

Foreword

Our De Gruyter multi-volume journey on Emerging Trends in Conflict Management closes with the third volume entitled *Conflicts and Conflict Management in Intentional Communities*. It was preceded by the first volume on *Contemporary Trends in Conflict and Communication*, edited by Jessica Katz Jameson and Missy F. Hannah, published in 2022. *Track III Actions: Transforming Protracted Political Conflicts from the Bottom-Up*, edited by Helena Desivilya Syna and Geoffrey Corry followed and was published in 2023.

Throughout the series, we have accentuated several features of social conflict. First, social conflicts represent ubiquitous and pervasive phenomena, manifested in international, intergroup relations, organizations and communities. Second, as implied by the series title, discords display dynamic characteristics, frequently changing their form and course over time. Third, social conflicts are embedded in geographical, socio-cultural and both global as well as local political contexts. The latter largely inform the strategies embraced to manage the discords.

The current, final volume of the multi-volume series endeavors to illuminate conflicts experienced by intentional communities and the ways whereby these entities engage with the discords. Palgi and Getz, the co-editors, draw on Pitzer's (1989) definition of an intentional community, underscoring the following features of such social units: their voluntary nature; partial seclusion from the wider society; and the members' shared economic association and lifestyle, who attempt to materialize their ideological, religious, political, social, economic, and educational credos. The book focuses on communities that interact face-to-face, share a geographical space; comprise stable membership that manifests relationships among its members, promoting cohesiveness and a sense of inclusiveness.

Intentional communities akin to other types of alliances and partnerships are premised on positive structural interdependence, hence constitute cooperative entities. Notwithstanding the collaborative basis, such social units are bound to experience inherent paradox, namely, their members aspiring to pursue individual interests aside from the collective goals. Such a paradoxical nature poses a significant challenge on the way intentional communities engage with conflicts they encounter that in turn have consequences on their functioning, sustainability, the well-being of the members and the overall wellness of the community.

The book addresses the conflict management intricacies on both the conceptual as well as practical levels. The first part provides a theoretical analysis along with three case studies portraying various types of conflicts. The second part concentrates on praxis, presenting different mechanisms for conflict resolution employed by practitioners.

The theoretical frameworks are built on international research interfacing community building and conflict transformation. In addition, Israeli research on kibbutz provides important theoretical insights on conflict management in intentional communities.

The practical approaches to conflict management comprise four methods: **Consensus Building**, accentuating intergroup facilitation; **Sociocracy**, underscoring the “power with” orientation; **Cooperative Culture Development**, stressing the imperative of culture alignment; and **Restorative Circles**, focusing on a non-punitive mechanism for engaging with internal conflict. Notwithstanding the distinctions among the four methods, they all reflect common dilemmas concerning the application of conflict interventions in intentional communities. These dilemmas revolve around two main issues. One entails **idealism versus pragmatism** that is embracing efficient, short-term techniques or more idealistic, time-consuming patterns while potentially reaping gains in the long-run. The other comprises **trust-based versus power-based mechanisms**. The former emphasizes mutual dialogue whereas the latter stresses the decision of authority figures how to approach the conflict.

Akin to the two other volumes in the series, the current book also highlights the importance of context, especially the cultural underpinnings of intentional communities. Understanding the socio-cultural features aids in “fitting the forum to the fuss,” namely, matching the patterns of engaging with the discords in such complex social units.

The co-editors and the authors of the book elucidate the particular features reflected in the conflict resolution approaches employed by intentional communities. These methods attempt to construct arrangements allowing to enhance the sense of justice, sense of community; foster consensus on shared values and goals and transparent communication; promote mutual obligations, active participation and transforming power relations.

The insights presented in the book contribute to further understanding of emerging trends in conflict management in the unique domain of intentional communities on both the theoretical as well as practical level. Beyond the specific arena, the book offers pertinent insights and applications to local and international communities, alliances and partnerships on alternative collaborative dispute resolution. As the world grapples with mounting intragroup, intergroup and international polarization, contention and violence, greater grasp of research-based and practical constructive remedies to the destructive developments becomes an indispensable imperative.

I wish to congratulate and thank Michal Palgi and Shlomo Getz, the co-editors and all the authors for the intriguing, highly relevant and invaluable book.

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