



From conflict to collaboration

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Debates vs. Conversations

- Discussion between people who take different 'sides' on an issue: a social dilemma
- Pit the 2 branches of evolutionary fitness against each other
 - Individual survival vs. Group survival
 - Both necessary & innate tendencies
 - Cultural focus generally highlights our individuality
- Increased inequality threatens group survival
 - resources, power
 - E.g., sports league: if a team is consistently defeated, they may leave the league; if many teams make this choice, there is no league

Why collaboration necessary



Competition

- Focus on individuals, status hierarchies
- Zero-sum game: one person's 'win' = another's 'loss'; scarcity
- Can't solve problems on long-term basis because 'loser' always undoes previous actions when power shifts



Collaboration

- Focus on groups, social nature of humans
- Satisfaction for everyone possible ("win-win-win"); abundance
- More complex solutions possible; long-term progress more likely
- Requires finding common ground

Evolved Human Defaults

- **Short-Termism**

- We value the present more than the future
- Evolution: survival necessary for reproductive success
 - Present threats > future risks
- Complication: present is experienced (concrete), future is imagined (abstract)
 - Human brains privilege experience

- **In-group / Out-group**

- We value the interests of our 'own kind' over those of other groups
- Evolution: reciprocal altruism
 - competition for scarce resources
- Identity: status & self-concept
 - Loyalty to & acceptance of in-group
- Opportunity: In-group definition is elastic (context-dependent)
 - E.g., SK, Canada; woman, human

Possible work-arounds

- **Short-Termism**
- Interest in survival of future generations (especially own kin)
- Experience/imagination: draw attention to changing local conditions (weather, seasons, species diversity)
- Concrete visions of future possibilities
 - E.g., worse vs better future
- **In-group/Out-group**
- Reputation concerns
 - ‘indirect reciprocity’
 - ‘brand’ trust
- Avoid identity threats
 - Focus on wider categories, strengths
- Humans are a social species
 - Group health & protection
- Finding ‘common ground’, goals that we all value

From debates to conversation & collaboration

- Remember that you also have these defaults, which will nudge you toward competition, rather than establishing collaborations unless you stay alert to them
 - Find 'tricks' to focus yourself on your essential goals
 - E.g., 'Be Curious' works for me
- Finding common goals is facilitated by maintaining interest in the other AND trusting your own competence
 - What do they see that I don't? Why would they think that?
 - What goal do they think this serves? What is my own goal?
 - Could both goals be achieved? (i.e., move from scarcity to abundance perspective)



Small Group Activity



- Organize yourselves into groups of 2 or 3 people
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- One of you describe a frustrating conversation you've had recently about grassland preservation / restoration
- Work together to identify possible default concerns of the 'dissenter'
- **Work together to identify possible options to engage the 'dissenter', rather than counter their arguments**
- **Each of you discuss any resistance to engaging in such collaboration-building conversation you noticed in yourself**

Community Activity

- Share ideas you generated in your small groups
- Can we use any of these to build coalitions in our communities for specific grasslands?



