UNIVERSITY OF
EASTERN FINLAND

EDUCase
Higher Education Platform
for Global Sustainability

Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution 2022

course report

Photo: Denis Dobrynin

International course

8-12 August 2022, Joensuu, Finland

University of Eastern Finland

**Figure 1.** Professor Irmeli Mustalahti and Professor Lasse Peltonen lead the class.

Photo: Saara Pajunen

SUMMARY

The Environmental collaboration and conflict resolution (ECCR) course series on the conceptualization of environmental collaboration and conflicts includes examination of theoretical frameworks, case studies, and exercises on a collaborative approach, mediation and listening skills. The courses are organised by the ECCR network. The 2022 August course in Finland addressed conflicts related to the conservation, governance and management of natural resources and the environment. The course included the examination of conflict cases around the world, hands-on exercises, and the development of collaboration, mediation, and consensus-building skills. Concepts such as collaborative governance and the Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement (BATNA) were also presented and discussed. The classroom work was complemented by a field excursion. During the field excursion, course participants were able to explore and reflect on conflict resolution and collaboration related to hydropower energy production in Finland. Pre-course assignments and a final course diary were mandatory elements for completing the course. Completion of the course resulted in 5 ECTS credits.

Figure 2. Course participants and teachers.

The course was held on 8–12 August 2022 in Joensuu, Finland, and brought together 39 students and teachers (Figure 2) from 13 countries (Figure 3). Participants of the course were Master's students, PhD students, senior researchers and teachers, representatives from non-governmental organizations, consulting companies, and state institutions.
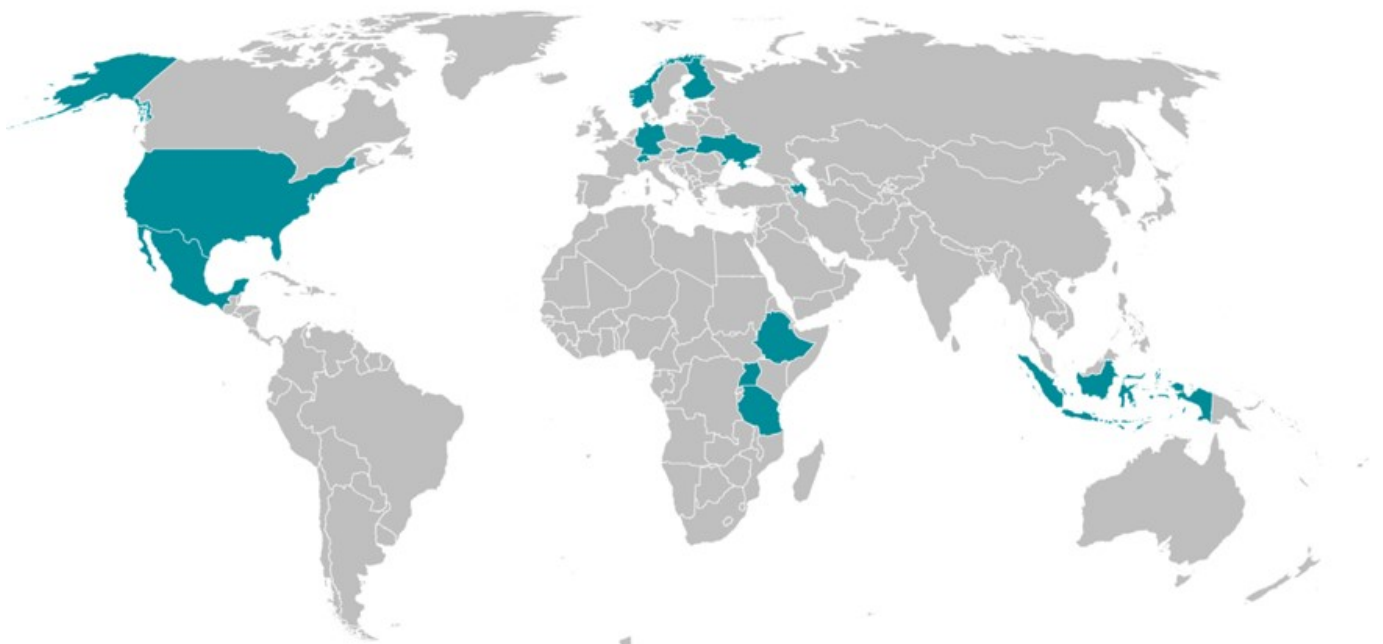
Figure 3. Countries from which the course participants came.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course consisted of three parts: (1) pre-course homework, (2) the course per se, and (3) submission of the course diary. The course itself was organized as an in-person 5-days event, including four days of classroom work and a one-day field trip.

Pre-course homework

The pre-course homework included exploring the materials placed on the online education platform (Digicampus) and submitting an essay. The materials included articles and video presentations. The articles were aimed at introducing students to theoretical issues of conflicts, collaborative governance, and consensus-building. The video presentations, prepared by PhD researchers, demonstrated four conflict cases related to natural resources and the environment. In addition, students were asked to carefully watch video presentations and to be prepared to discuss the above-mentioned conflict cases during the course. After the course, the course participants were asked to submit a course diary based on reflections on the pre-course materials as well as on their personal experience and knowledge, and to answer questions on how they understood the terms environmental collaboration and environmental conflict.

Introduction to the course content

The course was opened by Kenneth Matengu, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Namibia and President of the Council of The Pan African University, who was invited to give an opening speech. Irmeli Mustalahti (University of Eastern Finland) and Tiina Kontinen (University of Jyväskylä) then introduced the Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution (ECCR) course series and the EDUCase platform. After the introduction of the participants of the course, Mustalahti opened the course with a reflection on the concept of environmental collaboration in which she contrasted Finnish and global contexts and interpretations. Lasse Peltonen (University of Eastern Finland) introduced the participants to the theoretical issues of conflicts: conflict elements, conflict analysis and conventional and alternative approaches to conflicts. At the end of the first day, course participants were divided into groups to analyze and discuss four conflict cases led by PhD researchers: conflicts related to forest plantations in Tanzania (Aristarik Maro); a conflict over peat water sharing, peat fires, and oil palm plantations in Indonesia (Rijal Ramdani); a conflict on forestry and intact forest landscape conservation in Russia (Denis Dobrynin); a socio-territorial conflict over land and forest in Mexico (Violeta Gutierrez Zamora).

Introduction to a collaborative approach and collaborative governance

The second day was opened by Stephen Greenwood (Portland State University, National Policy Consensus Center) who conducted a tug-of-war exercise (cover photo of this report). Greenwood used the exercise to demonstrate the difference between traditional and non-traditional approaches to collaboration and competition, including 'winners and losers' vs. 'win-win' solutions. In the classroom, Greenwood presented a conceptual framework for a collaborative approach and for moving from competition to collaboration, including the concept of 'Moving Northeast' (page 14, Figure 8).

Jonna Kangasoja (Akordi oy) complemented the collaborative approach with the concept of interest-based negotiation which was followed by a session on the role of a neutral third party in conflict resolution. Kangasoja shared her experiences as a neutral professional designing and facilitating a mediation process to resolve a national forest conflict in Finland. The negotiations took place between the Finnish state forest authority (Metsähallitus) and two environmental NGOs (Greenpeace and the Finnish Association for Nature Conservation).

Laurel Singer (Portland State University, National Policy Consensus Center) illustrated natural resource conflict resolution using examples of a collaborative approach in Oregon, USA. A hands-on exercise on consensus-building, called the Family outing exercise, was organized by the course teachers. The exercise illustrates the life situation caused by the different interests of family members regarding how to spend a day off. The task was to devise a solution for the family and then reflect on the negotiation process among the student course participants as the 'family members'. The last session of the day focused on preparation for the excursion and included the application of the context, concepts, and analytical frameworks for the trip.

Figure 4. Stephen Greenwood leads the class.

Photo: Denis Dobrynin

Field excursion

The excursion, organised on the third day of the course, was dedicated to the conflicts and collaboration practices related to hydropower in the Koitajoki river and Koitere lake area. The excursion addressed the consequences of water regulation caused by hydropower development in the region, such as displacement of people, water level fluctuations and negative impacts on water ecosystems and fish stocks but also on collaboration between the hydropower plant and locals to hinder the negative effects. The excursion was organised in partnership with the North Karelia Biosphere Reserve (coordinated by the North Karelia Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY-centre)) and the monitoring group of the regulation of Lake Koitere and Kivilahti village.

Figure 5. Visit a nature trail and communication with locals during the course.

Photo: Saara Pajunen

The field day included a visit to the Pamilo hydropower plant and included several stops along the Koitajoki river to see the effects of the hydropower on the landscape and the river. The final destination of the day was Kivilahti village where the course participants followed a panel discussion. During the stops along the Koitajoki river, the participants became acquainted with the historical, political, cultural, and natural features of the region to better understand the context of the conflict and the collaboration under consideration. At the Pamilo hydropower plant, the participants were introduced to the technical features of the plant operation, its impact on landscapes, and the key parties. Vilma Lehtovaara (Biosphere reserve coordinator) and the members of the monitoring group of the regulation of Lake

Koitere who participated on that day presented a collaborative platform related to the water catchment area and hydropower production established in a project that was coordinated by Ympäristökeskus, the organisation preceding the North Karelia ELY-Centre. In Kivilahti village, the panel discussion with members of the monitoring group and villagers was facilitated by Mustalahti. During the panel discussion, the participants tested the theoretical knowledge acquired during the first two days of the course on a live 'from-conflict-to-collaboration' case in situ. In addition, during the village visit, Lehtovaara explained the role played by the North Karelia Biosphere Reserve in environmental collaboration. The description of the Koitajoki and Koitere case is given on pages 15-17.

From conflict toward collaboration

The fourth day began with reflections on the excursion facilitated by Irmeli Mustalahti and Lasse Peltonen. The reflections included key actors and their interests, the timeline and history of the conflict case, hidden conflicts or mistrust between actors, and the best alternatives to a negotiated agreement. The reflections were followed by lectures on moving from conflicts and competition to collaboration by Stephen Greenwood and Laurel Singer. They stressed the importance of the framing of the collaboration, i.e., "defining the problem or issue in a way that considers the various perspectives and directs efforts toward an outcome or solution that meets the interests of all stakeholders". Stepping stones to collaboration, such as interdependence, listening, reciprocity and trust, were explained. Key roles in collaborative practices, including sponsor, facilitator, convener and participant, were presented. Features of consensus decision-making were discussed. The process of consensus-building, including informing, engagement, consulting and collaboration, was also one of the topics of the day. Stephen Greenwood conducted exercises related to trust-building, collaboration, and active listening.

What did we learn?

The last day included reflections on what had been learned over the previous days as well as new topics. Stephen Greenwood presented personal tools for working across divides, including finding mutual interests that unite actors, asking questions, and applying active listening. In the final session, Irmeli Mustalahti introduced the United Nations resolution on Youth, Peace and Security, and how it is related to environmental conflicts and collaboration. Mustalahti presented the term 'soft security' which is a form of security that strengthens society and stabilizes and promotes democratic inclusion and participation. Mustalahti introduced a

research project called ALL-YOUTH which aims to study young people's participation in society, youth activism and environmental citizenship and their interaction and decision-making on environmental governance, which links young people's participation to soft security. The day ended with the Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution series course alumni meeting which was attended by alumni of this course and alumni of previous courses, both in person and online. In the meeting, participants discussed the development of the ECCR network and the organization of the next courses. Key issues and concepts applied within the course are shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Key issues and concepts applied within the course.

"Natural resources and nature as such will be a source of conflicts in the future more and more often. The changing environment but also economic and social relations in Europe and globally will raise more and more ethical and value-based issues related to the exploitation of nature and humans here or on the other side of the globe. That is why the study of methods of collaboration is relevant here and now as well as in the future. I am really grateful to all the team and all who made this course happen.",

Zuza Fialová, trainer and analyst, Partners for Democratic Change Slovakia

"Surprisingly, what I learned in the course comes to mind quite often. For example, today we planned workshops for evaluating the effectiveness of a law. We thought about how we could best get the different parties to work together to solve a problem, together. My motivation to find mutually agreeable solutions has grown a lot. I am even in overdrive, feeling like cooperation is the only way! I worry about whether it is necessary to create a large bureaucracy in order to be able to use the methods learned in the course. The correctness of the practice, and the details of how collaborative governance is practised, are essential to both its legitimacy and its effectiveness." ,

Jaana Junnila, legislative advisor, The Ministry of the Environment, Finland

"If I were asked about the best three concepts I learned from the course, my response would be directed to three which are: responsibilization, symbolic violence and Best Alternative Negotiated Agreement (BATNA). I will continue to use these concepts in my future interactions and engagements with the community. Besides the three concepts, I also gained a better understanding of the EDUCASE network, the activities of the alumni, some of the future plans and different topics covered in the course. I must take this opportunity to sincerely thank the organizers and the course lecturers for a job well done."

Willy Ngaka, Professor, Makerere University, Uganda

"My reflection from the course is I have become inclined toward collaborative strategies, their ethics, and systemic analysis and assessments of conflicts. Based on what I experienced at Lake Koitere - the collaboration between a multinational power company and the local people - I appreciate that economic development and environmental sustainability can be achieved together when collaboration is stressed. In my work as a grassroots peace educator, I have learned useful team game techniques and practical resource governance theories and ideas to improve my work in local communities. As a student, I have learned new theories, perspectives, and intervention strategies that could influence my understanding of environmental conflicts, and how they could be resolved - collaboratively."

Felix Dade, Master's degree student, University of Jyvaskyla, Finland

Conflicts are the expression of struggles between two or more parties over status, values and interests. Conflicts can occur at different scales, from conflicts between family members or work teams and social groups to conflicts between countries and regions of the world. According to Lasse Peltonen, conflicts can be caused by a combination of elements such as incompatible goals, hardened identities and perceptions, and so-called mirror images of 'us vs. them'. Conflicts are often related to the scarcity of material resources, including natural resources, but scarcity alone does not lead to conflict. Environmental and natural resource conflicts involve competing uses of the resources and concerns over environmental change, and impact on both human actors and non-human entities. Environmental conflicts are usually complex, involving multiple actors, both public and private, and have consequences for future generations. Environmental and natural resource conflicts typically involve issues regarding ownership, use and access, decision-making and benefit vs. burden sharing. Resource conflicts can be driven by uneven geographic patterns of resource distribution and power imbalances between actors. The conflicts may involve various levels and sectors of
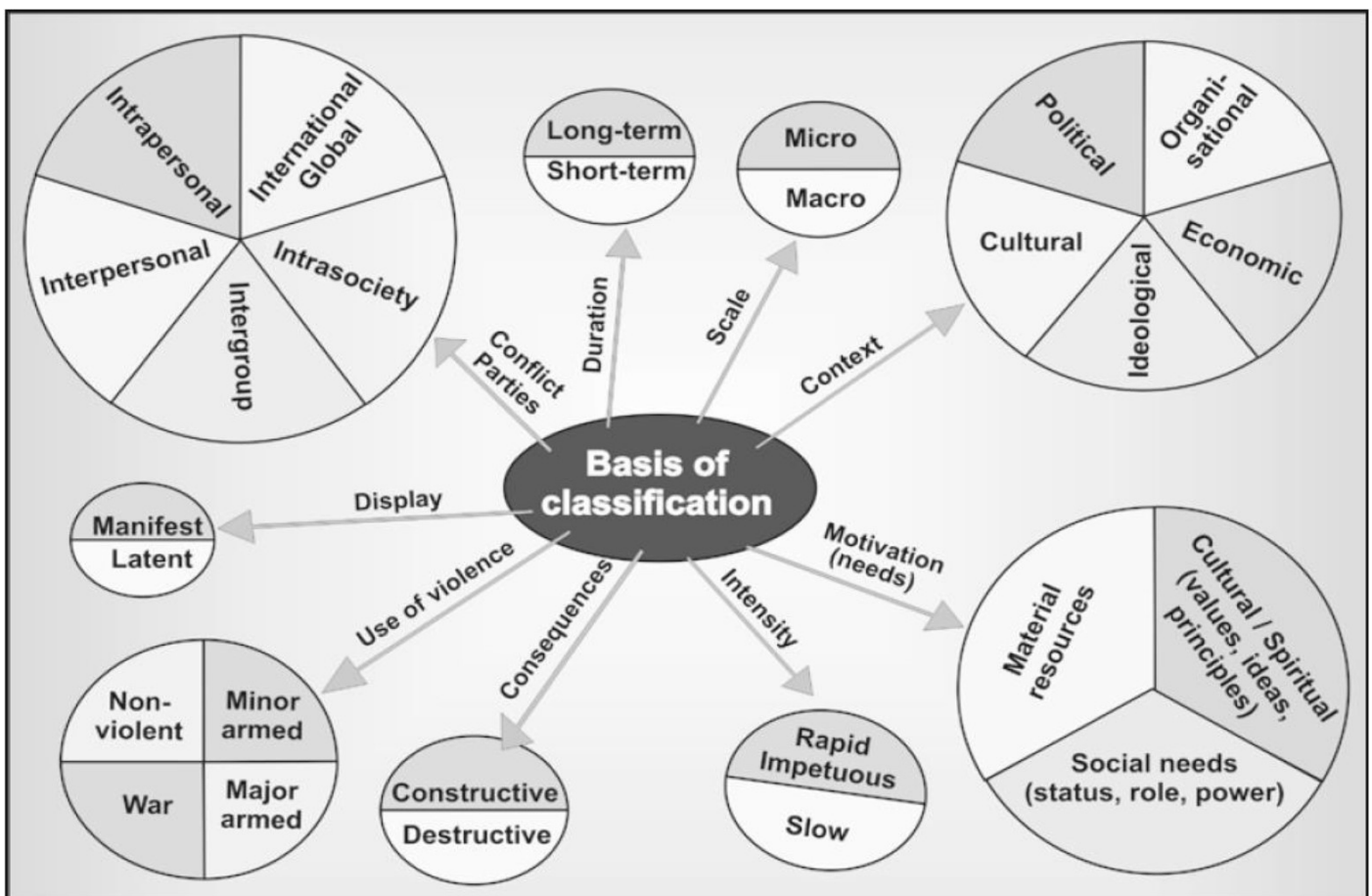

Figure 7. Types of conflicts (adopted from Lyamouri-Bajja et al., 2013).

governance, from global to local. Environmental conflicts may be place-based or policy-related. In the ECCR course series, we focus on the resolution of non-military intersociety and intergroup conflicts over natural resources and the environment (Figure 7). There are three alternative approaches to conflict resolution, which may be based on power, rights and interests (see Box 1).

Box 1. Three alternative approaches to conflict resolution:

1. Power-based; power struggle

"Might makes right" most apparent in violent conflict.

Harmful for relationships between actors.

Leads to distrust.

2. Rights-based; legal/administrative adjudication

Based on legal claims.

Leads to win-lose situations e.g., in court proceedings.

Weakens relations between parties.

Costly and uncertain.

3. Interest-based; reconciling interests

May lead to win-win situations.

The parties are in control of the process/decision.

May avoid growing costs.

Adopted from Lasse Peltonen's presentation and based on Ury, Brett & Goldberg (1988).

A collaborative approach

Why should we collaborate? As we see in many examples, conflicts (whether they are environmental or not) can be handled in various ways. One way is a competition aimed at winning, eliminating the opponent, and taking what we want. Our culture and society are pushing us into such a competitive mode almost automatically. At school, work, within communities, and even in families, we are expected to compete and win against others. Another way to resolve or prevent conflicts is collaboration which requires rejecting the competitive mode. A collaborative approach is where we think of our interests while at the same time acknowledging the interests of the other party, and try to find a common outcome beneficial for both sides. However, collaboration is only possible when the parties are interdependent and need to work together to find a win-win solution.

## Environmental collaboration

Key concepts related to the prevention and resolution of conflicts considered during the course were environmental collaboration and collaborative governance. Environmental collaboration can be understood as a collaboration between various actors, institutions and processes related to the governance, conservation and management of natural resources and the environment. Environmental collaboration implies a wide range of practices, including process design, joint fact-finding, collaborative interventions, citizen science interventions and knowledge co-creation or e.g., the facilitation of negotiations, collaborative governance as well as co-management of natural resources and the environment.

Trust and the role of a convener

Trust is an essential ingredient of (environmental) collaboration. Collaboration and conflict resolution are difficult or even impossible without some degree of trust between parties, as well as the parties' trust in the process and in the rules of the game. Trust in the process, and parties' motivation to participate can be enhanced by a suitable convener. A convener is different from a facilitator or mediator. A convener is a person or an institution that invites parties to the table so that they are able to trust the procedure and are willing to try it despite their dislike of or distrust towards each other, or fatigue related to the conflict. A convener invites and hosts the process of conflict resolution. Impartiality, financial transparency, and other objective aspects could be named to ensure the convener is respected and seen as trustworthy by all parties and actors engaged.

Moving to the 'North-East'

Collaboration does not, as some believe, require altruism. Nor does it require abandoning advocating for one's own interests. Collaboration is about working to fulfil one's interests in the context of interdependence, where the parties have intersecting goals. Exploring interests helps identify mutually beneficial options. Collaboration is a powerful approach because it helps parties meet their own interests instead of asking them to be altruistic, i.e., to serve other interests. Simply stated, if we continue to think only about 'us', we can reach half of gain possible for our interest. When collaboration is successful, we can go 'North-East' – towards the upper right corner of the chart (Figure 8) and get to the solutions that are mutually beneficial and bring more outcomes for each of the parties. To achieve this, we need the genuine will to acknowledge the legitimate interests of 'them', and a process where we will be searching for mutually beneficial solutions.

In order for you to win, *they* have to win, too.
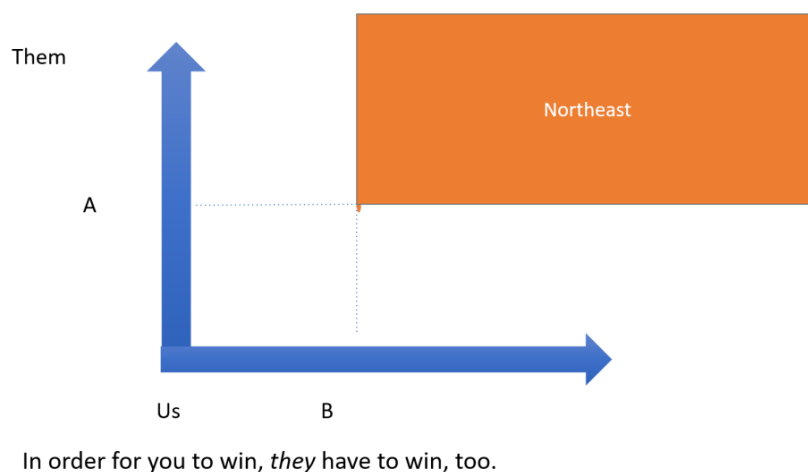
Figure 8. Moving to the 'North-East' (adopted from Stephen Greenwood's presentation).

BATNA

BATNA stands for Best Alternative To a Negotiated Agreement. The term was coined by Roger Fisher and William Ury in their 1981 bestseller, Getting to Yes: Negotiating Without Giving It. BATNA means the best option we can get if the other party refuses to negotiate with us or if they make such conditions for us that we refuse to continue the negotiation process. Therefore BATNA is not necessarily our ideal outcome, unless our ideal outcome is something we can get without any interaction or collaboration with another party. BATNA is critical in negotiation because it helps actors to enter into or to refuse to accept a negotiated agreement on the basis of an understanding of possible alternatives. BATNA is not something objectively given and lasting in time; it may change with the circumstances and actors entering the process. Also, actors can work to improve their BATNAs.

The history of the conflict in the Koitajoki and Koitere area began in the 1950s when the development of hydropower in Finland was caused by the need to develop the economy under the conditions of paying reparations to the Soviet Union and post-war reconstruction. Hydropower companies began to buy land from villagers to construct water reservoirs (Figure 9). However, after the reservoirs had been built, the water level rose less than the representatives of the hydropower sector had anticipated. As a result, significant areas of land purchased from villagers were not flooded and remained commercial forests (that are still being used by forest companies). The villagers who lost their lands felt that the perceived compensation was insufficient and that the situation, in general, was unjust. Moreover, the operation of hydropower plants negatively impacts both the ecosystems and local communities through fluctuations of water level, erosion, the risks for water transport, degradation of fish spawning and increasing mercury concentration in water. At the same time, the hydropower plant electrified the area that previously had been without electricity.

The key actors involved in the case were the hydropower company, the municipality of Ilomantsi, villagers, the fishery association, summer residents, government agencies (Ympäristökeskus and the Finnish Environment Institute) and environmental NGOs. To consider the interests of various actors, a Lake Koitere water level regulation development project was carried out from 2000 to 2004. As a result of the project, a collaborative platform was formed to monitor that the agreements made within the project are kept. The collaboration became possible, among other things, due to the interdependence of the actors. For the hydropower company, it was in their interest to have a good reputation and a high level of social and environmental responsibility to continue operating and developing its capacity in the region. For their part the villagers, including local fishermen, were interested in an appropriate water level, good water quality and restoring fish stocks. For


Figure 9. A reservoir for hydropower generation in North Karelia.

Photo: Saara Pajunen

the government and municipality, it is important to provide conditions for the operation of the hydropower company that pays taxes and generates electricity while also guaranteeing the well-being and livelihoods of local communities and taking environmental protection aspects into consideration.

During the course, the participants discussed BATNAs in relation to the Koitajoki and Koitere case. The course participants identified the BATNA for the hydropower company as follows: "*They can have their business, but with a bad reputation, possible civil unrest, and day-to-day problems with the citizens.*" The BATNA for fishermen whose livelihoods are dependent on the lake ecosystem could be: "*They can move away from their land, or they can use civil unrest activism to give the company a hard time.*" In the discussion course that participants had while visiting the area, they understood that the parties were interested in negotiations and collaboration.
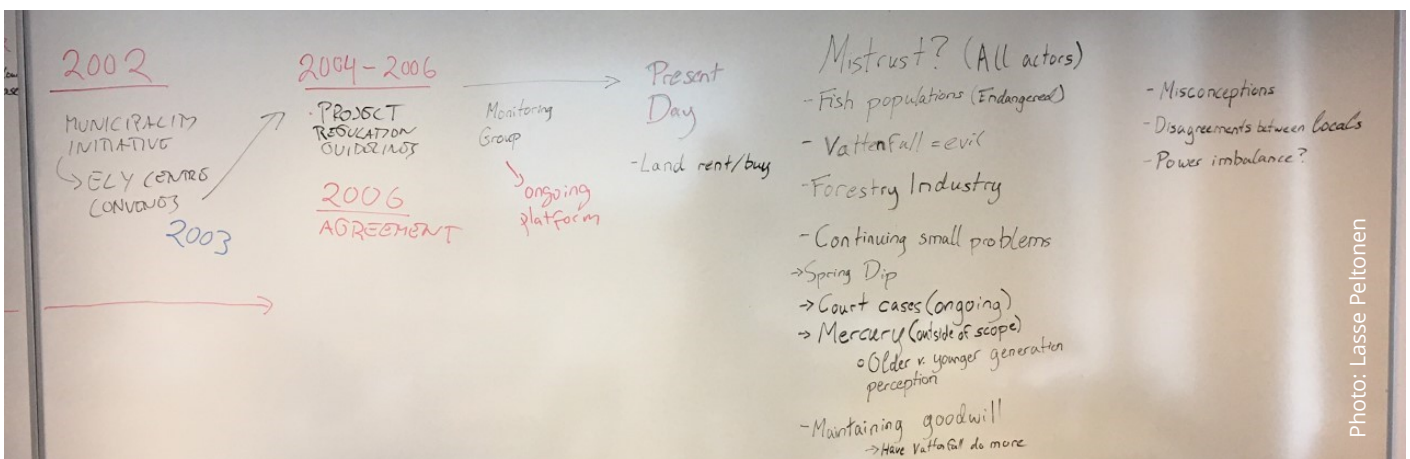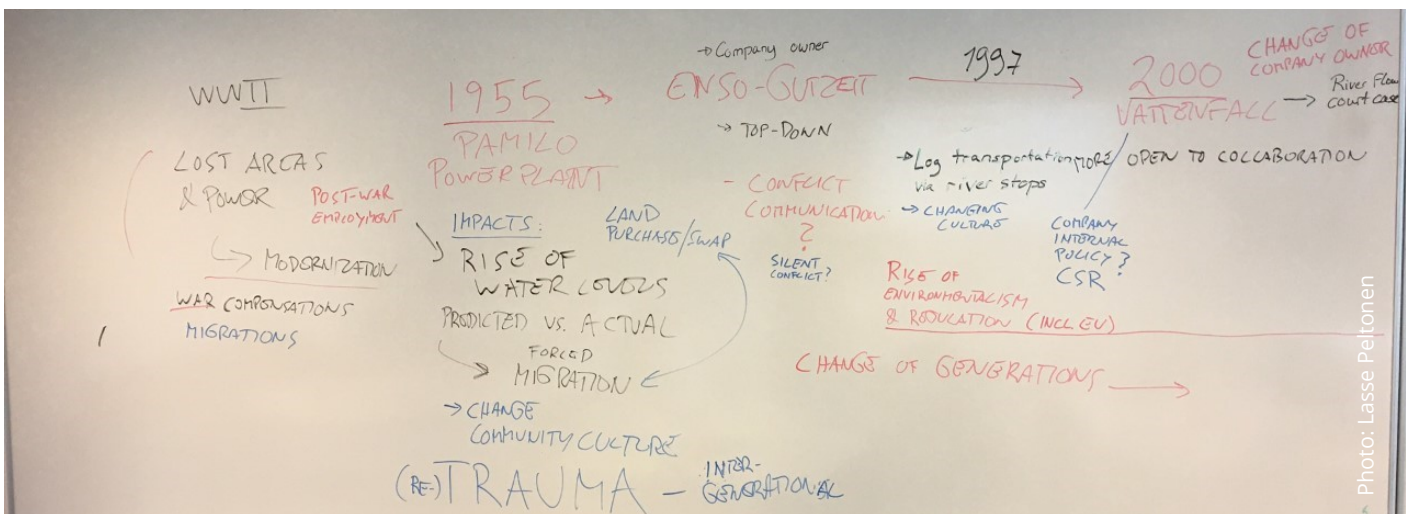
Figure 10. Analysis of the Koitajoki and Koitere from-conflict-to-collaboration case (from the course materials).

Figure 11. Discussions between course participants related to the Koitajoki and Koitere case.

Figure 12. The field visit during the course to analyse the Koitajoki and Koitere case.

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COURSE TEACHERS, ORGANIZERS AND PARTNERS

Course leader: *Irmeli Mustalahti*, Professor of Natural Resource Governance, Department of Historical and Geographical Studies, University of Eastern Finland

Course teachers:

Lasse Peltonen, Professor of Environmental Governance and Conflict resolution, Department of Historical and Geographical Studies, University of Eastern Finland

Laurel Singer, Executive director of the National Policy Consensus Center (NPCC), Portland State University, the USA

Stephen Greenwood, Director of Training and Academic Services, the National Policy Consensus Center (NPCC), Portland State University, USA

Jonna Kangasoja, Co-Founder and Managing Director, Akordi

Vilma Lehtovaara, Coordinator of the North Karelia Biosphere Reserve, the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and The Environment for North Karelia.

Niko Nesterinen, Trainee, the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and The Environment for North Karelia.

Course partners:

Antti Erkkilä, Senior Researcher, Department of Historical and Geographical Studies, University of Eastern Finland

Tiina Kontinen, Associate Professor, University of Jyväskylä, Finland

Course coordinator: *Denis Dobrynin*, Ph.D. Researcher, the ECCR Network Coordinator, Department of Historical and Geographical Studies, University of Eastern Finland

EDUCase Platform is a pilot initiative of the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture's Global Programme 2021-2024. It engages faculty, academics, students, and staff in interdisciplinary efforts to build lasting partnerships for science, innovation, entrepreneurship, and educational impact related to global challenges. With a network of 11 universities and 15 universities of applied sciences, EDUCase Platform represents the majority of higher education institutions in Finland. The network promotes practical case collaborations for education, research, innovation, and entrepreneurship skills development between Finnish and partner country higher education institutions. The network offers a tangible modality of cooperation to address intersecting sustainable development challenges, with stakeholders representing various cultures, institutions, and areas of expertise. See more here: https://educase.aalto.fi/.

Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution (ECCR) course series and teaching network at the University of Eastern Finland is a part of EDUCase Platform. ECCR promotes collaboration between Finland, Tanzania, Uganda, Cameroon, and USA higher education institutions. The course series and teaching network contribute to the implementation of Finland's National Action Plan 2021–2024 on Youth, Peace, and Security and Finland's Africa Strategy, including the Africa Action Plan for the administrative branch of the Ministry of Education and Culture. See more here: https://uefconnect.uef.fi/en/group/eccr/.

Reports from previous courses can be found at the links below:

ECCR course report 2020 (online)
ECCR course report 2018 (Joensuu Finland)
ECCR course report 2016 (Joensuu, Finland)