff meetings,
- in this way he, A, could get into difficult situations with the mayor and the community representatives.
Lessons learned from Case

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• In reality communication problems are probably unavoidable - **conflict dimension**
• People with communication problems suffer - **psychological-social dimension**
• Communication problems in the organization often also concern problems of the organization with the social environment - **policy dimension**
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• Good communication is important, if not decisive for success of forest organization - rational dimension
• In reality communication problems are probably unavoidable - conflict dimension
• People with communication problems suffer - psychological-social dimension
• Communication problems in the organization often also concern problems of the organization with the social environment - policy dimension
• Possibilities and limits to systematic changes of communication - management dimension
Basics of Communication

• Communication is a basic behavior of people. You can not not communicate.
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• The goal of communication is understanding between people using language and signs.
one-way communication

sender  information  recipient
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Konrad Lorenz

Austrian zoologist, Nobel laureate in medicine and one of the main representatives of classical comparative behavioral science.

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• **Basics of successful communication are credibility and willingness for understanding**
Credibility

means two things:

• the partner is given "faith" and "trust" in terms of what he says and does

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asymmetry of loss or gain of credibility
Willingness for "Understanding"

Three requirements:

• *partners come to a consensus on the content of the exchanged message or fact*

• *partners understand the position of each other*

• *partners accept an action based on the submitted facts*
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- The goal of communication is understanding between people using language and signs.
- Communication means a dialogical process with reciprocal behavior.
- Communication is more than just information - every communication has a content and relationship aspect.
- Basics of successful communication: credibility and willingness for understanding
- Difficulties in understanding with potential for conflict can be traced back to three causes:
Causes for conflict

(1) The communication difficulties are based on *incomprehensible terminology.*
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(2) Difficulties in understanding can be an expression of *different interests*. 
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(2) Difficulties in understanding can be an expression of *different interests*.

(3) Difficulties in understanding are based on different "*worldviews*", different normative basic assumptions and problem perceptions.
Improve communication skills - possible on the level of

• individuals?
• teams?
• overall organization?
Improve communication skills - possible?
on the level of individuals and teams

- analyze communication problems systematically

- train communication
Improve communication skills - possible? on the level of overall organization

• *develop a system of systematic engagement with communication issues at all levels and between levels of organization*

• *offer training in communication and conflict management and*

• *present their normative foundations - the „management philosophy" - in written form of a mission statement.*
Thank you very much for your attention

Dziękuję bardzo za Państwa uwagę

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