

Social Analysis Systems² OM

Concepts and Tools for
Collaborative Research and Social Action

<http://www.sas-pm.com/>

Name of this technique: Previous Responses

Author(s) and correct citation: Jacques M. Chevalier, 'SAS² 1.0: Previous Responses,' in *Social Analysis Systems² 1.0*, <http://www-sas-pm.com/>.

Acknowledgements: *Previous Responses* is a SAS² adaptation of basic concepts used in the field of conflict management (see in particular M. Warner et al. in *Readings and links*).

What is the goal of Previous Responses?

Previous Responses helps you assess the ways that key parties have managed core problems in the past.

What are the guiding principles of Previous Responses?

- The ways that parties manage problems can include all of the following: local customs, legal and administrative measures, and Alternative Dispute Resolution (see Attachment A).
- Your approach to problem management will vary according to the value you give to cooperation or the use of force. It also depends on whether you emphasize responding to people or getting the task done.

Here's how to use Previous Responses

1. Identify a **core problem** where you need to analyze the previous responses of key stakeholders. Define this problem as clearly as possible, and clarify the purpose of your analysis.

2. Use *Timeline* to identify **important events** that have been part of this core problem over time.
3. For each important event identify how the key parties responded to the core problem. Make sure that your descriptions of **previous responses** to a problem are clear and concrete.
4. Create a table (see example below). In Column 1, insert the **previous responses** by each party, from the most recent to the oldest event (in chronological order).
5. Assess whether each response involved **local customs, legal-administrative measures, or Alternative Dispute Resolution**. (If you're not sure what these categories mean, see Attachment A.) Record your assessment in Column A.
6. For each response, decide to what degree the party's goal was to respond to people or to get a task done. Use Attachment B to help you decide the best way to describe what happened. Record your evaluation in Column B.

Responses By party and by event, in chronological order	A Type of response Customary, legal-administrative or alternative	B Goal of response People versus task	C Effects Positive	D Effects Negative

7. Discuss the **positive effects** of each response. Record the results in Column C.

8. Discuss the **negative effects** of each response. Record the results in Column D.
9. Identify a **major event** that reflects the way key parties have responded in the past. Then, fill out Attachment C for each party.
10. Discuss your findings and priorities for action. Look for **major changes** in the parties' responses over time.

Making this process work for you

For simpler versions

- Restrict your analysis to major events and key parties only.
- Leave out the assessment of typical responses (Step 8).
- Do the assessment of typical responses using one or two major events (Step 8) and leave out all other steps.

For more advanced versions

- During the exercise, record the explanations that parties provide for each previous response to a problem.
- Write a summary description for each event and for each previous response.
- Take more time to find the information you need to complete the exercise.
- Increase the number of events, parties, and previous responses.
- Identify the criteria and the indicators that you need to evaluate the positive and negative effects of previous responses.
- Using *Freelisting*, *Sorting* or *Problem Domain* to list and compare previous responses.

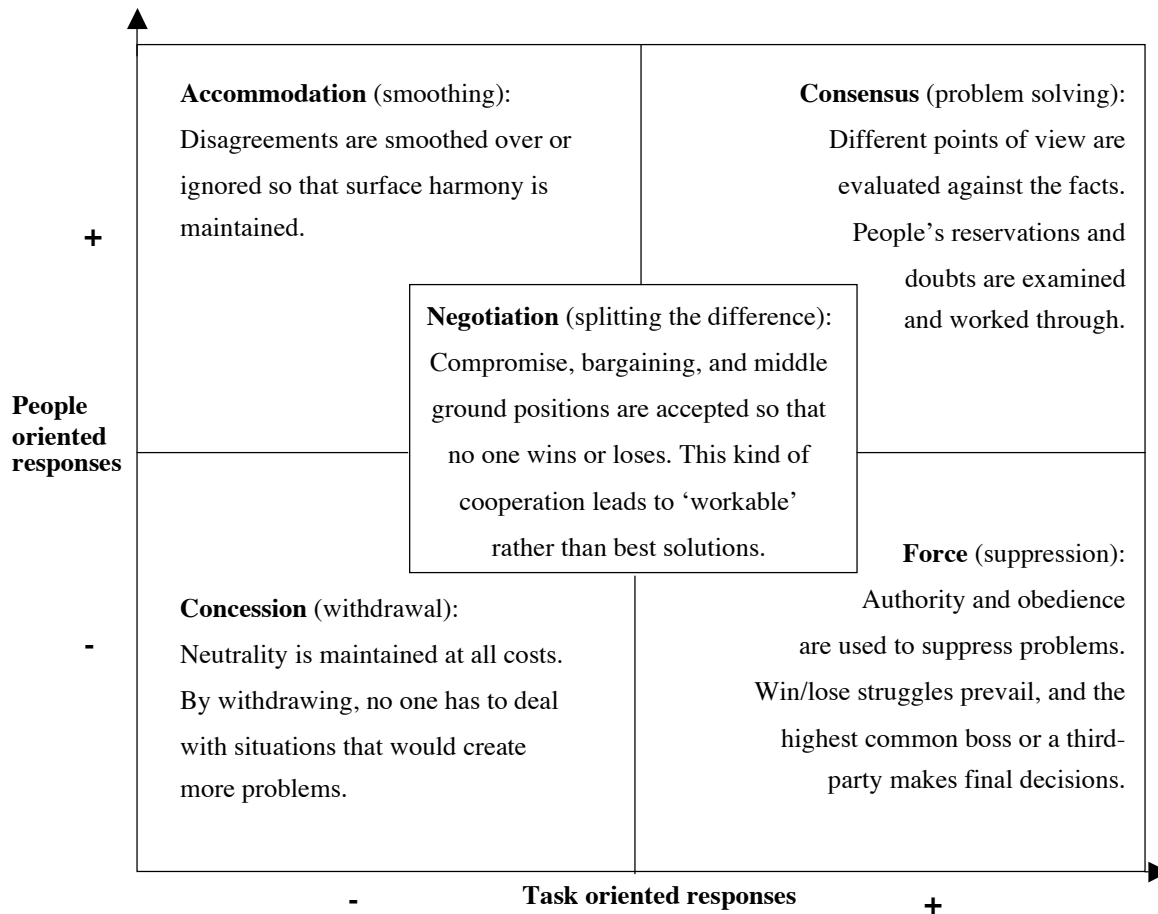
Readings and links

See Attachments B and C.

Attachment A: Strengths & Limitations of Different Conflict Management Systems

System	Strengths	Limitations
Local Customs	<p>Encourages community participation and respect for local values and customs</p> <p>May be familiar and builds on past experience</p> <p>Can be more accessible because it is low cost, uses local language, and may be more readily available than other options</p> <p>Decisions and settlements are often based on collaboration and wide-ranging discussion</p> <p>Strengthens a community's sense of self-reliance and empowerment</p>	<p>Not all people have equal access to this way of managing conflict, due to gender, class, caste, ethnic background or other factors</p> <p>Courts and administrative law are legally recognized, while local authorities that use this method are not</p> <p>When communities become more mixed, the results are weaker authority systems and social relationships</p> <p>This method may not be able to manage conflicts between different communities or between a community and the state</p>
Legal/ Administrative Measures	<p>Officially established with well-defined procedures</p> <p>Takes national and international issues into account</p> <p>Judicial and technical specialists are involved in the decision making</p> <p>Decisions are legally binding</p>	<p>May not be available to the poor, women, marginalized groups and remote communities because of cost, distance, language politics, illiteracy and discrimination</p> <p>May not consider local knowledge, local institutions, and long-term community needs when making decisions</p> <p>Judicial and technical specialists often lack skills or interest in participatory management</p>
Alternative Dispute Resolution	<p>Promotes conflict management and resolution by building upon shared interests and finding points of agreement</p> <p>Some of these processes are like the methods used in local conflict management systems</p> <p>Low cost and flexible</p> <p>Creates a sense of ownership in the solution and in the process itself</p> <p>Enhances local capacity</p>	<p>It may not be easy to get all parties to the bargaining table</p> <p>May be difficult to overcome power differences among parties</p> <p>Decisions may not be legally binding</p> <p>Some moderators try to use methods developed in other countries and settings without adapting to local needs</p>

Attachment B: People Orientation Versus Task Orientation



Sources: elements adapted from

Michael Warner, Richard Roberts with Joan Gregus, edited by Joan Gregus and Richard Roberts, *Tools and Training*, Natural Resources Cluster Secretariat, Business Partners for Development, Module 5 (p. 14), http://www.bpd-naturalresources.org/html/tools_train.html

Stephen Worchel and William G. Austin (eds.), *Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, Nelson-Hall, Chicago, 1986, p. 76

Attachment C: How Do We Manage Problems or Conflict?

Instructions:

1. Read the following statements and rate each one with a score from 1 (does not apply at all) to 5 (applies very well).
2. Enter your scores in the Table 1. For example, if your response to Question #1 was a rating of 3, then you will write the number 3 beside the number 1 in the Table.
3. When you have finished putting your responses into Table 1, add the numbers in each column together to get a total for each column.
4. Each column represents a certain way of dealing with problems or conflicts. If you have a high score in a column, this reflects the approach you or your group tends to use. The text that appears below the Table explains more about these 7 ways of managing problems or conflict.

I/we acted on the belief that:

1. I/we had no choice but to use force or make threats to use force _____
2. I/we should simply walk away from this and let the whole thing pass _____
3. Things would have been worse had I/we not given up _____
4. Legal action would play a decisive role _____
5. I/we could reach a solution that would generally satisfy everyone _____
6. There was no point in acting immediately or deciding quickly _____
7. No one could win completely (have it all) _____
8. We had reached a dead end and an arbitrator had to come in to decide _____
9. I/we had to get maximum support from people of influence or from public opinion _____
10. I/we lost the battle and could not do anything about it _____
11. The events justified taking drastic action that created fears of violence or vengeance _____

- 12. All parties who care about this should be involved in reaching a final agreement _____
- 13. An external party should listen to all parties who care about this, and impose a settlement _____
- 14. Working out a reasonable compromise was the best option we had _____
- 15. Other problems mattered a lot more and this one could wait _____
- 16. Trusting one another was essential to solving the problem _____
- 17. There was so much tension that a third party had to come in to settle the matter _____
- 18. The problem should be handled by those officially responsible _____
- 19. The situation was so unfair or out of control that the severe actions I/we took were acceptable _____
- 20. I/we should focus our attention on making some important gains _____
- 21. Given the circumstances, giving up was the best thing to do _____

Table 1 – Recording your scores

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	4	3	2	7	8	5
11	9	10	6	14	13	12
19	18	21	15	20	17	16

Total for each row:

Explanation of each method

A. Necessary force: You decide to act strongly because you believe basic rights or key interests are at stake, that no other means are available, and that only by taking strong action will you overcome the problem. The kinds of actions you believe you must take

include political and economic sanctions and the use of force or threats of force. When you completed the questionnaire, you agreed with the following statements:

We acted on the belief that:

1. I/we had no choice but to use force or make threats to use force
11. The events justified taking drastic action that created fears of violence or vengeance
19. The situation was so unfair or out of control that the severe actions I/we took were acceptable

B. Authority and social pressure: You decide to act strongly by using social pressure (such as media coverage, lobbying, building networks), the methods available in customary law or the judicial system. Your actions are based on a belief that important rights or interests are at stake and that other methods, such as the use of force or negotiation are either unacceptable or likely to fail. When you completed the questionnaire, you agreed with the following statements:

We acted on the belief that:

4. Legal action would play a decisive role
9. I/we had to get maximum support from people of influence or from public opinion
18. The problem should be handled by those officially responsible

C. Concession and accommodation: You decide to abandon your position or sacrifice your immediate interests because you lack a power base or see your position as weak. You may also choose this way because you have other priorities, because other strategies (social, economic, political) may cost too much, or you hope to gain benefits in the future by showing good will now. When you completed the questionnaire, you agreed with the following statements:

We acted on the belief that:

3. Things would have been worse had I/we not given up
10. I/we lost the battle and could not do anything about it
21. Given the circumstances, giving up was the best thing to do

D. Withdrawal and diffusion: You decide to keep things the way they are, to decide later, or to direct your attention elsewhere, because of other priorities, fears that the problem may get worse, or hopes that the overall situation or your own circumstances (such as access to resources or information) may improve. When you completed the questionnaire, you agreed with the following statements:

We acted on the belief that:

- 2. I/we should simply walk away from this and let the whole thing pass
- 6. There was no point in acting immediately or deciding quickly
- 15. Other problems mattered a lot more and this one could wait

E. Give-and-take compromise: You are willing to give up something in exchange for something else. You will be happy to achieve a workable solution for a while since the interests at stake are only somewhat important and other strategies would provide fewer benefits. When you completed the questionnaire, you agreed with the following statements:

We acted on the belief that:

- 7. No one could win completely (have it all)
- 14. Working out a reasonable compromise was the best option we had
- 20. I/we should focus our attention on making some important gains

F. Third party arbitration: You are willing to let a third party hear all sides of the problem and reach a decision. You decide to do this because the parties cannot achieve a solution any other way (where the costs or risks may be even higher). When you completed the questionnaire, you agreed with the following statements:

We acted on the belief that:

- 8. We had reached a dead end and an arbitrator had to come in to decide
- 13. An external party should listen to all parties who care about this, and impose a settlement
- 17. There was so much tension that a third party had to come in to settle the matter

G. Mediation and collaboration: You decide to reach solutions that are agreeable to all parties and that satisfy everyone's concerns and interests. You will use a facilitator or mediator if you have to, and will emphasize building trust and involving all parties. When you completed the questionnaire, you agreed with the following statements:

We acted on the belief that:

5. I/we could reach a solution that would generally satisfy everyone
12. All parties who care about this should be involved in reaching a final agreement
16. Trusting one another was essential to solving the problem

Source: adapted from

Means, Katherine and Cynthia Josayma, with Erik Nielsen and Vitoon Viriyasakultorn, *Community-Based Forest Resource Conflict Management: A Training Package*, Volume 1, Section 4.2, <http://www.fao.org/DOCREP/005/Y4300E/Y4300E00.HTM>, and Volume 2, Activity 25, FAO, Rome, 2002, <http://www.fao.org/DOCREP/005/Y4301E/Y4301E00.HTM>.

Lawrence, Karen, *Train the Trainer: Facilitator's Guide*, Wiley & Sons, 1998