



## **The underground of a land and water conflict: case analysis and possibilities of mediation approaches based on paradigm shifts**

**Ebel Smidt (1), Patty Kluytmans (2) and Theo Olsthoorn (3)**

1. MSc, Certified mediator, Principal SG Consultancy and Mediation, Holland, PhD researcher Delft University of Technology, address [smidt.sg@inter.nl.net](mailto:smidt.sg@inter.nl.net), [www.sgmediation.eu](http://www.sgmediation.eu)
2. BSc, Junior researcher, SG Consultancy and Mediation, Holland, Free University Amsterdam
3. PhD, MSc, Professor of Geohydrology, Delft University of Technology, Senior Researcher Hydrology Waternet Amsterdam-Holland

Thousands of hectares in the Netherlands are being transformed from agricultural land into nature. The success of each single procedure is largely based on voluntary cooperation of all stakeholders, available budgets and the long breath of leading governmental agencies and their planning procedures. In some cases individual farmers or agricultural organizations withstand the planning procedures successfully for many years. This paper describes a complex case in which a single farmer has been protesting more than 10 years against the governmental procedures of land reallocation and nature building. Within this period an informal mediation has been applied, which opened unexpected solutions within only three months. However, lack of enforcing capacity and/or willingness from the involved governmental agencies hampered their implementation. This resulted in further distrust of the farmer, leading to several court procedures and political actions.

The case will be analysed from a combined perspective of water and environmental sciences and psychological and conflict management theories. It will be shown that the access to 'deeper' reservoirs of trust and solutions could be achieved by relatively

simple interventions. However these interventions were based on an appropriate balanced integration of the culture-nature-soul triangle. Responsible authorities at governmental level could have benefited more from the scientific background from these interventions. The paper explains in more detail which mechanisms lead to 'cold water fear' at governmental agencies for mediation type of interventions and which role science can play to overcome this fear. An interdisciplinary approach by the scientific, governmental and private stakeholders is the first prerequisite for successful interventions.

The relation with paradigm shifts in sciences and their consequences will be discussed as well as possible applications to international water conflict prevention.