

video conflictum
Conflict transformation with video

Janos D Tedeschi



To what extent can video support transformational processes and encourage mutual understanding between conflicting parties?

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Introduction

Abstract

The diploma project *video conflictum* focuses on the possibilities of conflict transformation with video in a village in Sumatra, Indonesia.

The project examines the psychology of video interviews, and the possibility of on-site conflict transformation in Teluk Meranti, a small village community experiencing at times violent conflict between opponents and supporters of the expanding palm oil industry. The experiential report will be summarised in the publication of the same name; complemented by articles and interviews with experts in the fields of peace building, media studies, as well as with journalists. The aim is to compile a «reader» for professionals working with video and film, discussing the psychological mechanisms of video and video interviews, their relevance as tools in conflict transformation processes and their effects upon conflict situations in general.

Video Conflictum & HyperWerk

During my studies at the HyperWerk Institute, my focus was on the potential of the video medium as a process facilitator, its possible applications and methods thereof. In the „SIGDOC“ course, overseen by Professor Max Spielmann, my former co-student Christof Schaefer and I began work on a film documentary, „The Green Desert“. This project addresses the destruction of the habitat of the last indigenous peoples of Indonesia by multinational corporations („The Green Desert“, in production, cineworx Filmproduktion GmbH, Zurich). In villages still hidden deep in the heart of Borneo, we interviewed indigenous peoples, querying them on their situation and the ongoing resistance against environmental and cultural degradation. This is a conflict they are mercilessly exposed to. The time spent in the jungles of Borneo made a lasting impression on me: I was taken aback by the power inherent in the medium of video itself. The presence of a camera alone, the recording of their fates, left many of the villagers with a sense of self-importance: Was that not a small but possibly decisive step towards true empowerment?

Video and conflict transformation

Conflict transformation (or conflict resolution¹) as both a professional practice and academic field, evolved during the 1960s at the height of the Cold War, when the conflict between the superpowers seemed to threaten human survival and the need for social change was understood. Conflict transformation as a concept is based on two verifiable realities: Conflict is normal in human relationships, and conflict is a motor of change. *Transformation* provides a clear and important vision because it brings into focus the horizon toward which we journey in such projects: The building of healthy relationships and communities, locally and globally.²

There are innumerable methods and means utilised in conflict transformation projects today. Since the introduction of inexpensive and user-friendly cameras in the mid-1990s also video has become a widely used tool in conflict transformation. Surprisingly however, its use is largely confined to the recording and transmission of information between conflicting parties. Yet, could a video interview not be employed for more than mere information transmission? Could it influence the psychological state of the interviewee, thereby contributing to the transformation of a conflict? Which processes could be encouraged, where would the problems lie and what dangers would arise?

¹ The term *resolution* carries with it a danger of an attempt to get rid of conflict. Conflict *transformation* however, focuses on the *processes* of constructive change.

² Lederach, Jean Paul; Good Books, 2003; p.15, [The Little Book Of Conflict Transformation](#) 3
(The Little Books of Justice and Peacebuilding Series)



Hypothesis

In *video conflictum* I attempted to pursue such questions. In the first few weeks of my final year at the HyperWerk Institute, I did research on the psychological effect of video and of video interviewing, as addressed in the specialised literature of sociology and psychology. I discussed these matters in great detail with my external coach, conflict expert Dieter von Blarer. It was on the basis of these discussions that I developed a hypothesis that seemed worthy of field testing in Teluk Meranti:

By employing interview methods proven in psychotherapy and couple therapy, the psychological effect of the video camera itself on the interviewee significantly diminish preconceived attitudes: It could help in fostering a feeling of empathy for the „opponent“ and thereby be employed as a subtle but practical tool in processes of conflict transformation.

The conflict in Teluk Meranti

Hardly a newspaper today is not spreading the word: a new „green era“ is upon us. Climate change is on everybody’s mind, there is incessant talk of CO2 footprints, of renewable energy sources and of biodiesel. To meet these growing demands, plantations the size of whole European countries are springing up in Indonesia literally overnight. A new gold rush is on and the government is invoking „stimuli for local economies“. Unfortunately, realities on the ground are different: Every year, human rights organisations register hundreds of land rights conflicts – many of them violent – between palm oil companies, their local henchmen within the communities and the opposing local villagers fighting against often illegal expansions.

When in February 2009 APRIL, a large corporation, approached the Teluk Meranti villagers to buy off their indigenous land, it divided the approximately 350 inhabitants into two factions: The majority of opponents, as well as a minority of supporters. Almost all of the people in Teluk Meranti are fishermen or small-scale farmers. They have little personal possessions and depend heavily on each other’s help and support. The apparent scarcity complicates the conflict: The expansion of the palm oil industry onto village land is genuinely seen by some as an opportunity to improve their lives, especially since the number may appear high for a villager for whom money is still a rather abstract concept. Others may argue that the conversion of their indigenous land on which they plant crops for their own needs, puts the community at the mercy of the company. The one-time payment by the company would subsequently be spent on buying vegetables and rice from a supermarket in a nearby town. How long would that money last? Also, news had traveled from other villages in the region, that the heavy use of chemicals on the plantations causes the fish stock in the rivers to dwindle. The villagers began accusing each other of collaborating with the company and selling community land for a personal profit.

The horizontal conflict reached a violent peak when APRIL handed out cash to a select number of villagers, ostensibly for work they had done. In truth however, this was aimed at fomenting divisions and to soften up the village’s social structure. A wrought-up crowd smashed one of those villagers’ house and badly injured him. The company’s henchmen in the village retaliated by having their crops destroyed. Such mutual estrangement cut deep wounds into the communal fabric. The village chief feared that the conflict would get out of hand. He sought help from Greenpeace, hoping to hereby improve the situation. To his disappointment however, the presence of Greenpeace and their media work created international awareness for the problem of forest destruction in general, yet it helped little to improve the situation in his village.

Reflection I

GREENPEACE

Greenpeace International set up a «Forest Defenders Camp» in Teluk Meranti. It formed the geographical frame of reference for «video conflictum».



Georg Stein, conflict expert at the Swiss Embassy in Jakarta mentored the project locally and was an invaluable source of information and practical knowledge.



A Teluk Meranti villager critical of the expansion of the palm oil company.

Point of departure

Having already invested time and effort in my Indonesian film project, I had established valuable contacts to non-governmental organisations active in the country. I contacted Asti Roesle, project supervisor of Forest Campaigns for Greenpeace Switzerland.³ As coincidence would have it, Greenpeace International was initiating a new campaign in Indonesia at that very moment. Thus, Greenpeace's „Forest Defenders Camp“ in Teluk Meranti in the Kampar region, Sumatra, became the geographical frame of reference for my own project. I hoped to test my hypothesis within the relatively safe framework of this village. The curious presence of a European with a camera, this my presumption, would probably provoke less unwanted attention here. The palm oil company's notorious henchmen, as well as the military police's security services, both powerful players and deeply involved in the conflict, would probably pay less attention. Equally important however, was the fact that the villagers had approached Greenpeace to help them in the conflict. This meant, that they were interested in resolving their differences and were looking for help.

The method by which I would be testing my hypothesis in Teluk Meranti had been discussed in great detail with Dieter von Blarer before my departure. Nevertheless, he helped initiate contact with Georg Stein, human security advisor and conflict expert at the Swiss Embassy in Jakarta. Mr Stein was to mentor the project locally. It was with him that I regularly discussed the specific stages of my work. More than once, this diploma project took a decisive new turn, thanks to Georg Stein's theoretical know-how and his practical suggestions. Moreover, I had begun learning the Indonesian language due to „The Green Desert“ and had acquired a substantial knowledge regarding the palm oil controversy. I was confident that I was adequately prepared and left for Indonesia on October 20th, 2009.

Subjective position and approach: Victim - culprit

My own position as an independent „researcher“, able to carefully consider diverse opinions, seemed pivotal to me. While working on „The Green Desert“, I had already discovered that this would require a moral balancing act of high personal demand. I had witnessed the blatant injustice and brutality of the multinationals and their henchmen amongst the villagers. I feared that in Teluk Meranti as before, I would clearly situate myself on the side of those defending themselves against the palm oil company. This would accord the other party in the conflict, the supporters amongst the villagers, the role of culprits. How could I ensure them of my own evenhanded respect and muster the empathy required for such a project? American psychologist Marshall Rosenberg's concept of nonviolent communication (NVC), which postulates an impartial approach to individuals of differing opinions, hereby proved an invaluable tool: To observe the situation as it is without passing judgement, and focus one's attention on compassion as the motivation for the interaction.⁴

³ Greenpeace is very actively combating the destruction of virgin forests in Indonesia. It operates a network of excellent contacts to embassies, as well as to the local population.

⁴ Rosenberg, Marshall B.; Puddledancer Press, 2003; Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Compassion

Side effects: Expectations

My interest in the personal views and fortunes of the interviewees fosters hopes and expectations in relation to my person and to the project. It is impossible to completely avoid this occurring, as these are the natural by-products of any process forming intervention.⁵ Jan Reuter, a psychiatrist at the Charité Hospital in Berlin and an acquaintance of mine, suggested that I follow psychotherapeutic guidelines by finding the right balance between *identification* and *distance* to the interviewee.

Culture and conflict

Culture is inextricable from conflict, though it does not cause it. It is embedded in every conflict because conflicts arise in human relationships. When differences surface in communities such as Teluk Meranti, culture is always present, shaping perceptions, attitudes, behaviors – and outcomes. Whether a conflict exists at all, is, one could say, a cultural question. Cultural fluency, and genuine respect toward the particular culture involved is therefore a core competency for me who intervenes in their conflict.⁶ It was also because of this, that I decided to work together with Reyhart Dumbayan, an Indonesian friend who had already accompanied me for „The Green Desert“ as a translator, and would now be joining me as a „cultural interpreter“⁷



A small river flowing through Teluk Meranti with its 350 villagers.

⁵ Lederach, Jean Paul; Jossey-Bass, 2002; [A Handbook of International Peacebuilding: Into The Eye Of The Storm](#)

⁶ LeBaron, Michelle; Culture and Conflict, 2003; http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/culture_conflict/

⁷ Lederach, Jean Paul; Jossey-Bass, 2002; [A Handbook of International Peacebuilding: Into The Eye Of The Storm](#)

Reflection II

Two laws of process design

In conflict work, an in-depth knowledge of the culture and structure, as well as of the processes inherent within the respective community is an absolute prerequisite: A very basic evaluation of the potential, as well as the dangers of the medium employed (within a clearly defined parameter of process and effect) is needed.

I have therefore framed two laws of process design which will form the precept of my project. These will be complemented by my practical research and by the theoretical fundamentals.

The first law of process design

Possibly the most important lesson I learnt during my studies at the HyperWerk Institute is that it is the „process designer“ that must learn to take responsibility vis-à-vis the subjects of the formative process, as well as others thereby affected. Responsibility is hereby defined as understanding as clearly as possible the formative process in its complexity and assessing the unwanted consequences of an intervention for all involved persons, as well as their environment. In the context of my Indonesian project, I took this as a warning to adapt the project to a dynamic situation, as well as to discuss all my steps with a local conflict expert beforehand, thereby ensuring the necessary safeguards, should a situation threaten to „get out of hand“.

The second law of process design

The „process designer“ is never purely the designer and uninvolved bystander. Rather, he always remains an active process participant: Contemplation and *self*-reflection, are an integral part of process design. Often, these offer perhaps the most valuable insights. The „process designer“ has an innate responsibility to himself as an active participant and must develop an awareness for his own processes. I refer to this development as the „second law of process design“. In reference to our year-long theme *undwasjetzt?* (*andwhatnow?*), I postulate this law as a progression and consolidation of process systemics and process culture, as taught at the HyperWerk Institute.⁸

⁸ In my view, gaining insight into one's own processes is an often neglected subject at the HyperWerk Institute. Within this project, I have therefore attempted to lay emphasis on the question.



Method

The aim of the approach herein described is to initiate a shift in thinking and attitude within the individual involved in the conflict, with a view towards a transformation of the conflict as a whole. Subtle interventions, as depicted in the following, aim to weaken stereotypes and prejudices, while encouraging empathy towards the respective opponent. The aim is to (re-)open lines of communication between the conflicting parties (or individuals) involved that were formerly blocked.

This occurs in two steps, whereby the steps described are mutually interdependent.

Step 1: The effect of the video camera

Without question, video is the most direct and generally intelligible medium at our disposal today. It apparently conveys an image that is a likeness of reality. From my own experience and through relevant reading⁹ however, I now know that people behave differently when confronted by the lens of a camera. Various psychotherapeutic approaches had already taken the camera's effect into consideration by the early 1980s.¹⁰ Although elusive, the claim to „validity“ and „truthfulness“ inherent to video exerts a clearly discernible effect on the interviewee: It remains an extraordinary and unnatural situation to be captured „by sound and vision“. The presence of a camera, especially in a development aid context such as Teluk Meranti, prompts a sense of „being taken seriously“; it contrasts clearly to the everyday conversation, interview even, by laying claim to „validity“ and to „truth“.¹¹

Step 2: Interview questions

The camera's effect on the the interviewee forms at once the basis, as well as the amplifier for the „psychological questionnaire“. The camera's presence, referred to as „reactivity“ in the field of social studies is - in interviews aimed at the transfer of information - often a disturbing factor. There is obviously a distortive tendency. In this project however, our focus is not on the flow of information from the interviewee to the interviewer.¹² Rather, it is insight; a consciousness transformation („self-therapy“ in the widest sense) regarding the interviewee's conflict situation.¹³ Such transformational processes will not only take place during the conversation, but also during the subsequent mental processing period.

Through an interview situation with video with highly specified questions, prejudgmental attitudes can be diminished, nurturing a growing sense of empathy for the respective „opponent“ .

⁹ Lamnek, Siegfried; Beltz Psychologie Verlags Union, 2005; Qualitative Sozialforschung: Lehrbuch, as well as

Sontag, Susan; Picador, 2001 (1971); On Photography

¹⁰ The use of video in general psychotherapy is however limited to the recording of therapeutic sessions for subsequent evaluation („mirroring“) in supervision or for educational purposes.

¹¹ Exceptions to this rule are of course media professionals, politicians, etc. Having grown used to the presence of video cameras and to their effect (on the viewer), they are in a position to manipulate the outcome for their own benefit.

¹² The symmetry of the conversation, a central theme in social sciences when quantitative and qualitative interviews are conducted, can therefore be disregarded.

¹³ Lamnek, Siegfried; Beltz Psychologie Verlags Union, 2005; Qualitative Sozialforschung: Lehrbuch, p.331

The five-question-model (FQM)

The five-question-model developed for this project is based on standard questions adapted from a methodology predominantly applied in family- and couple conflicts.

The questions, as well as their sequence are standardised, as they pursue a specific purpose.

- 1) „How do you see the conflict?“
- 2) „What is it you want in this conflict?“
- 3) „What do you think your opponents want in this conflict?“
- 4) „What do you think, your opponents think you want in this conflict?“
- 5) „What do you think needs to happen to resolve this conflict?“

It is quite evident that the application and effect of these questions is not confined to the specific situation and condition of this project, but may equally work in other settings. However, in the context of video conflictum it is the „fusion“ with video which makes them especially potent. Video „activates“ the questions to their full potential and thus can be considered an amplification tool.

Methodical-technical aspects of the interview

As an interviewer, it is important to assume an attitude of reserved interest, of motivational passivity and of general sympathy, while avoiding exerting any specific influence.¹⁴ A permissive, open atmosphere should be conveyed that allows the interviewee the „luxury of frankness“. Interviews should therefore be conducted at the respective person`s home whenever possible. Or, as Roland Girtler puts it: „In order to conduct really good interviews, one has to [...] enter into the experiential realm of the concerned persons. They should not be interviewed in situations that are uncomfortable or foreign.“¹⁵ We should therefore strive to reign in the fear factor. A basis of trust is very important in this context. A trust ensuring that the interviewer will not use the video material to the detriment of the interviewee must be established. It goes without saying that this trust must be safeguarded at all times.¹⁶

¹⁴ In the social sciences, this form of interview is described as being „from neutral to soft“.

¹⁵ Lamnek, Siegfried; Beltz Psychologie Verlags Union, 2005; Qualitative Sozialforschung: Lehrbuch, p.378 (from: Girtler, Roland; Böhlau Publishers, 1984; Methoden der qualitativen Sozialforschung. Anleitung zur Feldarbeit, p.151)

¹⁶ Lamnek, Siegfried; Beltz Psychologie Verlags Union, 2005; Qualitative Sozialforschung: Lehrbuch, p.378 (from: Girtler, Roland; Böhlau Publishers, 1984; Methoden der qualitativen Sozialforschung. Anleitung zur Feldarbeit, p.151)

Process I

Visa and authorisation

I entered Indonesia on October 20th, 2009, equipped with a tourist visa. Neither did this visa allow for any form of political or journalistic activity, nor was I equipped with an official permission to conduct video interviews. At the Swiss Embassy in Jakarta, my mentor Georg Stein was duly worried for my safety. Several foreign journalists conducting research on the palm oil controversy had been expelled from the country in the last few months. It was only after Mr Stein had repeatedly applied benign pressure that I agreed to travel to Singapore. At the Indonesian Embassy, I was then accorded a business visa; an investment that was to pay off well only five weeks later.

Project presentation in Teluk Meranti

It was now two weeks since my arrival in Jakarta. Reyhart Dumbayan, an Indonesian friend who had already accompanied me as a translator for „The Green Desert“ and I duly travelled to Teluk Meranti. Reyhart, an activist in the Indonesian peace movement is well-versed in defusing conflict situations.

Teluk Meranti, only accessible by a small motorboat, seemed the ideal location for my project. Particularly, as the Greenpeace activists had been welcomed with open arms by the villagers – or so it seemed.

On the third evening after our arrival, I was able to present my project to the inhabitants of the village. After sundown, the men assembled, seating themselves in a circle in the house of Kepala Desa Pak Mursit, the village elder. In shaky Indonesian, I began introducing myself and my project. I explained how I planned to conduct video interviews, thereby promoting mutual understanding amongst the conflicting parties. Hopefully, I stated, new lines of communication - previously closed - could then be reopened. Before I was able to explain that this was a student project, that I had no previous experience in conflict transformation and that they should not set their bar too high, the men began debating loudly. Some of them got up and walked about the room, pointing at others and gesturing wildly. The situation rapidly deteriorated to a fight. Some believed the palm oil company offered an opportunity to improve their economic situation, others were of the opinion that palm oil clearly constituted a danger to their very survival. The palm oil company had handed out bribes, some said, while others accused Greenpeace of interference and of dividing the community.

Inadvertently and without any previous knowledge, I found myself in the middle of a process design!

I apologised to Pak Mursit for seemingly having provoked a fight. We agreed to meet alone the next day. I was taken aback and shocked by what had happened and spent the rest of the evening on the phone with Georg Stein. We discussed whether I had done the right thing. Had it been reckless to present my project in such a direct manner, without assessing the situation beforehand? I had placed my trust in the information I had received from Greenpeace activists. Emphasising their superb contact to the villagers, they had suggested that I introduce my project to the community in the manner employed.



«I am not the only victim here»



«What I think they think that I want? I believe they have become so greedy that they are unable to think clearly»



«We should all just live in peace. Why are we fighting?»



«..now our community is broken and we fight between each other»



«.. they simply don't know anything about these things. I want our lives to improve. Of everyone of us.»

The next day, accompanied by a Greenpeace activist, I met with Pak Mursit. I described my hypothesis, questioning whether my project was proving a catalyst and having a counterproductive effect.¹⁷ Again, I explained that this was a student project, a pilot project of sorts. With only a limited amount of experience in the field, I could not vouch for the success they were hoping for. The village elder seemed somewhat overwhelmed by the questions at hand, but quite intrigued. He would talk to some of the families he was more closely associated with, he said. A list of the interested parties would be prepared and I could then acquaint myself with them. Once more, I suggested inviting all those concerned to a group discussion with Pak Mursit.

Distance – identification

Pak Mursit chose thirteen families and assembled them in his office.¹⁸ It was easy to make out who was an opponent and who was a supporter: Five men sat on the left, eight on the right side of the office desk. Without even a nod of recognition, the adversaries took up position, donning sinister expressions.¹⁹ In Indonesian, I explained the procedure and bid them to ask questions, in case anything remained unclear. Throughout the whole meeting, not a single response was discernible. They seemed so distrustful of my person and my project that they were unwilling to comment, at least not in the presence of the others. In the following days, I paid a visit to every single party involved, accompanied by Reyhart. I carried the camera and the tripod with me, doing my best to conduct the respective interviews. In my initial naïvety I struggled to retain an appropriate balance between distance and identification: Friendly and interested, but personally aloof without appearing indifferent or overbearing.

Not one of the villagers was prepared to conduct a video interview. They simply did not trust me.¹⁹ It became clear to me, that the situation in this village was fundamentally different from that of a therapeutic session or social research. In order to gain the people's trust I would need to open more of myself to the situation – become more „humane“ – similar perhaps to an ethnologist intimately but with respect studying a foreign culture.

The video interviews

The access to the villagers as well as their acceptance necessitated a higher degree of identification, of „humanity“ than I had foreseen and I understood that this would need time. At this point I contacted my Indonesian friend Rudi Ranaq to ask for his advice as an ethnologist. He encouraged me to just spend time with the selected families for the following ten days. I followed his suggestion, eating with them and simply listening to them. Initially, they were surprised that I even cared for their side of the story. Yet with every day that passed, I realised that they were disclosing more. Increasingly, they became more honest and candid about their lives and about the conflict. On the other hand, I avoided asking any questions or commenting on my personal intentions. At the time, I „merely“ wanted to be a passive listener, hoping this would enable me to gain their trust, bit by bit.

¹⁷ Under no circumstances did I want the villagers to gain the impression that my project could aggravate the conflict. This was a risk I was not prepared to take.

¹⁸ Societal and family structures in Moslem countries such as Sumatra are decidedly patriarchal. Women are therefore excluded from practically all public gatherings.

¹⁹ Furthermore, I observed with interest that three of the five supporters were far better dressed. Of those, two wore golden watches on their wrists



«...you will regret it for the rest of your lives»

This however also resulted in hopes and expectations towards me and the project being reinforced. Although unavoidable, I needed to reconsider the question of socialisation and its limits.²⁰

In the course of three consecutive days, November 22th - 24th, I conducted the video interviews at the homes of the respective interviewees.

Epilogue



«They promise us a better future. I believe people here are just old and not educated to see this possibility».

On November 29th, the Greenpeace camp in Kampar was cleared by the Indonesian military police. Even though I was located in Teluk Meranti, at a distance from the Greenpeace settlement, I was nevertheless arrested. In the course of a long interrogation, two policemen wanted to know all they could about me.

I consciously avoided terms such as „conflict“ and „palm oil“ and was very relieved when they finally let me go without examining the contents of my backpack: It contained the two MiniDV-tapes with all the interviews. The consequences for me and especially my interviewees would unquestionably have been unpleasant, as a number of the villagers had also been arrested during the police raid.²¹ They were obviously intimidated. To keep my word and guarantee their safety (and that of their families), I subsequently destroyed all video tapes and merely kept a sample of video stills for the record.



«The company gives money to their henchmen in the villages to divide it. Divide and rule. It has proven to work» (Prof. Dr Jonoto-

The question of my responsibility as the process designer vis-à-vis the interviewees took on a wholly new dimension. I was angry at myself because my behaviour had been careless and unprofessional: I had failed to adequately ensure the safety of those involved in my project. I should have removed the film material „to safety“, even though, being in the „outback“ of Sumatra, this would have proved far from easy.

²⁰ Peacebuilding and documentary filming often necessitates a solidary stance. For the expert or interviewer, merely acting the part for the course of a project is not an option. More often than not, a social rapport, once established, tends to last beyond a project and can become a burden.

²¹ Many of the arrested foreigners were consequently expelled from the country. The Indonesian arrestees were charged and sentenced to multi-year jail sentences last March.

Reflection III

First conclusions

During the last few months, a detailed analysis of my experiences and of the process took place in discussions with Georg Stein and Dieter von Blarer. It is important to understand that the transformational processes intended in the current project are of a very subtle nature. They are difficult to measure and require time in order to lead to a verifiable alteration in the overall conflict. Transformation in a conflict situation is furthermore always based on an interplay of various processes. Consequently, a number of questions remain difficult to answer conclusively: To what a degree, and in how sustained a manner can my video interviewing method support, or even initiate transformational processes in conflicts? How can one measure its success? What parts of my method need alteration and adjustment? Could my method possibly be useful in vertical conflicts, and would it work in the industrialised world?

It must also be pointed out that the project at hand *cannot* be regarded as a scientific treatise. Rather, it is an initial experimental study that, through its publication, aims to encourage others. This will hopefully lead to a scientific debate on video as a tool of conflict transformation.

The following points made here also merit consideration (summary)²²:

- Even while conducting the interviews, I gained the impression that the camera's presence, in combination with the FQM, initiated a reaction on the part of the interviewees. Of those, many showed a pronounced reaction to the 4th question– „What do you think, your opponents think you want in this conflict?“ – baffled, most said that they had never considered this before.
- I returned to Indonesia at the beginning of March 2010 and visited my interview partners in Teluk Meranti to conduct an evaluation. I gained the overall impression that the conflict between the villagers had been significantly defused. The village elder Pak Mursit duly confirmed this to be the case.
- Of the five original supporters of the palm oil industry, two had switched sides. The reasons for their change of position however, remain unclear as they did not want to discuss them with me.
- According to the Greenpeace office in Jakarta, the conflict had significantly deescalated in recent months. Violent confrontations between the villagers had declined.
- At the time of writing, APRIL had discontinued their attempts to take over the indigenous village land. To what extent their decision was influenced by a stronger, more united village community on one side and by Greenpeace's media attention on the other, remains to be discussed.

Of course, neither these points, nor the more detailed analysis prove the workability of my approach. They do however allow us to carefully infer that the psychology of video interviewing might in fact be a key to mutual understanding between conflicting parties.

²² A more detailed analysis will be provided in the upcoming publication.



Process II

Publication

Clearly, the facts described above have implications not only in the field of conflict studies employing video. They would also seem to be of great interest to filmmakers and other media professionals.



Peter Hlaisaire, programme supervisor at Interpeace, Geneva, showed much interest in my work. He will also help me with finding an international publisher.

In February 2010, I presented my work to Peter Hlaisaire, Interpeace's project supervisor. Originally developing from a United Nations project, Interpeace is considered one of the pioneering organisations in the field of peacebuilding with video. Peter Hlaisaire was intrigued by my approach and suggested that I publicise my report. In the following months, it became apparent that a number of publications in the field of conflict transformation exist. Not a single one however, calls attention to the effect of video application, or how video might specifically be applied. This surprised me, as video has been in use in the area of peacebuilding since the mid-1990s. It was with Dr Oliver Wolleh at the renowned Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management in Berlin where the idea of a „reader“, compiling my own experiential report from Indonesia, articles by experts in the field working with film and video as well as papers by academics studying the general application of film and video as tools, took form. My motivation with this publication would be to encourage a wider debate on the importance and possibilities of these tools in conflict transformation.

Berghof Conflict Research

Dr. Oliver Wolleh and Katharina Gotzler at the Berghof Research Centre for Conflict Management has been very supportive in the conceptualisation of the publication.

Publication of the document will follow in two steps. A first edition, consisting of 3 copies with a limited number of contributions, will be self-published in August 2010 to give a basic impression of the eventual publication. The draft will be sent to a number of peacebuilding organisations, researchers and educational institutions working in the field, with a request for more contributions. Also, I will look for a person of stature (e.g. Johan Galtung, Kofi Annan etc.) to preface the book. This winter, I will then begin the search for a publisher of the by-then revised edition.

Being one of the first publications of its sort worldwide, its release by a well-known publisher would indeed seem quite conceivable, as experts such as Marian Liebman and Dieter von Blarer have assured me. Thankfully, they will be supporting me with their contacts.

Contributions

As per August 1st, 2010 the following contributions (abstracts below) have been submitted to my publication:

The Contribution of Video to Conflict Transformation

Dieter von Blarer, solicitor and conflict expert, Switzerland

In the last years video has become an eminent tool for social communication. Platforms such as Facebook provide the possibility to show private and community experiences to an unmeasurable audience. Video is used as a tool to document violent conflicts e.g. the violent clashes between Uzbek and Kyrgyz population in the South of Kyrgyzstan. But does video bring a real added value to conflict transformation processes? Does it not also bear the risk of escalating conflicts by the dramatic potential of documenting "reality"? What might be the methodology to use video in sensitive environments? In this article I will try to develop some ideas based on my own practical experience but also working with assumptions on the issue of video in conflict transformation.

Video and Conflict Transformation in Nepal

Subel Bhandari, Agence France-Presse (AFP), Nepal

(abstract pending)

Cinema of India's Ex-Criminal Tribes – A Case Study of the Chhara Denotified Tribe

Dakxinkumar Bajrange, theatre director & filmmaker, India

192 tribal communities were officially branded as 'criminals' by the erstwhile colonial government in India in 1871 and were later reclassified as the 'Denotified Tribes' in an attempt to end the discrimination against them in 1952. This article focuses the processes of criminalization of these tribes and how these communities are working towards removing the social stigma they face until today through Community Film Making and Theatre Art in an attempt to create awareness and social acceptance.

Using Video in Conflict Transformation (provisional title)

Marian Liebmann, conflict expert, United Kingdom

This chapter looks at the use of video in mediation and restorative justice. It includes examples of the use of video in international situations, as in the former Yugoslavia, to bring former neighbours back together; the use of video in bringing together opposing groups, such as travellers and local residents. There will also be a section on the use of video in victim-offender work in the criminal justice system in the UK – both to pass on messages and as a precursor to face-to-face meetings.

Conflict Work and Documentary Film - Personal Reflections of a Filmmaker from the Outskirts of Documentary Production.

Christof Schaefer, filmmaker, Switzerland

In conflict work, the video medium is applied and viewed mostly as an information carrier; aesthetic and narrative qualities are only attributed a marginal role. «The Jugglers of Colaba» is a documentary film project conducted with a group of socially underprivileged youths. The project attempts to bridge the gap between conflict work and producing an aesthetically and narrationally ambitious film. These two viewpoints seem disparate both in their approach, as well as in their purpose. Combining the two approaches to filmmaking both provides opportunities and prompts questions: To what degree can documentary film (or the filmmaker) intervene in the documentation process itself? What are the limits? Should the intervention itself be transparent? How does one deal with the consequences of one's own intervening? And finally, what is more important: Truth or dramatic composition, drama theory - or conflict resolution?

From YouTube to Participation and Development

Max Spielmann, HyperWerk Institute, Switzerland

YouTube, Twitter and mobile phones with integrated video cameras have changed the way we communicate and use video content. This time the trendsetters are coming from all over the world. Especially users from countries in crisis are showing us ways of use. There is a lot more to find and to develop. The existing jittery images of demonstrators and police are really just a beginning. Cheap video equipment could be used in transformation processes of any kind and anywhere. We all have to learn – and we have the possibility to learn together – it's the same technology, widely accessible in the first and third world and we are at the beginning in both worlds.

The Power of Film in the War-Torn Region of Pakistan and Afghanistan

George Gittoes, international war correspondent, Australia

(abstract pending)

Situating Video in the State of Perpetual Transition: A Case Study of Indonesia

Ferdiansyah Thajib, M.A., Kunci Cultural Studies Center, Indonesia

The aim of this article is to trace the strands of subjectivity and reflexivity that animate video activism in Indonesia, particularly in its relation to conflict transformation processes in regional as well as national settings. Drawing on the stories of success and failure from activists working with video technology in advocating and spreading messages from and between conflict-laden communities, the author argues that more critical articulations need to be teased out from the a state of perpetual urgency in the field. Particularly those contributing to alternative ways of representations as well as activism configurations that push the boundaries of structures constituting the succession of various social conflicts in the country.

I am delighted to be able to present you with the first draft of the publication ***video conflictum*** at the diploma presentation on September 6h, 2010.²³

²³ Subsequent to the presentation, a copy of the first draft of the publication will be on display at the diploma exhibition.



Exchange with Mahardhika STIE College, Indonesia

My translator Reyhart Dumbayan introduced me to Dr. Sofyan, who is employed by the Indonesian government as an expert, mediating between conflicting parties in Papua New Guinea. Dr. Sofyan teaches economics and sociology at Mahardhika College in Surabaya. Intrigued by my concept of working with video, Dr. Sofyan spontaneously organised a two-day seminar on „conflict studies and social responsibility in business“ at his faculty. On December 2nd 2009, I held a lecture on my current insights. The enthusiasm and reactions of the student body were exhilarating, and the ensuing discussion lasted well into the night. I emphasised the question of my responsibility vis-à-vis the involved parties. I was surprised to hear that for most of the students, this had never been a subject of interest before. Once again, this in my view confirms that the transboundary approach taught in process design at the HyperWerk Institute is, if taken seriously, a unique and invaluable one.

From September 10th - 12th 2010, in conjunction with Rudi Ranaq (human rights lawyer and ethnologist) and Ferdiansyah Thajib (researcher), I will be conducting a three-day workshop on conflict transformation at Mahardhika College in Surabaya. In view of the interdisciplinarity and partnership that the HyperWerk Institute is striving for, I hope to hereby lay the foundation for further cooperation between the two educational institutions.

Reflection IV

Partners

Vanessa von Gliszczynski, German Embassy, Indonesia

Katharina Gotzler, Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management

Dr. Oliver Wolleh, Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management

Thomas Heidl, conflict management expert, Germany

Peter Hislair, programme director at Interpeace, Geneva

Wei Chen Lin, graphic designer, Berlin

Dr. Rudi Ranaq, human rights lawyer and ethnologist, Indonesia

Rudy Reddy, SawitWatch NGO, Indonesia

Jan Reuter, psychiatrist, Charité Berlin

Asti Rösle, Coordinator Forest Campaigns, Greenpeace Switzerland

Dr. Sofyan, STIE Mahardhika College, Surabaya

Ferdiansyah Thajib, M.A., Kunci Cultural Studies Centre, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Consultants

Dieter von Blarer

Solicitor Dieter von Blarer headed his own law office until 2002. During 1991, he spent time in Iraq on a mandate for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). From 1999 until 2002, von Blarer worked for the OSCE and for an ombuds-institution in Kosovo. Until 2005, he developed and realised various projects in Central Asia for the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs (FDFA). Since January 1st 2006, von Blarer is the ombudsman of the canton Basel-Stadt. In our regular discussions, Dieter von Blarer „kept me on my toes“ and, due to his wealth of experience in the field, was able to provide me with a lot of valuable input. Furthermore, his contacts to Georg Stein, as well as to Professor Jean Paul Lederach were a great help during this project.

Georg Stein

Georg Stein is Human Security Advisor at the Swiss Embassy in Jakarta. Before that, he worked as Deskofficer for Humanitarian Policy and Migration at the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), as well as Programme Advisor at the Association for the Prevention of Torture (APT) in Geneva.

Professor Max Spielmann

Max Spielmann has done research on video as a medium of process design for over 15 years. He is currently supervising a project on community television in South Africa. Spielmann is Professor of Process Design at the HyperWerk Institute, University of Applied Sciences of Northwestern Switzerland. Our cooperation has been very fruitful, with Professor Max Spielmann steadily supplying me with vital food for thought.

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Credits

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About the author

Janos Tedeschi was born September 1, 1983 in Switzerland. After graduating from Schule Schloss Salem, he studied at Royal Conservatory in The Hague and at Asian Institute of Gemological Science in Bangkok. In 2007 he enrolled at the HyperWerk Institute where he focused on how video can be used in process design. *video conflictum* is his diploma thesis.

His first documentary feature «No Way To Heaven» was released in 2008.

Contact

University of Applied Sciences of Northwestern Switzerland
Academy of Art and Design - Institut HyperWerk
Totentanz 17/18
CH – 4051 Basel
T +41 (0)61 269 92 30
F +41 (0)61 269 92 26
info.HyperWerk.hgk@fhnw.ch
www.fhnw.ch/hgk/ihw

Janos D Tedeschi
Obentraut Strasse 41
10963 Berlin, Germany
M +41 (0) 77 44 66 99 0
janos.tedeschi@hyperwerk.ch
www.nowaytoheaven.ch

