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THE RULES OF CONCESSIONS MAKING IN NEGOTIATIONS

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Purpose: one of the most important tools applied in negotiation processes are concessions made by their participants, which enables them to achieve efficient deals. Therefore, very sound and promising objective of the paper is to present the author's concept of classifying and describing the rules (principles)of concessions making within negotiation processes.
Design/methodology/approach: since the paper is of a theoretical nature, the basic methodological tools used for its elaboration are the comparative and critical analysis of the literature on the considered problem, supported by author's theoretical findings and practical experience from socio-economic negotiations.
Findings: developing a comprehensive, precise as well as universal concept of giving in in negotiation processes as a part of their normative model by distinguishing and describing the rules of making concessions, including the three kinds of those rules, i.e. concerning the way of giving in, size and value of concessions.
Practical implications: the presented set of rules of concessions making may be successfully used within a wide variety of practical negotiation processes, ensuring achieving their required effectiveness.
Originality/value: unlike numerous researches and works on the issue of giving in within negotiation processes, presenting mainly fragmentary and selective findings related to that issue, the classification and description of the rules of concessions making within negotiations presented in the paper is of a synthetic, insightful and complex nature.
Keywords: socio-economic negotiations, negotiation process, the rules of concessions making.
Category of the paper: Viewpoint.

1. Introduction

This paper examines the processes of conducting socio-economic negotiations, or more precisely, one of the typical tools used within those processes: mutual concessions made by participants. These are among the most important detailed tools in conducting negotiations, as without them, it is essentially impossible to reach an agreement that satisfies all parties involved.

Concessions play a dual role in negotiations: on the one hand, they serve as a signal, an offer to reach a compromise or consensus, and on the other, they serve as an attempt to determine the limits of concessions acceptable to the negotiating partner(s). Concessions are therefore a key condition for reaching an agreement, involving the surrender of some of one's demands in exchange for benefits from the other party. Proper concessions should be well-considered, gradual, and balanced, and (if possible) lead to a model negotiation conclusion, i.e. a win-win situation.

The objective of the paper is to systematize and describe the rules (principles) of making concessions in socio-economic negotiations, based on proposals contained in the literature and the author's own reflections stemming from his negotiation experience, gained both theoretically and practically.

To systematize such rules three basic types of them were identified: those concerning the method of making concessions, their size (scope), and their value (significance). These are presented in the main part of the paper, after explaining the essence and nature of concessions and their importance for the efficient implementation of the negotiation process, in the context of a typology of tools for conducting them.

2. Research methods and literature review

Given that the primary research method employed in this paper was a comparative and critical analysis of the literature on making concessions in negotiations, two fundamental methodological issues - namely, the research methods and the literature review - have been combined into a single section.

The analysis of the literature on making concessions in negotiations was a multi-stage procedure based on several analytical criteria. The aim of this procedure was to identify the bibliographic items most relevant to explaining the nature of concessions as specific negotiation tools and to precising the principles of using them.

First, a preliminary review of the state of research on making concessions during the negotiation process was conducted to identify the quantity and scope of research studies within the considered area to define the scope and directions of their further analysis. As it turned out the issue of making concessions in negotiations is undoubtedly one of the most frequently discussed problems in literature. A number of classic bibliographical works on the subject can be cited, e.g., (Bartos, 1964; Dawson, 1999; De Dreu, 1995; Karrass, 1984, pp. 39-53; Kennedy, 1998; Pruitt, Carnevale, 1993), as well as numerous contemporary studies published in recent years, including: (Bhatia et al., 2023; Cronin, 2026; Cueves, 2022; Karrass, 2025; Mertes, Kunz, Hüffmeier, 2023; Shonk, 2025).

Secondly, a detailed and systematic review of the literature on the subject under consideration was conducted. A very extensive list of publications was compiled using popular electronic bibliographic databases and put in chronological order. Given the large number of those studies, a precise selection was made by excluding publications that were least relevant to the paper's objective and those containing repetitive content.

Thirdly, the primary criterion used to analyze and select the research studies of interest was the distinction - commonly adopted in the literature (e.g., Rządca, 2003, pp. 25-26) - between two opposing research approaches in the field of negotiation: the descriptive and the normative ones.

The first approach explains the nature, specificity, conditions, etc. of making concessions in the negotiation process. Consequently, the research works adopting a descriptive approach were used to characterize concessions as specific negotiation tools in the subsequent part of the paper. It can also be noted that concessions are often not considered in isolation, but rather perceived within a broader context, including their types, conditions, strategies, etc. Selected literature of that kind is summarized below.

1. C.K.W. De Dreu (1995), discusses concessions in bilateral negotiations, while in the works (Kersten, Gimon, 2012; Yasumura et al., 2009), they are analyzed in multilateral negotiations. In the first of the mentioned cases, making concessions is considerably easier (almost intuitive) whereas the second requires a precise analysis of the positions held by all negotiation participants.
2. In the paper (Hendon, Roy, Ahmed, 2003), discusses concessions in the context of international negotiations. In this case, what matters is not so much the substantive issues subject to negotiation, but rather the socio-cultural context of the negotiations—factors that determine the manner in which concessions are made, as well as their scope, pace, sequence, and so on.
3. Concessions are considered, on the one hand, in the context of integrative negotiations, i.e. as tools for striving to reach an agreement that satisfies all negotiating participants (Cueves, 2022; Ma et al., 2006), and, on the other hand, in the process of distributive negotiations (Bhatia et al., 2023; Mertes, Kunz, Hüffmeier, 2023; Tey et al., 2021) in the pursuit of achieving unilateral benefits at the expense of other negotiating parties. These issues will be discussed in greater detail in the next part of the paper.
4. In the work (De Dreu, 1995), concessions are viewed from the perspective of the bargaining power of the negotiating parties, i.e., the realistic possibility of achieving their goals. The role of concessions is considered both when one negotiator has an advantage over the other participants, which creates opportunities to obtain significant concessions, and when negotiating from a weaker position, which significantly limits the possibility of obtaining concessions.

5. Most studies on the discussed issue are qualitative in nature, focusing primarily on formulating principles for making concessions, analyzing their determinants, effectiveness, benefits, and significance, etc. However, there are also quantitative studies that create formal models based on attempts to measure the size or scope of concessions (Badica, C., Badica, A., 2012; Ma et al., 2006). Several studies consider concessions in the context of electronic negotiations (Carbonneau, Vahidov, Yu, 2021; Yasumura et al., 2009).
6. Finally, some works present the results of empirical research, mainly of a comparative nature, on the ways of making concessions in practical negotiation cases, as well as their scope, importance, benefits, conditions, etc. in relation to particular, specific negotiations (Badica, C., Badica, A., 2012; Bartos, 1964; Hendon, Roy, Ahmed, 2003).

On the other hand, the normative approach is focused on indicating how concessions should be made in negotiations. In other words, they indicate recommended behaviors regarding concessions by formulating practical principles for making them. Extensive literature representing the normative approach was elaborated, including on the one hand a number of books and scientific articles, such as (Dawson, 1999; Karrass, 1984, pp. 39-53; Kennedy, 1998; Kersten, Gimon, 2012; Pruitt, Carnevale, 1993, pp. 29-31; Rządca, Wujec, 1998, pp. 69-74), and on the other hand, advisory (consultative) works, e.g. (Cronin, 2026; Karrass, 2025; Malhorta, 2016; Shonk, 2025; Szopa, 2013). Those works were used to systematize the principles for making concessions in the fourth (main) part of the paper.

3. Concessions as specific tools of negotiations

As a starting point for further considerations, we should adopt the typology of negotiation tools according to their degree of generality, as presented in Table 1. It contains the interpretations and meaning of particular tools of that kind, starting from the most general, i.e. negotiation strategies and styles, to the most detailed, and within them the most interesting in this paper, i.e. concessions.

Table 1.
Systematics of negotiation tools

Type	Interpretation
Negotiation strategy	Program defining the key goals and principles of the negotiation process, as well as the assumptions and expectations regarding its course. It includes a scenario of anticipated events and the expected actions and behaviors of the negotiation participants. It also identifies the conditions (opportunities and constraints) for conducting negotiations, resulting from the positions of the parties, the immediate context, and the external environment. It outlines the procedure for conducting negotiations in the form of synthetic guidelines and schedule.

Cont. table 1.

Negotiation style	The general way of conducting negotiation process, determining all actions undertaken within that process and the selection of means for implementing these actions, in particular the initial assumptions, the way of perceiving the scope and goals of negotiations, the selection of their tools, means of communication with negotiation partners, etc. It depends on the specificity of a given situation - the problem, goals, partner, etc., on the one hand, and on the individual characteristics of the negotiator on the other.
Negotiation principles	Statements specifying how negotiation processes should or should not be conducted. There are three types of such rules. 1. General, e.g. concerning developing partnerships with the other party, building mutual trust, preventing crisis situations, etc. 2. Detailed, e.g. relevant to subsequent sub-processes, phases, and stages of negotiations. 3. Specific rules for implementing particular activities, e.g. assessing bargaining power, delegating authority to representatives, formulating offers or arguments, etc.
Negotiation techniques	Systematically applied, detailed negotiation methods, based on practical experience and theoretical generalizations. Adapted to subsequent stages of negotiation process: opening, main phase, and closing, as well as of twofold nature. 1. Collaboration-focused, with a predominance of integrative and fair play-based actions, in searching for mutually beneficial deals. 2. Competition-oriented (confrontational) – seeking to obtain unilateral concessions from other partners, pursuing own goals, sometimes at all costs, by exerting pressure on the others, issuing ultimatums, manipulating, threatening, etc.
Detailed negotiation tools	• offers (proposals) presented to the partners in the negotiation process and counteroffers made to them, • arguments and counterarguments necessary to convince the other parties and persuade them to accept the proposal, • **mutual concessions** between the parties within an agreed and acceptable scope (limits), and • questions asked of the negotiating partners and answers to their questions.

Source: own elaboration based on (Kozina, 2018, pp. 123, 235-236).

As very detailed (specific) negotiation tools, concessions should therefore constitute a precise concretization of the adopted negotiation strategy. Their significance differs when two opposing types of strategy are employed: cooperation and competition. In the former, mutual concessions constitute the most important means by which the negotiating parties achieve mutual benefits, best satisfy their needs, and pursue their goals and interests at a satisfactory level. When employing a competition strategy, the negotiating parties pursue only their own goals, ignoring the needs and expectations of their partners and striving to extract the largest possible concessions from them.

There is also a relationship between the scale of concessions and confrontational negotiation techniques. Many of these techniques are aimed at extracting the largest possible concessions from partners in all phases of the negotiation process. Initial concessions are demanded at the beginning of negotiations as a condition for starting talks. In the middle phase, when a lively exchange of concessions occurs, the parties strive to gain an advantage in terms of the scope of concessions to their own advantage, at the expense of their partners. Finally, at the conclusion of negotiations, demands for additional concessions are made, which are a condition for reaching an agreement, as if "on the line."

It should be added that the significant importance of mutual concessions on the part of negotiation participants stems from one of their fundamental interpretations, namely, perceiving them as a process of exchange of values between the parties through mutual

agreements and concessions. Such exchange involves both tangible and intangible values, under agreed-upon terms (Kozina, 2018, pp. 15-17).

For example, negotiations are defined as a tool used to seek conditions for obtaining what we want from someone who wants something from us (Kennedy, 1999, p. 9). From another perspective, the basic mechanism for reaching an agreement is the exchange of concessions, mutually setting conditions, the fulfillment of which determines the parties' further actions (Nęcki, 2000, pp. 17-18).

The following sections of this paper systematize the most important rules (principles) of concession in negotiations. They are divided into three groups:

1) the manner of making concessions, i.e. specifying how, when, in what order, and for what reasons (why), for what purpose, etc., they are made (or not made),
2) their size (scope), i.e., defining their potential limits, taking into account the realistic possibilities of achieving the negotiation goals and interests and the subjective and objective constraints in this regard,
3) the values (importance) they reflect, from the perspective of the needs, goals, and interests of the negotiators and the effectiveness of the negotiation process itself.

These rules constitute, on the one hand, recommendations (guidelines) specifying how concessions should be made, and, on the other, warnings, i.e., statements about how they should not be made.

4. The way of concessions making

Both the way of concessions making and its process (dynamics) are much more important than the concessions themselves, i.e., their size (scope) or value (significance). Whether and by how much, for example, we extend a payment deadline, reduce the price, expand the scope of a warranty, etc., is far less important than how we do it, when, why, etc., or whether we don't do it. If the manner of concession is inappropriate, it can raise the partner's expectations for subsequent proposals containing concessions in their favor, and even lead to an escalation of their demands. Below the most important principles of concession in negotiations are listed i.e. reflecting the recommended way for making concessions.

1. You should not accept offers of preliminary concessions as a condition for initiating negotiations if your partner lacks a real advantage to present such a condition.
2. You must insist on concessions from your partner, even if the terms of their initial offer seem attractive to you.
3. A negotiator who does not immediately make concessions when presenting their offer encourages the other party to delay the opening of negotiations until the proposed offer is subject to his\her influence.

4. If you make a concession to your partner, you should immediately ask for a reciprocal concession, meaning an equivalent one. Don't expect this to happen later, as any concession to the other party quickly loses value. In negotiation literature, this practice is sometimes called the "prostitute principle," meaning that the value of a service is valued more before it is performed, but its value plummets afterward.
5. To obtain a concession, your partner should present appropriate (convincing) arguments. You shouldn't make concessions solely because the other party demands them. Giving in to this type of pressure undermines the credibility of previous arguments and can lead to escalation of your partner's concessions.
6. You shouldn't be afraid of retracting a previous concession or refusing your partner's demands for a concession. Repeated, firm responses of "no" are intended to deter their demands for further concessions.
7. It is necessary to adopt an appropriate pace of concessions:
   - quick concessions at the beginning, then stopping, will frustrate the partner, as the initial concessions created additional expectations that were later unmet;
   - slow concessions, followed by an acceleration in the pace of concessions, strengthens the partner's position by convincing them of the effectiveness of a hard-line negotiation;
   - concessions at an alternating pace (sometimes faster, from time to time slower) provokes pressure from the partner, who is unaware of how their behavior affects the other party's concessions;
   - concessions should always be made slowly, gaining something in return - this allows for consistency with the partner, signals how they can obtain a concession, and prevents them from escalating their concessions.
8. Furthermore, concessions should not be made easily, as the partner will likely be dissatisfied if the concession is made too easily and quickly. People usually value what comes easily less than what they have had to fight for long and hard. Moreover, doing so will prevent your partner from demanding further concessions.
9. Before making any concession, always consider all its potential consequences, both positive and (especially) negative.
10. Not every concession from a partner needs to be reciprocated. Mutual concessions are not always necessary, and equal concessions are not always fair, however that may be understood. When a partner insists on an exchange of equal concessions, it should be acknowledged that this is not possible.
11. Escalating concessions at the end of negotiations should be avoided. Both experienced and inexperienced negotiators are sometimes inclined to do so, influenced by the mutual escalation of demands.

12. Do not show satisfaction with the concessions made by the partner, especially the first one, no matter how favorable it may be.
13. It is important to thoroughly understand all the other party's requirements before making any concessions. It may turn out that the partner does not expect them at all.
14. Sometimes, simply entering into negotiations can constitute a significant concession to the partner, especially if they have weaker bargaining power.

5. The size of concessions

When entering into negotiations, it's advisable to apply the "aim high" principle, i.e., assume that high expectations lead to the best results in negotiations, while low expectations produce the worst effects. Therefore, it's recommended to initially set a high level of expectations (the highest possible offer) to achieve the best possible end result, while maintaining the impression that this offer is within reasonable limits and acceptable to the partner. This adds strength, resilience, and self-confidence. The reasons for applying this principle are as follows:

- it may simply be possible to achieve the best solution,
- it allows for greater room for maneuver (to lower the level of demands),
- it creates the impression that the offer is more valuable and attractive, and that the partner can make a great deal,
- it prevents stalemates (often arising because negotiators, contrary to their own intentions, lack the courage to demand more),
- the partner then feels (is convinced) that they have obtained certain concessions.

A necessary condition for the effectiveness of this principle is belief in the attractiveness, credibility, and reliability of their offer. When initial demands are indeed excessive, a willingness to make concessions should be demonstrated to encourage the partner to negotiate.

The less one knows about the partner, the greater the initial demands should be, as they may be willing to accept them or have many surprising arguments up their sleeve. This makes it easier to establish a good relationship with them, encourage cooperation, and then make larger concessions (Dawson, 1999, pp. 15-20).

Here are the basic rules of concessions making regarding their size (or scope).

1. It is recommended to remember that when entering into negotiations, we face dilemmas: whether to give in at all, to what extent, why, at what pace, when, etc., and the impossibility of predicting the partner's reaction to our proposals. Our partner also faces similar dilemmas.
2. When initially defining the limits of concessions, it is recommended to avoid dividing the difference between the initial proposals of the negotiating parties in half, i.e., it is advisable to avoid easy (hasty) compromises.

3. You should first obtain a concession from your partner. As a rule, the negotiator who gives in first gives in more (more), as concessions are most often alternated.
4. Concessions should be small, as too much should not be given at once. The partner ought to seek our possible further concessions. Furthermore, people primarily notice the fact of a concession, attaching much less importance to its size. On the other hand, too small concession may be interpreted by the partner as "throwing them a sop" and become irritated.
5. You should never offer everything you have to give at once, a so-called unilateral disarmament, just because your partner expects a "final" proposal or says they "don't like (or don't like) negotiating." Statements like this are usually considered bluffing.
6. You should never make small concessions at the beginning of negotiations to "test the waters," as this can lead to an escalation of your partner's demands, and your attempts to persuade them to accept further concessions only strengthen their position. This weakens your bargaining position.
7. Whenever your partner demands concessions, you should call for something in return, some kind of compensation. That is, you should receive something equivalent to your own for each concession. This should be done in a measured, calm, and unemotional manner, politely asking the other party, "If I can do this for you, what will you do (be able to do) for me?" without making categorical demands. The benefits of this approach are as follows:
   - it prevents your partner from escalating further concessions,
   - you may actually get something in return; you can gain a lot, not lose anything,
   - it increases the value of your concession – by emphasizing its importance, you create the conditions for obtaining something in return later in the negotiation. "Giving" does not result in "receiving", "taking" does not result in "giving".
8. You should avoid making reckless, unilateral concessions in response to your partner's seemingly insignificant demands, such as "no problem", "it's a minor thing", etc. Every concession, even a small one, should be rewarded. At the same time, you should be wary of such concessions from your partner, as they may be vague or even fictitious, constituting empty promises, etc.
9. Subsequent concessions should be of varying sizes. If they are consistent and equal, your partner will never stop demanding more. It's a mistake to make even the same concession twice. Therefore, you should avoid easily predictable patterns or patterns of concessions on your part. Failure to follow this rule can lead to an escalation of your partner's demands, i.e., a "snowball effect", and ultimately, result in a disastrous negotiation failure.

10. On the other hand, you should not make concessions in a completely unpredictable manner (one large concession, the next minimal, or vice versa), as your partner will expect significant concessions each time, and failure to make them will result in dissatisfaction.
11. The size of each concession should be gradually reduced, making smaller and smaller increments, from relatively large concessions, through smaller ones, to minimal ones. This approach is intended to provide greater satisfaction to the partner and to instill in them the belief that they should not delay signing the agreement because they are approaching the limits of their capabilities, that they have achieved as much as was possible in the given situation.
12. The final concession should be small to create a favorable negotiating atmosphere. Too large a concession may be perceived as a lack of flexibility on our part.

6. The value of concessions

Concessions can have varying values (material or intangible) for the negotiating parties, depending on their goals and interests, and consequently, their priorities, ranging from the most important to the least significant. These values are relative, meaning that something that may be extremely important to one party may be completely irrelevant to another.

Creating value in the negotiation process is possible when a party offers something that is of little value to them but of great value to the other party—and vice versa. By exchanging these values, each party loses little but gains a great deal (Negotiations..., 2003, p. 53).

The following key rules for making concessions in negotiations can be listed, depending on their value.

1. Before making any concessions, it is advisable to establish the types and hierarchy of values sought in the negotiations and attempt to obtain similar information from other negotiating participants.
2. If possible, make concessions that are beneficial to all negotiating parties.
3. It's best to offer concessions that don't cost us anything, such as:
   - listening carefully to your partner,
   - committing to considering your options and limitations,
   - assuring them that, despite your best intentions, a concession is not possible,
   - appealing to an authority figure who has acted in a similar situation,
   - providing the most comprehensive explanation of your position and stance possible,
   - answering any questions or concerns your partner may have,
   - giving them more time to "catch their breath".

4. You should emphasize the importance of your concessions by telling your partner how difficult it is to give up some of your demands. Sometimes, the "great sacrifice gambit" technique is used, i.e., making a minor concession the main one in negotiation, through the most credible justification possible, and demanding that your partner compensate for it.
5. It's also important to remember that the value of concessions can change over time, influenced by various factors, e.g. the partner's actions, one's own moves, mistakes made, contextual conditions, etc.
6. Demanding a concession of significant value should be supported by strong and credible arguments, unless the partner wishes to obtain a concession of similar value in return, i.e., proposes an equivalent exchange.
7. Furthermore, ensure that the partner understands and properly assesses the value of our concession by asking appropriate questions and providing appropriate explanations.
8. It is recommended not to be the first to give in on important matters, as this significantly weakens our bargaining position (power). It is even better not to make such concessions at all.
9. Furthermore, such a concession may be perceived by the partner as a signal that the issue is not that important, so further concessions are possible, or perceived by the other party as a weakness or as an overly persistent and therefore suspicious pursuit of an agreement.
10. Therefore, it is possible and necessary to demonstrate initiative by offering and accepting concessions on less important matters.
11. It is beneficial to inform your partner beforehand of your intention to make a concession on an issue that is less important to you. This saves time and demonstrates goodwill and a willingness to negotiate.
12. Furthermore, giving in on such an issue may allow you to obtain a concession from your partner on an issue that is more important to you. The need for this also stems from the fact that partners often have different priorities in negotiations, and they will not be afraid of losing face.
13. Do not assume that your opponent understands the benefits of the concessions you make. If not, you must demonstrate them convincingly and clearly, even repeatedly.
14. The final concession should be minor; so as to leave your partner satisfied without offering too much.
15. Remember the concessions you've made and remind your partner from time to time (even repeatedly) of their importance and the costs you incurred. The previously mentioned "prostitute principle" also applies in this case.

7. Conclusions

The suggested classification of concessions making rules adequately reflects their specific characteristics, functions, and importance in the negotiation process. Furthermore, it comprehensively and thoroughly captures the scope and possibilities of their use in this process, effectively supporting its implementation. It is universal in nature as well, meaning it can be successfully applied in all types of socio-economic negotiations. It also appears that the adopted criteria for the typology of concession rules have proven effective, allowing for a comprehensive characterization of these rules.

In the author's opinion, the approach to concession rules in negotiations presented herein can be a significant contribution to the creation of a general normative model, which, in addition to concessions, should also include other specific negotiation tools, such as offers, arguments, and questions, systematizing the principles of their application.

It should be added that, in specific negotiation situations, the presented concession principles must be specified depending on a number of specific features of the negotiations, such as their type, parties, subject matter (scope), goals, significance, conditions, etc. These desires determine the three important dimensions of concessions identified in the article: their size and value, and the manner of concession itself. Considering these features, as well as the intensity and scope of their impact on concessions in negotiations, determines the scope of research developing the proposed approach to their general principles.

The author also intends to verify the proposed concession principles in comparative empirical research, encompassing both typical, recurring negotiation situations, such as in trade and marketing, and specific, rare negotiation cases, such as in mergers and acquisitions. Such research will confirm the usefulness and applicability of the proposed principles.

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