

**Namibia in Transformation:**  
**Contributions to the Facilitation of Past and Present Conflict**  
**From a Process Work Perspective**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Master of Arts in  
Conflict Facilitation and Organizational Change

by

Benjamin T. Schernick

Process Work Institute  
Portland, Oregon (USA)

January 2014

***Copyright Notice:***



***This material is protected by a Creative Commons License***

***→ <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.5/za>***

***You are free to share*** (to copy, distribute and transmit the work) **and to remix** (to adapt the work), under the following conditions:

***Attribution*** - You must attribute the work in the manner specified by the author or licensor (but not in any way that suggests that they endorse you or your use of the work)

***Share Alike*** - If you alter, transform, or build upon this work, you may distribute the resulting work only under the same or similar license to this one.

***Non-Commercial*** - You may not use this work for commercial purposes

## **Abstract**

This theoretical research paper explores the applicability of a Process Work approach to conflict (as developed by Dr. Arnold Mindell since 1970s) in the Namibian context. Namibia is a culturally rich and diverse country in Southern Africa in the midst of transformation. Having gained independence 24 years ago, painful memories of violent conflict, systemic oppression, and segregation continues to exist in visible and invisible scars within the social fabric of society. Process Work is a cross-disciplinary approach to working with individual, relationship, and large-group conflict in facilitated ways that focus strongly on relational aspects and on finding meaning in even very disturbing experiences.

Key findings are that past and present ways of handling conflict in Namibia are related, that traumatic past experiences still manifests themselves today in many different ways, and that Process Work methods for dialogue and conflict facilitation may be useful for dealing with such a painful collective past and present-day conflicts. Specific aspects of Process-Oriented approaches to conflict seemingly most useful are: awareness and facilitation of differences in rank, power and privileges, focus on interpersonal relationships, self-awareness, Christian spirituality, and on the difficulties in expressing and dealing with underlying emotions which historically had to be suppressed. Process Work approaches can fundamentally support building of genuine and sustainable relationships and community in accordance with Namibia's motto: "Unity in Diversity".

Introduction and application of such approaches must deeply understand and authentically appreciate the qualities of current ways of handling conflicts. Otherwise, there would not only be greater resistance to such new approaches, but it would also indirectly and unconsciously repeat harmful patterns of colonialism and oppression.

Because Process-Oriented conflict facilitation in Namibia is still in its infancy suggestions are not only regarding possible further research but also on practical ways forward, and on opportunities to practically learn more about Process Work in Namibia and the Southern African region.



## Acknowledgements

I am deeply grateful to my previous Social Work Professor, Dr. Angela Mickley at Potsdam University of Applied Sciences, for introducing me to the field of nonviolent conflict resolution and for inviting me in 2004 to join her mediation and capacity building project in Namibia. This changed my life's focus and, as a German in a former German colony, made me decide to stay here to continue learning how best I can contribute to the resolution of the various kinds of conflicts in past, present, and future Namibia.

In acknowledgement of our global historic and cultural context, I would further like to recognize and express deep gratitude to all indigenous tribes and peoples from around the world and particularly Southern Africa. Their connection with our natural environment and their innate wisdom have survived centuries of oppression and the destruction of their habitat and culture. However, their wise and peaceful spirits, as well as their interconnectedness with everything within and around them persevered and serves as a strong inspiration for me. Such interconnectedness has also immensely contributed to the development of Process Work and its ways of facilitating and transforming conflict, as well as building relationship and community.

I would like to thank Drs. Arnold and Amy Mindell for dedicating their lives to exploring the unspeakable magic behind the processes of life itself, and the practical application hereof for the facilitation of conflict. Similarly, I would like to thank all my teachers at the Process Work Institute, particularly my study committee members Gary Reiss, Ayako Fujisaki, and my advisor Emetchi, as well as my 'examiner' Dawn Menken. They all did an amazing job in guiding and supporting me in my journey through the program, including giving me clear and honest feedback, as well as a strong push when necessary.

I also like to express thanks to the members of my MACF-Cohort 4: Art, Genevieve, Elizabeth, Lindsay, Mohammad, Nami, Okokon, Sonia, Yura, and Zea, for

enriching my life by being true companions on our shared journey. Our diversity with regard to socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds and in our communication and learning styles, as well as their authentic commitment to personal growth and global transformation means a lot to me.

Furthermore, I am deeply grateful to Dr. Stephen Schuitevoerder, who regularly offers Process Work seminars in South Africa, and it was one of his workshops in 2009 that made me enroll in this program. I am similarly grateful to all my fellow South African co-learners in these seminars over the last 5 years, as they and their courage to be so honestly open with each other truly inspired me. Their work not only opened my eyes to the huge need for such work in a post-apartheid context, but it also demonstrated what contributions Process Work can make to such ongoing transformation process. Similarly, I thank my friends, colleagues, students, and workshop participants here in Namibia, who participated in various courses and workshops around dealing with conflict. I appreciate their commitment to their and my own learning in this field, as this serves as one of the foundations and inspirations for this thesis.

I am also very thankful to my partner, Ester Kaino Nakale, who directly and indirectly contributed to my learning around the applicability of Process Work conflict situations during many trial and errors with my own facilitation skills during our naturally occurring conflicts. She further endured and supported me during a variety of my moods, especially during the last period of my studies and the writing of this thesis.

Finally, my deepest appreciation and gratitude goes to my parents, Inge and Heinz Schernick, who were there for me throughout my whole life and who believed in me, even when my own path in life diverted from what they initially thought would be best for me. Their unconditional love and support serves me as a role-model for my own life. If there is something that I learned from them which I will pass on to future generations, it is this spirit of being supportive in combination with a deep sense of trust and the ability to let go and give people the freedom to follow their own process and path in life.

## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	iii
Acknowledgements .....	vi
Chapter 1: Introduction .....	1
Background Information .....	1
Problem Statement .....	3
Research Questions .....	4
Purpose of This Thesis .....	5
Limitations.....	6
Significance .....	7
Overview .....	8
Research Approach and Methodology .....	9
Ethical Considerations.....	10
Personal Background and Motivation .....	10
Personal background.....	10
Personal motivation. ....	12
Chapter 2: Literature Review .....	17
Namibia: Conflicts and Power Struggles .....	17
General background.....	17
Historical background.....	19
Addressing historic injustices.....	26
Ways of Dealing with Conflict in Namibia.....	30
Historic conflict handling patterns.....	31
Contemporary ways of handling conflicts.....	34
Process Work: Origins, Philosophy, and Application.....	45
Philosophy and approach.....	46
Applications of Process Work.....	47
Similarities and Differences to Other Approaches.....	48
Process-Oriented trauma work.....	49
Conflict management/resolution vs. conflict facilitation.....	52
Worldwide Application in Conflict Situations.....	60
Process Work in an African context.....	61
Process Work in Namibia and Southern Africa.....	63
Concluding Remarks for Literature Review .....	68

Chapter 3: Discussions on Process Work in Namibia.....	71
Dealing with a Violent Past.....	72
Collective and trans-generational trauma. ....	72
How the past is present. ....	73
The ghosts of history.....	75
An arising need for reconciliation.....	78
Why only now?.....	80
Process Work methods for dialogue and reconciliation .....	86
Relevant Process Work Aspects & Challenges and Opportunities .....	89
An unknown paradigm and approach. ....	90
Working with hotspots.....	93
Understanding and processing violence.....	95
Focus on building relationships. ....	97
Awareness of rank, power and privilege.....	100
Spiritual aspects in the context of Christianity. ....	105
My own role as facilitator. ....	109
Chapter 4: Conclusions .....	115
Summary of Findings .....	115
On the Namibian situation. ....	115
On Process Work's contributions.....	116
Conclusions .....	121
Namibia's own pace of dealing with history.....	121
Social aspects of transformation. ....	122
Contributions to the Field.....	123
Next Steps and Ways Forward .....	125
Further research. ....	125
Training and study opportunities. ....	126
Networking. ....	128
Dialogue forums.....	129
Working on men's issues.....	130
In conclusion: planting a seed.....	131
References .....	133
Appendices .....	146
A - Students' Assignment on Traditional Ways of Conflict Handling .....	146
B - Letter from an Open Forum Participant in South Africa.....	148



## Chapter 1: Introduction

*Life is not about waiting for the storm to pass,  
it's about learning to dance in the rain.*

- Author unknown -

### Background Information

The quote above describes my personal relationship with conflict as it developed over the last 4 years of my studies in Process-Oriented conflict facilitation. It further speaks to how Namibians may benefit from a Process Work approach to conflict and how it can help them in dealing with the challenges they face during their country's process of transformation.

According to Merriam-Webster, "'transformation' means 'an act, process, or instance of transforming' or 'a complete or major change in someone's or something's appearance, form, nature, character, etc.'" (Transformation, n.d.). In the context of this thesis, transformation is understood as Namibia (as an entire nation) being in the process of undergoing a major long-term change and transition out of a relatively long period of violent and systemic oppression, segregation, fragmentation, and with high socioeconomic imbalances and inequalities (Jauch, 2011). The Government of Namibia, as expressed in its guiding policy document *Vision 2030* (Republic of Namibia, 2004) therefore deliberately works towards "social and economic transformation" (p. 13), yet with its primary focus on the economic aspects (i.e., industrialization, economic independence, and information technology), as well as the transformation of the public health and education systems. The Secretary and CEO of the Namibia Competition Commission and Founding President of the Namibia Economic Society, Mihe Gaomab II (2005) explains that the "marginalization and exclusion of the majority of the Namibian people in the economic mainstream" (p. 3) has so far been addressed and tried

to be overcome by means of Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) Affirmative Action frameworks. BEE in Namibia strives for "economic empowerment [of] previously disadvantaged communities and individuals that were subjected most to exclusion in the historical past, including women and people with disabilities" (pp. 5-6). However, Gaomab II (2010) further states that, besides a number of remarkable successes, the implementation of these frameworks is facing a variety of challenges, especially with regard to empowering the "human capital" (e.g., in terms of mentorship and skills transfer) and all the stakeholders (including the previously advantaged business owners) genuinely understanding, embracing, and supporting such policy and its underlying rationale. Hence, the transformation of the Namibian economy is linked with and actually dependent upon social, intercultural, and psychological aspects of human interaction and relationships.

International mediators, such as Lederach (1995,1997) advise to sensitively address socio-cultural conflict as part of a country's transformation process, and Process Work founder, Dr. Arnold Mindell (1995), emphasizes the fact that "economic conditions are not independent of other problems" (p. 168). He further stresses the importance of being aware of underlying historic, cultural, spiritual, and social dimensions, and highlights the necessity to enhance our ability to work on our relationships as well as on conflicting issues within ourselves (e.g., how we perceive ourselves and others inside and outside our interactions). Over the last three decades and based on direct experiences in different cultural contexts, Process Workers around the globe have developed a variety of methods, skills and metaskills to particularly work on the facilitation and transformation of conflict in individuals, groups and whole systems. This thesis looks through a Process Work lens at some of the underlying aspects of Namibia's transformation process and how it could possibly be supported.

## **Problem Statement**

Two interrelated problems motivated me to write this thesis. The first one is connected to Namibia as a country itself, while the second one derives from internal questions around my own role as conflict facilitator in the field.

Although Namibia, since its independence in 1990, achieved quite remarkable progress in political and socio-economic arenas, it is still characterized by huge social and economic inequalities (Hon. Calle Schlettwein [Namibia's Minister for Trade and Industry] as cited in Van den Bosch, 2013) and is being "plagued with escalating levels of violence that have permeated Namibian homes, schools, as well as broader social environments" (UTN, 2013, p. 14). This disturbing phenomenon of wide-spread violence is just the tip of the iceberg with much bigger and more complex underlying issues. Even though these issues may not be clearly visible, they surely influence Namibia's overall development, socio-economic progress, and the achievement of *Vision 2030*. In addition, the absence of any facilitated process (such as South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission) that may have helped the country in dealing with difficult and painful experiences of systemic oppression and racial segregation is also something that could have contributed to the currently existing problems and would therefore need to be looked at as well. However, I have not come across any existing in-depth research on the connection between past and present conflict patterns in Namibia and how this impacts the country's development and current transformation process.

My personal challenge lies with my own role as a German (outsider) who works in the field of conflict facilitation in Namibia. It is related to the question of how best can one provide support in such a complex and sensitive area without unconsciously repeating harmful patterns of history (i.e., "imposing" something from the outside that is apparently better than what already exists here)? During recent years of teaching and

giving training on how to deal with conflict, I became increasingly aware of the dangers of merely introducing Western concepts of conflict management without a profound awareness of and sensitivity for often subtle intercultural differences and unconscious bias (e.g., preferring one particular way of communication or handling conflict over another). Throughout the last centuries, many foreign concepts and ways of doing things have been directly or indirectly imposed on African societies in general and onto the Namibian people in particular, hereby often causing both visible and invisible harm to individuals and to the sociocultural fabric of societies.<sup>1</sup> Over the last 4 years of studying Process Work, I learned how this approach, although initially developed in the Western world, is highly sensitive, genuinely appreciative, and fundamentally inclusive towards diverse individual and cultural ways of being. However, I felt that a more specific examination of the applicability of such an approach in the Namibian context was necessary in order to avoid unconscious repetition of previous harm done.

Hence, deriving from the two problem areas, I saw the need to critically reflect on the past and present ways of handling conflict in Namibia, on a Process Work approach to conflict, and on my own experiences with both.

### **Research Questions**

It is my experience that whenever transformation occurs there are naturally and inevitably conflicts (i.e., between various aspects of the existing old and the emerging new paradigms and ways of doing things) to be dealt with. Hence, I looked for answers to the following questions:

---

<sup>1</sup> For example, the introduction of Christianity led to the loss of many cultural elements and traditions; and the modern education system often goes against a free and experiential way of learning about life in nature. Aspects of spirituality, interdependency and cooperation as practiced in indigenous cultures are hereby marginalized, for example, children of San people traditionally only played non-competitive games in which there were no winners or losers but the focus was on the shared experience of joy and community (Mann, 2007). Also the modern law based, criminal justice system took crucial aspects of direct compensation, reconciliation and relationship-building between disputants away, which were often essential elements of traditional justice systems.

- ✓ What are the main areas of conflict in past and present Namibia?
- ✓ What were and currently are the predominant ways of dealing with conflict in Namibia?
- ✓ What are characteristics of a Process Work (or Process-Oriented facilitated) approach to conflict?
- ✓ How and in what areas can such Process-Oriented approaches to conflict and related issues (such as trauma) potentially contribute to Namibia's process of transformation?
- ✓ What are possible challenges and opportunities of introducing and applying Process-Oriented approaches to conflict in the Namibian context, and what are some of the aspects that one would need to consider and be aware of?
- ✓ What could be possible and practical ways forward in terms of building capacity for constructively dealing with conflicts in Namibia to support the country's overall transformation process?

### **Purpose of This Thesis**

The specific purpose of this study was to offer a Process Work perspective on Namibia's unique, complex, and ongoing transformation process, and to critically analyze and reflect upon existing challenges and opportunities for a Process-Oriented approach to facilitating conflict in this specific context. My intention was to hereby gain a deeper understanding of the Namibian situation and to share relevant insights (e.g., areas and aspects of the Namibian situation in which a Process Work approach and perspective would be particularly helpful or might require adaptation) with the diverse network of process workers and conflict facilitators worldwide, as well as anybody interested in social change towards peace and justice. By giving examples and describing the application of Process Work in theory and practice I also sought to make such approach of dealing with conflict more known and accessible to interested Namibians.

## **Limitations**

In order to offer a better understanding of the Namibian situation and to create a context for reflections on how Process Work approaches can make a positive contribution to Namibia's complex transformation process, this thesis provides a rough overview of the key conflict areas and most common ways of dealing with them. However, it does not cover all the diverse conflict handling patterns and ways of dealing with conflict within the various tribes and subgroups in Namibia today and throughout its rich history, and also does not reflect on Namibia's complex sociopolitical situation in detail. Rather, it is limited to a general overview which looks more at underlying patterns than going into details, and it is clearly influenced by my own personal observations, experiences, and perceptions.

When referring to Process Work within this thesis, I primarily talk about its principles and practical applications for dealing with conflict and social tensions among individuals, groups, and society at large. The entire body of Process Work theory and practice encompasses a much larger range of additional phenomena and applications, such as therapeutically working with dreams, body symptoms, addictions, coma, dying, extreme states of consciousness and so forth. However, my studies and this thesis focus specifically on those Process Work aspects that are related to "Conflict Facilitation and Organizational Change", which is why it is important to clarify that the term Process Work is used, although it does not cover all the various aspects of this approach.

It is also important to note that Process Work has a language that makes it easier to frame and understand various conflict phenomena. Hence, some fundamental concepts and terminologies, such as "rank", are therefore used in this thesis. Although I briefly explain these terms when mentioning them for the first time, I do not provide in-depth explanations of these terms. Readers who are interested to learn more about

Process Work are therefore invited to follow the links, read the books, and/or listen to the audio files referred to in the list of references. I herewith also want to acknowledge that, although only a limited number of them are cited and referenced in this thesis, there are many more Process Work practitioners worldwide who have made huge contributions to this field.

### **Significance**

This study offers a new and deeper perspective on conflicts in Namibia, particularly how the past is related to the present and how this visibly or invisibly influences people's relationships and the country's overall development. It further describes and reflects on an alternative approach to dealing with conflict and diversity (particularly around issues of rank, power, and privilege) which can be insightful and supportive for local facilitators and conflict resolution practitioners in their work. It may also inspire other Namibians to become interested in conflict work and learn more about it, even if that just means to apply the respective methods and tools in their own social and professional environment. In any case, this contributes to an overall increase in societal awareness and capacity building. The entire process of introspection and reflection on the application of Process Work in Namibia further holds significance for me personally, particularly as I am basically the only resident Process Work practitioner so far. It will therefore improve my own awareness and interactions around the future development of Process Work in Namibia.

Significance with regard to the theory of Process Work lies in the application of this approach in an African, post-colonial/apartheid, and predominantly Christian context, which allows at least partial transfer of insights for working in other countries and cultural environments with similar backgrounds. The summary and analysis of particularly Namibian historical and contemporary conflicts, and reflecting on the

application of Process Work so far, serves as valuable background information for international conflict facilitators to gain a better understanding of the country. In turn, this may motivate future engagement and support, which actually is very much needed considering the current skills shortage in this field. Overall this thesis makes theoretical and practical a contribution to a more conscious capacity building in this very new field of conflict facilitation in Namibia, and helps to establish a more solid foundation for future research in this particular area.

## **Overview**

The initial literature review (Chapter 2) provides an introduction to historical and contemporary conflicts within Namibia and how they have been dealt with so far, as well as how incompletely resolved issues from the past still play a role in Namibian society of today. I then provide a brief introduction to Process Work and its similarities and differences to other approaches of working with conflict, as well as an overview of the application of Process Work in an African context, particularly in South Africa and Namibia.

The main part of the thesis (Chapter 3) consists of two parts. The first part focuses on how the past is present in terms of the after-effects of violence and related trauma, how far this applies to Namibia, and what approaches Process Work could offer to support facilitated processes around dialogue and reconciliation. The second part elaborates on selected aspects of Process-Oriented approaches to conflict and how these would be potentially helpful in a particular context, including reflections and discussions around a few practical examples.

In the Conclusion (Chapter 4) the main findings are briefly summarized and conclusions drawn. The very last section of this chapter then speaks about possible next steps and ways forward.

## **Research Approach and Methodology**

This thesis is a theoretical research paper, as explained by Swales and Feaks (1994), where an existing problem (or challenging situation) is first described, followed by possible solutions being explored and specific suggestions being presented.

In this thesis I make use of a broad variety of sources<sup>2</sup> to gain a wider understanding of historical and contemporary Namibian conflicts, particular around conflict and conflict handling patterns in Namibia, as well as of Process Work theory and practical application hereof in the context of facilitating conflict. It further draws from existing research around dealing with conflict, trauma, and the aftermaths of colonialism, as well as from written and oral accounts of the application of Process Work methods worldwide and specifically from within Namibia. I hereby describe and reflect on direct experiences from my own lectures at the University of Namibia and the Polytechnic of Namibia since 2008, as well as from workshops conducted with various government ministries, parastatals, nongovernmental organizations, schools, and community groups in urban and rural Namibia since 2005. Engaging with participants and students in practically resolving conflicts in their own social/professional environments and to jointly reflect on their experiences in workshop and classroom settings, provided great opportunities to gain invaluable insight into typical ways of handling conflict in urban and rural areas, which included individual research from more than 200 Namibian students, see Appendix A, pp. 139-140).

I further included relevant insight from my own self-reflections, as well as from general observations and conversations with Namibian facilitator colleagues on how they experience conflict handling patterns in groups and organizations they work with.

---

<sup>2</sup> Such as existing literature, which includes newspaper articles from the English daily and weekly newspapers in Namibia (all of which I have been reading on a regular basis over the last 9 years), as they provide valuable insights and reflections on contemporary issues.

## **Ethical Considerations**

I was in the role of an overt participatory observer in the field and my own perception can therefore not be absolutely objective. However, I tried to maintain as much awareness as possible of my own bias and one-sidedness with regard to the applicability of Process Work methods in the Namibian context, which I have experienced as highly beneficial.

As dealing with conflict is often a quite personal and sensitive issue, I do not mention names of any individual students, participants, or Namibian facilitator colleagues who shared their experiences with me through their feedback and in personal conversations, and I also do not specify the particular groups and organizations I have been working with in order to maintain confidentiality. However, when incorporating statements and reflections from groups or individuals that were published (e.g. in form of literature or newspaper articles) into this thesis, I reference them directly for reasons of transparency.

## **Personal Background and Motivation**

In writing this thesis about a specific approach to conflict in the context of a country and culture which is not my own country and culture of origin, it is relevant for me to speak about what initially brought me to Namibia. It is also relevant that I speak of my personal motivation to work with conflict, particularly in a Process-Oriented way.

**Personal background.** Growing up in Berlin/Germany and having initially studied and worked as Criminal Investigation Officer with the Berlin Police, I soon realized that a merely punitive approach of imprisoning offenders is neither helping them change their lives nor does it actually benefit society at large. After 6 years, I left the police and found some helpful answers to my search for peace, justice, and positive

change in the realms of sociopolitical and environmental activism. Spending almost 3 years participating in a variety of protest movements throughout Europe, broadened my horizons as I interacted with very diverse people from all walks of life. Further, I gained insight into various spiritual paths and traditions, and I learned a lot about the interconnectedness of social, economic, environmental and political global issues. Partially living in alternative intentional communities, also known as Ecovillages<sup>3</sup>, made me discover and experience new forms of communication<sup>4</sup> that evoked my passion for conflict resolution in interpersonal relationships and community settings.

At the end of 2003, I then began my social work studies in Potsdam/Germany, where Prof. Angela Mickley taught a 1.5-year seminar on Mediation and Peace Education. During my first year of studies, I then joined her in developing a project which aimed at offering mediation and nonviolent conflict resolution training in Namibia, thus building capacity for dealing with currently existing conflicts and supporting the postcolonial reconciliation process between Germany and Namibia.<sup>5</sup>

It was late 2004 when I first came to Namibia, where we initially focused on networking with various academic, governmental, and civil society organizations, followed by a series of training workshops and networking sessions in 2005/6. I was so captivated by the pioneering spirit of introducing this work, which seemed little known and yet so needed, that I actually spent most of my years as a social work student here in Namibia, engaging in our project activities and self-studies around different approaches on working with conflict.

---

<sup>3</sup> See Global Ecovillage Websites: <http://gen-europe.org> [Europe] & <http://gen-africa.org> [Africa]

<sup>4</sup> Such as 'the Forum', a transparent approach to building trust and community, with striking similarities to Process Work in terms of following and unfolding an individual's process in a circle of supportive group or community members - developed in the 1970s by the founding members of ZEGG in Germany. See: <http://www.zegg-forum.org> & [http://www.nfnc.org/info/document\\_library/what\\_is\\_the\\_zegg\\_forum](http://www.nfnc.org/info/document_library/what_is_the_zegg_forum)

<sup>5</sup> The project's vision was "to establish a vibrant network of conflict resolution practitioners from various cultural and professional backgrounds within Namibia, in order to not only reduce the high rates of violence but to build capacities for cooperative conflict handling, reconciliation and sustainable peace and social justice." (Mickley, 2005)

The project itself never received any substantial donor funding<sup>6</sup> and was primarily financed by ourselves with support from family and friends, which was one of the reasons why it officially came to an end in 2007. However, it became clear that there was a significant interest from various Namibian organizations and individuals in training on nonviolent conflict resolution. After completing my social work studies in early 2008, I began working in Namibia as freelance trainer and facilitator in this field, as well as part-time lecturer for newly developed courses on conflict management, mediation, and alternative dispute resolution at the Polytechnic of Namibia.

Moving to Namibia was a huge step which entailed building new friendships and relationships, and experiencing life in almost all areas of Namibia's capital Windhoek. Also on a professional level, I was privileged to be able to connect with and learn from Namibians from very different cultural and professional backgrounds. Since 2010, I further enjoy the benefits and challenges of an intercultural marriage, with my partner and wife having her cultural roots in the rural parts of the northern Ohangwena Region and a professional background in adult education, social sciences, community development, and creative arts.

**Personal motivation.** My first encounter with Process Work took place in 2009, during a series of training workshops in South Africa, facilitated by Dr. Stephen Schuitevoerder (2000, 2013). These deeply profound experiences lead me to enroll in the Masters in Conflict Facilitation and Organizational Change studies at the Process Work Institute in Portland, OR (USA) in 2010. Since then, this approach has enriched

---

<sup>6</sup> Numerous applications for project funding to mostly German institutions were repeatedly rejected, often with the reasons that there are either no 'real' conflicts in Namibia or that the issue of conflict resolution and reconciliation is a too sensitive one for the German Government to get involved in. However, financing all our expenditures ourselves (with the help of family and friends) enabled us to act more freely and independently than it would have been the case within a donor funded framework. Yet such a shoe-string budget also limited our overall range of activities and eventually caused an end of the official project in 2007.

not only my professional but also my personal life, which is my key motivation for trying to make it more accessible for fellow Namibians.

What fascinates me about Process Work, is that it is not judging or analyzing a person or situation, but that the interpretation of an experience is left to the person who experiences it<sup>7</sup>, which in itself is extremely empowering to me. Process Work's intrinsic notion of following nature and facilitating moment to moment interactions based on verbal and nonverbal feedback, rather than using or prescribing certain processes or steps to be followed, also hold great value for me. By not only focusing on finding a solution, it allows for crucial background information to surface and for relationship aspects to be strengthened, rather than reaching a quick-fix solution that may not last for long and leads to underlying disturbing issues re-cycling and coming back again in different forms.

Process Work helps in cultivating a beginner's mind (Mindell, 2003, p. 82) and approaches conflict from a healthy space of not knowing, while it also supports trusting nature and provides a profound conceptual and very practical framework for following feedback. Over the years, I have realized Process Work methods and philosophy to be a kind of metatool which seems to supplement, expand, and support the various conflict resolution approaches and tools that I have been familiar with so far.

I was also enticed by Process Work because it includes and helps in integrating all the experiences within and around oneself, rather than focusing purely on what is happening with the conflicting parties. According to the process work paradigm, conflict phenomena manifest themselves all the time in our moment to moment interactions, and Process Work provides helpful tools and awareness for noticing,

---

<sup>7</sup> "Look at somebody's process [...] without diagnosing the person or interpreting them as sane or insane." (Arnold Mindell interviewed by Steinfeld, 2011)

dealing with, and integrating these often disturbing aspects, such as the often unconscious misuse of rank<sup>8</sup>.

Over the years, I noticed how crucial especially these rank-related aspects of self-awareness are, especially as there is so much social rank attached to being a white, male, heterosexual European. Hence, I need to be keenly aware of how this plays out in my daily interactions with other people, particularly when working with conflict in a postcolonial and post-apartheid African context. Otherwise, even if I have the best intentions, I might cause more harm than good, because I would not notice the underlying patterns of oppression that come with unconscious rank. For example, while not being aware of my rank and my own intentions, I may not see that my own preconceived ideas of what a 'good solution' or a 'good way of conflict resolution' would look like, actually and inadvertently suggest that 'my way' of doing things is 'the right one', thus unconsciously re-enacting old and painful patterns of colonialism and oppression by 'telling others what to do', just in slightly different and more subtle ways. This explicit focus on oneself as a facilitator and one's own interactions and inner processes is something that other conflict resolution models do not offer to such extent, and I have experienced it as crucial for working here in various conflict situations.

However, although I am continuously working on increasing my levels of self-awareness, it is highly unlikely that this thesis is completely free of any bias or omissions due to the specific lenses through which I see this world and due to my own personal history. Hence, by at least being transparent about my personal background

---

<sup>8</sup> Rank can be defined as the sum of a person's privileges in relation to other people, and it is the "conscious or unconscious, social or personal ability or power arising from culture, community support, personal psychology or spiritual power" (Mindell, 1995, p. 42). There are various forms of rank or sources of power, i.e. social, structural, psychological, spiritual, and contextual. Awareness about rank issues and power dynamics is important because the conscious or unconscious use of rank often plays a key role in escalation or de-escalation of conflict.

and motivation, I hope to help readers put this existing and still unconscious bias into perspective.

Thus, I greatly appreciate and invite feedback and comments<sup>9</sup> on any aspects or areas where I may have overlooked or not properly presented certain views and perspectives, in order to continuously increase awareness and understanding of the issues presented and discussed in this thesis.

---

<sup>9</sup> Email address for contacting the author: [benschernick@gmx.de](mailto:benschernick@gmx.de) or [ccchangeconsult@gmail.com](mailto:ccchangeconsult@gmail.com)



## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Namibia: Conflicts and Power Struggles

In order to provide an overview of the sociopolitical and historical context, particularly for readers unfamiliar with the Namibian situation, I begin by giving some brief general background information about the "contrasting beautiful Namibia" (Doëseb, 1990), as she is also referred to in the National Anthem. This chapter therefore summarizes some of the major historic events leading up to the contemporary challenges the Namibian transformation process is facing today. This summary of historic conflicts and events further serves as a basis for the following reflections on how past and present conflicts have been and are currently being dealt with in different areas of society.

**General background.** Namibia is a highly diverse country in terms of natural landscapes and people, and is therefore known as the "land of wide open spaces, [with] so many beautiful faces" (Elemotho, 2003). Although covering an area of 825,418 km<sup>2</sup> (318,696 miles<sup>2</sup>), it is one of the least densely populated countries in the world with a total population of only 2.1 million. Most Namibians identify themselves as Christians affiliated to one of the many Christian denominations within the country, yet other faiths, such as Judaism, Islam, and indigenous traditional beliefs are also practiced freely, in part even parallel to Christianity.

Namibia's official language is English, while more than 6 indigenous languages are also taught in school and over 30 different Bantu, Khoisan, and Indo-European languages are spoken in the various parts of the country. This also reflects Namibia's cultural diversity with more than 11 different ethnic groups, each of them with various

subgroups and their own cultures, that are nowadays more and more honored and celebrated during cultural festivals and national events.

Politically, Namibia officially gained its independence in 1990, and is a member state of the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the Commonwealth of Nations. Its currency is the Namibian Dollar (N\$), which is linked to the South African Rand for various reasons, including the countries' shared history. In fact, there are many similarities between the South African and Namibian situation (e.g., the suffering of the majority of both countries' population under colonialism and later the apartheid regime, their diplomatic and armed struggle for independence, and also a still fairly strong influence of major South African companies on Namibia's economy). The main contributors to Namibia's gross domestic product are tourism, mining, fishing, and agriculture, especially meat and crop production. (Worldbank, 2013)

Yet, access to the country's economic resources is far from equally distributed (Hon. Minister Schlettwein as cited in Van den Bosch, 2013; Worldbank, 2013). Although there has been a huge shift in term of political power after Independence, substantial wealth and influence is still in white hands and with the majority of Namibians still living with few economic privileges. According to the Gini-coefficient, a renowned measuring tool for economic inequality determining the gap between a country's rich and poor, Namibia has been the country with the most unequal distribution of wealth, although there has been slight improvement over the last couple of years (Brown, 2011). In addition to the disparities in income distribution, Namibia's unemployment rate<sup>10</sup> "has remained extremely high for decades" (Worldbank, 2013),

---

<sup>10</sup> Depending on varying statistical information available over the years, the unemployment rate ranges from 37.6% (Source: Central Bureau of Statistics) to 51.2% (Source: Namibia Labor Force Survey).

although this might not appropriately reflect and acknowledge the country's high number of traditional subsistence farmers in rural areas.

Hence, Namibia can truly be referred to as 'the land of contrasts', not only in terms of its natural but also with regard to its socioeconomic landscape.

**Historical background.** This section first provides a brief insight into the country's history, followed by reflections on how occurring conflicts have been predominantly dealt with. Although Namibia<sup>11</sup> was one of the last colonized territories on the African continent, the experiences during both colonialism<sup>12</sup> and the then following apartheid era seem to have had a huge and still prevailing impact on how conflict is being perceived and handled in Namibia today.

**Pre-colonial times.** Rock paintings and findings of human remains date back to at least 27,000 BCE and suggest that the San or Khoesan tribes, living as nomadic hunters and gatherers, were the original inhabitants of the area known today as Namibia. About 2,000 years ago the #Nu-Khoen (Daman or Damara) and Khoe (Nama), moved in and started inhabiting mainly the central parts of Namibia. They followed a pastoral nomadic lifestyle (i.e., herding livestock by following irregular movement patterns to find fresh pastures on which to graze), until "the first contact with Europeans [...] led to a collapse of nomadic pastoralism" (Dierks, 1999).

It was also around that time when some of the Bantu tribes originating from Central Africa, such as the Ovambo and Herero, moved further down South into Namibia. While the Ovambo tribes settled down as agriculturalists in the North-West,

---

<sup>11</sup> Here "Namibia" refers to the territory known as Namibia today, although it did not exist under this name until 1968. Hence, this term is used as "a mere geographical expression" (Meredith, 2006, p. 8).

<sup>12</sup> Most historic records from this period stem from German administrators and missionaries, as well as from letters exchanged between the local European and the indigenous leaders at the time, while a vast amount of oral history, describing various events from indigenous perspectives, does still exist yet until now only few steps were undertaken to have these underrepresented and marginalized voices heard, for example in the form of oral history projects, such as *What the Elders used to say* (Erichsen, 2008).

the primarily nomadic and cattle-herding Ovaherero moved further down into the central areas of Namibia. Other Bantu tribes were settling in Namibia's North-East, next to some Khoesan groups and tribes that were already living in that area.

By that time already, tensions, conflicts, and even violent clashes among these different tribes sporadically occurred, mainly about grazing rights and territories but also about power and influence. Some of the roots of still existing prejudices against other tribes, as well as feelings of superiority (e.g., from Bantu tribes towards the San people) might go back to these times (Nakale, 2007, pp. 15-18; see also Gordon, 1992, Skotnes, 1996).

*European settlers and missionaries.* The first Europeans on Namibian soil were Portuguese sailors who only briefly landed at Namibian coasts in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century and did not settle. In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, the area around the strategically important deep-water harbor of Walvisbay became controlled by the authorities of the Cape Colony [South Africa], yet they also did not move much further into the land itself. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, a first group of British missionaries from the Cape Colony started moving into Southern Namibia, followed later by German missionaries who, together with Finnish Evangelists, also expanded their missionary activities into the Central and Northern parts of the country.

The various missionaries introduced and spread Christianity as a new way of spiritual worship to the various indigenous tribes. They helped in changing traditions that were regarded as violent and cruel, such as the common practice among the Ovambo tribes of burning girls alive when they became pregnant before being married or having undergone certain initiation ceremonies. However, the missionaries also often pushed their own agenda in often subtle and manipulative ways, thus eradicating many other aspects of traditional beliefs, rituals, and culture, which by now have almost

become forgotten or extinct. The missionaries thus played a crucial role in the process of colonizing by introducing western social, cultural, political, religious, economic worldviews, which have become the mainstream in nowadays Namibia.

Missionaries were then soon followed by mainly German traders, soldiers, and settlers, who started acquiring the first pieces of land from local chiefs, paying them money, guns, and alcohol; sometimes under pressure or under clearly fraudulent conditions<sup>13</sup>. This concept of ownership and selling of land was "unheard of in the African context," (Bishop Kameta as cited in Von Wietersheim, 2007, p. 188) which in effect caused many indigenous people to be "removed from the land and divorced from their ancestors" (Kameta, p. 188).

***German colonial rule.*** Rising tensions over power and influence often lead to violence and even wars, not only amongst some of the tribes themselves but also between the indigenous population and Europeans (Heywood, 1996), and even among the European Nations themselves. It was then during the "Scramble for Africa" and the Berlin Conference in 1884-85, that European statesmen and diplomats bargained over their spheres of interest on the entire African continent. Although they knew Africa more as a coastline than a continent, with large parts being described as *terra incognita*, they geometrically "marked out the boundaries of their new territories with straight lines on the map, taking little or no account of the myriad of monarchies, chiefdoms and other African societies on the ground" (Meredith, 2006, p. 1). This made Europe's new colonial territories enclose "hundreds of diverse and independent groups with no common history, culture, language, or religion" (Meredith, 2006, p. 1).

---

<sup>13</sup> Heinrich Vogelsang, the emissary of the German trader Adolf Luederitz, deliberately used the unit of geographical miles (=24,320 feet) in lieu of ordinary miles (=5,280 feet), knowing that Nama Captain Joseph Frederiks II [!Korebeb-||Naixab] was only familiar with the ordinary mile, which made the acquired land more than four times larger than what the Captain had bargained for (Niemeyer, 2010, p. 16; see also Dierks, 1999)

In this way, a territory known as German South-West Africa was created, with a small strip of land in the North-East being cut off from its natural sociocultural environment and added to the German colony.<sup>14</sup> At least 10 different ethnic groups [each with various subgroups with regard to language, culture and leadership structure] lived under German administration and colonial rule in this newly demarcated territory. Most Europeans settled in the central areas, where they got into an increasing number of conflicts with particularly Herero, Nama, Damara, and Baster groups and their respective leaders (Heywood, 1996), as well as with Namibia's original inhabitants the San people, who by that time were already marginalized, oppressed, and - under the derogatory term 'bushmen' - often treated like game (Erichsen, 2008, p. 7). During that time most ethnic groups in the Northern parts of the territory, such as the Ovambo, were less affected by the impact of colonialism.

The tragic culmination point of German colonial rule came when the Herero and the Nama officially took up arms against the Germans, following an increased number of settlers arriving between 1900 and 1903 which had led to more and more frictions over land, water, and grazing rights (Erichsen, 2008). From 1904 until 1908 the German military response to the uprising annihilated more than three quarters of the Herero people and half of the Nama people (Gewald, 1999; Meredith, 2006). Thousands of indigenous people who survived the battlefield, including women and children, were sent into concentration camps, served as sex slaves, were forced to work for the colonial government and German trading companies, and had to participate in so-called scientific experiments to 'prove' theories of racial superiority and included the transport

---

<sup>14</sup> The German's intentions were to establish direct trading routes to Tanzania [their colony in East Africa], hence they stroke a deal with the British and exchanged this strip of land for Helgoland [a small island in the North Sea]. It was then named after their lead negotiator, the German Chancellor Count Leo von Caprivi.

of skulls and other human remains to Germany.<sup>15</sup> These 'scientific findings' later served as the foundation of the Nazi's racial ideology and atrocities (Olusoga, 2010). Due to the extreme decimation in numbers, particularly through the "extermination order" [German: "Vernichtungsbefehl"] (Gewald, 1999, p. 273) given by German General von Trotha<sup>16</sup> against the Herero people during the battle at the Waterberg Plateau in October 1904, a growing number of historians describe these events as genocide.<sup>17</sup>

***South African occupation and resistance.*** During the first year of World War I, the German troops in South West Africa (SWA) were defeated by British and South African forces. After the war, the League of Nations - the predecessor of the United Nations (UN) - then officially gave the mandate to administer the territory to South Africa.

In 1946, this mandate was then officially revoked by the UN, but South Africa objected and refused to comply. Instead, South Africa introduced its infamous Apartheid system<sup>18</sup> also in SWA in 1951. The Odendaal Plan, in 1964, then cemented the racial segregation and increased tribal tensions by establishing 10 separate homelands for the main ethnic groups under limited self-administration by local and traditional chiefs. This also affected black people living in urban areas as the nonwhite

---

<sup>15</sup> The return of these skulls to Namibian soil is still of utmost importance for descendants of the Hereros and Namas, whose spiritual beliefs are strongly connected to their ancestors' spirits and their remains being properly laid to rest. However, it is questionable whether the German Government of today has already developed sufficient intercultural awareness on how to address this highly sensitive issue, which otherwise leads to an escalation of already existing tensions. (Melber, 2013; Matundu-Tjiparoru, 2013)

<sup>16</sup> In August 1904, the German Emperor replaced Major Leutwein with General Lothar von Trotha, a man notorious for brutality who had already fiercely suppressed African resistance to German colonialism in East Africa and who said, "I wipe out rebellious tribes with streams of blood and streams of money. Only following this cleansing can something new emerge" (Peace Pledge Union, 2013).

<sup>17</sup> Up until today Germany officially seeks to avoid the term 'genocide', which is part of the unresolved conflict between the victims' descendants and the German Government as well as Namibians of German descent. However, the atrocities committed and the ongoing process of reconciliation process between Germany and the affected tribes is of such a complexity, that it can only be touched on in this thesis.

<sup>18</sup> The South African Boers/Afrikaner, who themselves suffered in British concentration camps (Meredith, 2006: 4), invented this form of systemic oppression under the disguise of "separate development" for different ethnic groups, while it in fact led to severe exploitation of nonwhites.

townships had demarcated "locations" for certain groups only. In addition, introducing the highly discriminatory Bantu Education System<sup>19</sup> widened the gap between black and white for generations to come.

In response to the systemic oppression - building on years of underground activities from churches, student organizations, and trade unions - the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO) was founded in 1960, and became a strong force towards the country's liberation. SWAPO initially used means of diplomacy and civil disobedience, but turned later - with support from independent African states, as well as communist countries such as Cuba, Russia, and East Germany - to military tactics, primarily operating from outside SWA through their military wing, the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN).

In 1966, the United Nations (UN) officially ended the South African mandate, making South West Africa to fall legally under direct administrative responsibility of the UN, yet the South African Government ignored this decision again, and they responded with force to what they called a terrorist movement inside 'their' country with raids, arrests, detention, deportation, torture, and military action. A paramilitary-trained counter insurgency police unit, called 'Koevoet' (Afrikaans for 'Crowbar') whose recruits were mostly black policemen led by white officers, played a crucial and brutal role during these years of armed struggle. The Northern part of the country, an area called Ovamboland, was most severely affected, and Koevoet became widely feared and was notorious for committing acts of brutality against civilians. But also within SWAPO - the country's major liberation movement - detention, torture, and

---

<sup>19</sup> A racially segregated system designed, explicitly and without reservation, to keep blacks subservient to whites, and to provide them with a vastly inferior education, as they should be solely educated for the unskilled labor market: "There is no place for [the Bantu] in the European community above the level of certain forms of labor ... What is the use of teaching the Bantu child mathematics when it cannot use it in practice?" - Hendrik Verwoerd (then South African Prime Minister), as quoted in Clark (2011).

disappearing were means used against suspected traitors. However, mentioning this was often met with resistance and "a wall of silence," up until today. (Groth, 1996; Toetemeyer, 2010).

Demonstrations, strikes, and the armed struggle within Namibia, as well as local and international diplomatic activities continued and lead to an increased pressure against the South African Government. The UN, besides having officially changed the country's name from South-West Africa to Namibia already in 1968, officially supported the liberation struggle (e.g., by financing education for Namibians in exile).

In 1978, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 435 which set out proposals for cease-fire agreements and UN-supervised elections. During these transitional years, the government structures within SWA started to include representatives from nonwhite and anti-apartheid groups, which already effected some positive changes regarding the segregation policies. However, key decision making powers still strongly remained in the hands of the SA Government, and also the more radical SWAPO was excluded and also did not want to participate in elections held in the late 1970s and early 1980s, as well as in the Transitional Government of National Unity.<sup>20</sup>

***Namibia's independence.*** After more than 23 years of armed struggle, countless diplomatic efforts from inside and outside the country, and the implementation of cease-fire agreements and demobilization of special units like Koevoet, the first free elections under UN-supervision took place in November 1989. SWAPO won these elections with 57.3%, while six other political parties also won seats in the Constitutional Assembly.

---

<sup>20</sup> There were also huge tensions within the various groups of Namibia's independence movement around the question of how independence should be achieved, and how far collaboration with SA is acceptable. Part of these tensions are still felt today between the ruling SWAPO party and the opposition parties, most of which were part of the pre-independence Transitional Government. (Hopwood, 2004; Koetze & Lang, 1993)

On 9 February 1990, Namibia's Constitution was adopted, establishing the country as a "sovereign, secular, democratic and unitary State founded upon the principles of democracy, the rule of law and justice for all" (Republic of Namibia, 1990). SWAPO's president and veteran leader Sam Nujoma was sworn in as Namibia's first president on 21 March 1990, which was then declared Namibia's Independence Day. In the first years after independence a number of crucial issues were addressed, such as the Reform of the Education System<sup>21</sup> and the Land Reform<sup>22</sup>, as first attempts to deal with the enormous imbalances and injustices from the country's history.

**Addressing historic injustices.** Namibia's history, particularly during colonial times and the Apartheid era, was characterized by oppression, forced segregation of people and cultures, and other painful experiences, that caused huge tensions and division which are still felt today. This section provides an overview of how these historic injustices have been addressed so far.

**Colonial wounds.** Over the last decades, several attempts were made to address Namibia's colonial past. For several decades, affected Herero and Nama groups were trying to enter into dialogue with the German government. After many failed attempts (Romanowsky, 2009) a concerned group of Hereros eventually tried to sue the German government for reparations in order to make the German authorities listen to them, acknowledge wrongdoings of the past, and to negotiate fair compensation (Frederick, 2009). Even though the lawsuit was dismissed for legal reasons, the German

---

<sup>21</sup> Education is one of the major ongoing challenges for post-apartheid Namibia because of the damage that the infamous Bantu education system had caused and cannot be easily overcome within a few years/decades.

<sup>22</sup> As the "pattern of land ownership and access to land, which was inherited from our colonial past history, created fundamental problems" (Katjavivi, 2006), a National Conference on Land Reform took place in 1991. Amongst other resolutions being taken, it was decided that land will be transferred to the landless majority under the constitutional premise of just compensation, as well as that no ancestral land claims could be made. Yet, despite various efforts, progress on land reform has been rather slow, which is up to today an issue of concern for many Namibians, which repeatedly causes tensions and often heated formal and informal debates.

government started to slowly open up towards official dialogue, especially after its former Minister of Economic Development and Cooperation, Ms. Wiezoreck-Zeul in 2004 (during the 100-year commemoration of what can be referred to as genocide) offered an apology for the atrocities in her personal capacity (Romanowsky, 2009). Although the minister was given no official mandate for such an apology by the German government, the Federal Republic of Germany afterwards committed itself to a "Special Initiative" that supports cultural and infrastructure projects, and decided to allocate 20 Million Euro for specific development projects for the affected communities. However, the fact that this amount was unilaterally decided, the lack of an official apology and dialogue, and the facts that human remains of Hereros and Namas were still being held in German museums, left many of the affected groups unsatisfied with the process. This was, for example, expressed in a statement by Edwin Kanguatjivi, spokesperson for the Herero Genocide Committee 1904: "The Herero people shall not be fooled by hypocritical apologies, nor shall they allow their leaders to be treated as minors" (IRIN, 2005). Hence, a number of existing Genocide Committees are still trying to work towards more dialogue, acknowledgement, repatriation of skulls, and reparations, while the Namibian government as official development partner is also involved, for example, through the recently established parliamentary commission for bilateral dialogue. (Nashuuta, 2013)

***Apartheid and struggle for independence.*** Although Apartheid and the struggle for independence left many physical and emotional scars (Lebeau, 2005), there was little effort to address these wounds so far, besides the above mentioned "Policy of Reconciliation", and the integration of former combatants into the armed services, such as the military and the police. Over the past 24 years, a number of monuments and commemoration sites (including a recent and relatively controversial independence

museum) have been built, streets have been renamed, a number of books have been written, and one movie, *Namibia - The Struggle for Liberation* (2007), has been produced in remembrance of the years of struggle, often from the perspective of the main liberation movement and ruling party, SWAPO.

In 1996, a nongovernment organization called Breaking the Walls of Silence, named after the Lutheran pastor Siegfried Groth's (1996) book *Namibia - The Wall of Silence*, was formed to address the plight of ex-detainees who were imprisoned and tortured by their SWAPO comrades during the liberation struggle. However, this initiative did not receive much support from the SWAPO Government up until today, and it did not yet achieve the open dialogue, answers to their questions, and the accountability it was looking for.

Since 1999, the PEACE Centre in Windhoek (<http://www.peace.org.na>) provides voluntary counseling and assistance for victims of violence, including war veterans. Research they conducted on the psychosocial support of ex-fighters has shown the existence of a severe need to deal with traumatic war-experiences (Lebau, 2005). In 2006, the Ministry of Veterans' Affairs came eventually into existence, as "the time has come to create a central focal point where the needs of all war veterans could be addressed in a holistic manner" (Pohamba, 2006). A rather lengthy and still ongoing process of registering and vetting eligible veterans then almost opened old wounds when former SWATF/Koevoet soldiers (who fought on the side of the Apartheid regime against the liberation movement) also asked for recognition and compensation, which eventually was clearly denied (Ntinda, 2009). The ministry then started building houses and providing financial support for recognized veterans. In 2011, the decision was taken to initiate a pilot survey by the Council of Churches on veterans' psychosocial needs, which was carried out to identify issues of trauma and other psychological needs

(Paulus, 2012). In response to this survey, the Ministry of Veterans' Affairs started offering individual psychological counseling for war veterans.

In 2011, the Namibian Government also launched an initiative called "My Namibia, My Country, My Pride", a motivational campaign to instill national pride among Namibians, which primarily relies on cultural events, speeches and distribution of information material. However, its effectiveness with regard to genuine nation building is met with open criticism because it doesn't seem to invite open dialogue and address underlying root causes (Hengari, 2011). Overall, it can be concluded that only few and rather isolated efforts have so far been undertaken to address the painful history of Apartheid and the times of the liberation struggle.

*Differences between Namibia and South Africa.* Although there are huge similarities and a great deal of shared history between Namibia and South Africa, there are also distinctive differences between these two neighboring countries, especially when it comes to their respective transition from Apartheid to Independence. From 1994, under the political and spiritual leadership of President Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, South Africa engaged in a countrywide restorative justice process attempting to deal with past injustices through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (1995 - 1998); Namibia, 4 years earlier in 1990 under its first President Sam Nujoma, opted for what is called the 'Policy of National Reconciliation'. With this policy a general amnesty was issued for those who had fought on either side of the liberation war. Hence, everybody was asked to leave the past behind, forgive each other, and focus on the joint road ahead in order to achieve "peace and stability" (Pohamba, 2012) without going into any details of what had happened in the past. This is also expressed by Namibia's first Prime Minister, Hage Geingob (1999), who said that the

struggle was about peace. We, therefore, upon achieving independence, adopted a policy of national reconciliation. We said we had a bitter past, we hated each other, but after independence we should hold hands. We should live together and forget the past and forge ahead, because we all belong to Namibia and must do what we have to do to live in peace.

Although such a step was probably important for the sake of nation building at the time of the country's independence, yet there was no facilitated process - such as the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission - to deliberately deal with the deeply ingrained emotional burdens of the past. However, the need for processing of past events and the respective memories thereof, becomes visible through a number of individuals and institutions - such as churches, civil society organizations and opposition parties - who repeatedly and continuing today request the various aspects of the country's painful history to be addressed more deeply in a healing manner.

Similar to the situation in South Africa, where many critics say that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has had only limited success, Namibia's crime rates for violent crimes, such as murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, are extremely high (Winslow, 2002). This seems to be an additional indicator for past experiences of violence not having been processed, but rather being manifest in different shape and form. However, one significant difference from South Africa is that Namibia is often experienced and described as more quiet and peaceful. The genuineness of this perceived peace and quiet is further discussed in Chapter 3 under "Working with hotspots".

### **Ways of Dealing with Conflict in Namibia**

This section looks into major ways and patterns of dealing with conflict in past and present Namibia. The aim is to hereby assess which ways of conflict handling are

more known (i.e., primary process<sup>23</sup>) and how far a facilitative approach to dealing with conflict would be more unknown and less familiar (i.e., secondary process).

### **Historic conflict handling patterns.**

*Indigenous and traditions.* Although there is not much specific literature on indigenous ways of handling conflict and disputes and conflict in the various pre-colonial Namibian cultures, consultative inquiries and research by Hinz (1998) and findings from Polytechnic of Namibia students over the last 5 years (Schernick, 2013) show that each tribe had their own established ways of dealing with internal conflict and disputes. The clear pattern that emerges among almost all the tribes is that the hierarchical and patriarchal leadership structures were tasked with dealing with the various kinds of disputes arising. At first the local headman, in the presence of male village elders and spiritual leaders, called the disputants together to hear all sides of the story including witnesses, before he made a decision on the case. When one party to the conflict was not satisfied with the outcome, he could take it to the next higher level of tribal authority, up to the king or paramount leader of the respective tribe.

Rulings were always made by the traditional authority, comparable to modern-day arbitration, and involved some kind of punishment for the guilty party and compensation for the victim. In addition, the offender often had to pay a small amount of livestock to the respective traditional leader as a kind of administrative fee. Although punishment often involved physical violence in form of the guilty party being whipped or beaten in front of village or community members, emphasis was given on relational aspects when it came to issues of compensation. For example, when somebody was

---

<sup>23</sup> In Process Work terminology, an individual's or group's primary process refers to what is known to them and what they usually identify with (i.e., this is who we are and how we do things). The term "secondary process" is used to describe something that is not (yet) consciously part of the individual's or group's identity, and it often shows up in disturbing experiences (i.e., "disturbers") or something that the individual or group aspires to be or feels attracted towards (i.e., "attractors").

found guilty of killing somebody, the payment of 12 heads of cattle was not allowed to happen once-off but needed to happen over time, in order to allow for relationship between the affected families to heal.

Conflict between tribal groups was initially tried to be resolved by diplomatic means or, if these efforts didn't lead to satisfactory results, then by violent means or even warfare, including members of the defeated tribe being taken as slaves.

***Colonialism and Apartheid.*** The last hundred years of Namibia's history was anything but free from conflict and violent oppression. Following rather open and direct precolonial disputes and fights among some of the indigenous tribes much more indirect (i.e., structural and cultural forms of violence<sup>24</sup>) were introduced by the predominantly German colonizers, as their perceptions of themselves and their cultural, political, spiritual, and socioeconomic systems and values were regarded superior to those of the indigenous population. They acquired huge portions of land, partially by manipulative, fraudulent, and even physically violent means, making the question of land use and ownership in Namibia one of the biggest areas of conflict up to today (Brankamp, 2012).

The use of violence as a means to deal with existing conflicts and differences between the colonizers and the indigenous population peaked with the atrocities committed by German forces against the Ovaherero and Nama in the early 20th century. Historical evidence in the form of military orders, official letters and diary entries<sup>25</sup>, as

---

<sup>24</sup> Prof. Johan Galtung introduced these concepts, stating that "Structural Violence exists when some groups, classes, genders, nationalities, etc are assumed to have, and in fact do have, more access to goods, resources, and opportunities than other groups, classes, genders, nationalities, etc, and this unequal advantage is built into the very social, political and economic systems that govern societies, states and the world" (2004). Cultural Violence refers to attitudes and belief systems that put down or exclude a certain group of people and is often based on unjust, unfair and unbalanced mental concepts and beliefs, for example when aspects of a culture are used to legitimize violence in either its direct or structural form.

<sup>25</sup> One of the German soldiers describes in his diary for this day a scene from the battle of Hamakari in 1904 where he reflects on the horrors of war and of a wounded Ovaherero child lying next to his

well as proof of concentration camps that were set up, points towards a racially motivated<sup>26</sup> genocide having taken place in Namibia under German colonial rule.

Overall, the colonialists' own beliefs and perceptions that they were of a superior race and culture, tasked to bring so-called 'civilization' to Africa, made it extremely difficult to acknowledge and appreciate indigenous cultures and worldviews. This, together with a lack of dialogue as equals, can be seen as some of the main root causes for the violent conflict, as well as for discrimination and oppression following. The use of force and manipulation seems to have been a very known and the predominant way of handling conflict, especially in the interactions between the indigenous population and the European settlers. This continued and even escalated during the South African occupation through the Apartheid system, and also found expression in how crime was being dealt with (i.e., in very strict and punitive ways, including the death penalty). However, in both colonial times and the Apartheid era, various attempts were made by specific groups and individuals who - although often not in a position of great power or influence - tried to address and resolve existing conflict by means of communication and diplomacy, which should not be marginalized.

Great historic examples of those who were trying to facilitate conflicts in ways that enabled all sides to listen and understand each other, would be Captain Hendrick Wittbooi or Chief Hosea Kutako. Wittbooi was the Leader of the Namas during colonial times, and his letters (as documented in Heywood, 1996) to Colonial leaders, traders,

---

cannon: " ... the little worm had flung his arm around the wheel of the cannon, which had possibly destroyed his other family members ... we had been explicitly told beforehand, that this dealt with the extermination of a whole tribe, nothing living was to be spared." (Dierks, 1999). Prior to this particular battle, the commander of the German troops, General von Trotha wrote in a letter "I believe that the (Herero) nation as such should be annihilated, or, if this was not possible by tactical measures, have to be expelled from the country." (Mamdani, 2001, p.11)

<sup>26</sup> For instance, one of the letters from German settlers to the colonial authorities in Berlin reads: "From time immemorial our natives have been used to laziness, brutality and stupidity. The dirtier they are the more they feel at ease. Any white men who have lived among natives find it almost impossible to regard them as human beings at all in any European sense. They need centuries of training as human beings; with endless patience, strictness and justice." (Dierks, 1999)

other tribal leaders and to his own people, show incredible skill and metaskills, and a deeply acknowledging attitude towards "the other side," while at the same time being precise when naming and framing relevant issues and conflicts. Similarly, Chief Hosea Kutako used great communication and facilitation skills inside and outside the country (i.e., at the United Nations, where the petitions he coauthored played a significant role in Namibia's diplomatic struggles for independence).

### **Contemporary ways of handling conflicts.**

*Customary laws.* Given Namibia's rich and diverse cultural traditions, which even under German and South African rule were allowed a certain degree of self-determination, it is important to note that indigenous ways of conflict handling through traditional courts are officially acknowledged by the Namibian Government (Hinz, 1998 & 2010; Republic of Namibia, 2000 & 2003). In most rural areas traditional or community courts exist parallel to and are used instead of or in addition to the mainstream Roman-Dutch law court system.

In this parallel court system the traditional leaders act as arbitrators in accordance with predominantly oral laws and customs, similarly to how conflicts were handled historically, ensuring that the conflicting parties come together, that the offender is punished, and that the victim receives compensation (Hinz, 1998 & 2010). However, in contrast to earlier practices, all punishment needs to be in accordance with the constitution (i.e., neither the death penalty nor any form of corporal punishment is allowed anymore).

Although such customary laws and practices offer more direct dialogue between the parties involved than the criminal or civil court system, the manner in which decisions are made is often rather authoritarian and still based on a very patriarchal cultural understanding. It offers little space for emotional hurts to be shared or for

conflicting parties to develop solutions by themselves. For instance, in some traditions a rape offender is merely sentenced to pay a number of cattle as compensation to the victim's family, or someone who impregnates an unmarried girl is only asked to pay a fine of N\$ 1.200 (US\$ 120) without any further legal or social obligations (Schwarz, 2003).

***Criminal justice system.*** The current approach to conflict within the Namibian Criminal Justice System is still rather punitive or even revengeful, as pointed out by Schulz and Hamutenya (2003, p. 2):

The current Namibian Criminal Justice System [...] is firmly based on the notion of retributive justice. It reflects a moralizing, though individualistic world view, where for purposes of coercion and conformity the deviant actor is perceived as independent author of his/her actions [...]. If a rule has been contravened, the balance of the scale of justice has been disturbed and can be restored only if the offender is punished.

Only recently some reformative laws, such as the Correctional Service Act, Act No. 9 of 2012, have been passed and relevant ministries and institutions, such as the Namibia Correctional Services, started shifting their focus towards rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders (Thomas, 2013). However, Restorative Justice, as described and advocated by researchers and practitioners like Zehr (2005), in which the offender is enabled to directly address the harm that was done and to work on restoring broken relationships with the victims and the community at large, still remains a largely unknown concept.

The response to crime and violent conflict from the side of law enforcement agencies is also undergoing changes. The Namibian Police and the Windhoek City Police have recently introduced the concept of community policing, hereby involving more and more community members into their fight against violence and crime, for example through the 'Women and Men Network against Crime'. However, so far these

approaches merely aim to "assist the Police in identifying criminals, reporting crime and tipping off the Police to ensure that no crime goes undetected and all culprits are brought to book" (Hilukilwa, 2011) and fall short of actually providing alternative ways for addressing these conflicts (e.g. ,by means of facilitating dialogue among the conflicting parties in order to find/address the root causes of the respective conflict and to work on rebuilding broken relationships).

Overall, it is evident that Namibia is officially transitioning from a purely punitive criminal justice system towards a more rehabilitative and participatory one. Yet, this is a rather slow process which currently has little focus on relational and restorative elements.

*Civil court system.* According to Ford, a similar kind of thinking prevails in Namibia's civil court system. For instance, Namibia's current divorce law is inherited from South Africa and prescribes cumbersome and outdated procedures, such as one of the parties having to be "at fault" and guilty of either "adultery, malicious desertion (which includes constructive desertion), life imprisonment, insanity, [or] the imprisonment of a habitual criminal for five years" (Ford, 1999, p.5). This approach does not do justice to the relational dynamics involved in divorce situations, as the break-down of long-term love relationships is usually much too complex as to assign all the blame on only one person. An additional problem with the existing law is "that it is almost impossible for couples to get divorced without the help of lawyers, even if they are both in agreement about how to divide the property and take care of the children. This makes divorces expensive" (Hubbard, 2005, p. 1).

Plans to change this law and to include divorce mediation have been in the pipeline for more than a decade without much progress, although comprehensive studies with interviews and focus group discussions show that Namibians are overwhelmingly

in support of a new legislation. It is interesting to note that many see similarities with traditional ways of resolving conflict, yet strongly caution about the negative influences of the strong patriarchal cultures that exist within Namibia:

The wide use of dialogue by extended family to resolve differences in accordance with African tradition indicates a cultural norm which is supportive to the introduction of divorce mediation. Of course, the flip side of the tradition of family involvement is the extent to which oppressive values are used as reference points for the settlement of cases, particularly around the issue of gender roles. [...] concerns about trust and confidentiality were also raised. (Hubbard 2000, p. 158)

*Alternative Dispute Resolution.* Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) is a term used to refer to "various approaches for resolving disputes in a non-confrontational way" (Shamir, 2003, p. 1). Although increasingly popular and effective in many countries and contexts around the globe, concepts and practices of ADR are rarely to be found in Namibia. Besides the partial similarities between ADR and customary law and practices in rural areas, Namibia's legal system predominantly prescribes rather formal and complex procedures to be followed. This often necessitates the involvement of courts and lawyers, and not only makes attempts to finding a solution very costly and time-consuming, but relying on mere legal avenues also marginalizes or even damages social and relational aspects of the initially existing conflicts. In addition, ADR researchers and practitioners, such as Brown, Cervenac and Fairman (1998, pp. 9-20); Ford (1999); Bedrick (2012, pp. 50-60); and Owasanoye (2001), point out that purely legal solutions tend to create seemingly successful short-term settlements, while the underlying conflict itself remains unaddressed and might get even worse.

The only area in which ADR has officially gained momentum is labor disputes. The Namibian Labor Act of 2007 makes it now compulsory for everybody involved in labor related disputes to seek mediation and if necessary arbitration first before courts

may be approached (Republic of Namibia, 2007: Chapter 8). However, the implementation of this relatively new act has not yet had a huge positive impact on the handling of labor disputes in Namibia, as becomes visible through the recent wave of long and costly strikes in 2011/12 or repeatedly appearing articles in daily newspapers on unresolved labor-related disputes.

One reason for the lack of immediate success of ADR in Namibia, according to a number of lecturers and arbitrators with whom I had personal conversations with over the last few years, is that many conciliators and arbitrators from the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare received their training only through studies at the University of Namibia. Most lecturers there come from legal professions with little to no social-psychological background which would enable them to focus more on the social and intrapersonal relationship dynamics within conflict situations. In addition, the huge number of students per intake for these degree and certificate programs does not allow for much practical forms of training.

The Professional Arbitration and Mediation Association of Namibia (PAMAN) was established in 2003 "to promote alternative dispute resolution as an equitable, just and efficient means of resolving disputes to the broader public, render private arbitration and mediation services, train arbitrators, mediators and facilitators, and promote socio-economic development in Namibia" [PAMAN's Constitution]. It has been dormant for a number of years and was finally dissolved in mid 2013.

Based on the experience of Namibian consultant colleagues and my own experience as facilitator and consultant in the private sector and with parastatals, even internal workplace conflicts prior to the involvement of external conciliators or arbitrators are often not effectively handled. Most Namibian organizations still rely on very strict and often divisive internal procedures for handling conflict at the workplace

(i.e., disciplinary hearings and filing of complaints instead of trying mediation or other forms of facilitated communication between the affected parties). Hence, it is evident that ADR principles and practices are not well known in Namibia. Even the implementation of the New Labor Act has not yet had a strong influence on the rest of Namibian society in terms of promoting alternative and more collaborative ways of handling conflict.

*Society at large.* In addition to the traditional and legal system and at workplaces, there are other more general ways and approaches to handling conflict within the Namibian society at large (e.g., within schools, families, communities, churches, and among friends).

Based on newspaper reports, personal conversations, and own experiences over the last 9 years, I noticed the strong presence of a rather strict, authoritarian, and fear-based paradigm which dominates the ways in which conflicts are generally addressed and dealt with in both urban and rural areas. These findings are confirmed by essays from more than 300 students from the Polytechnic of Namibia (Schernick, 2013), who were tasked to interview family and/or community members on traditional and typical ways of dealing with conflict and to afterwards reflect on their findings. This authoritarian paradigm primarily becomes visible in the way children are raised and "taught their lessons" (i.e., through strict behavioral rules and corporal punishment in case of slightest disobediences [Hubbard, 2010]). In many households, especially in rural areas, children are not allowed to 'talk back' or even ask questions when an elder person is talking to them. If a child dares to speak up, this is regarded as a sign of misbehavior, disrespect, and disobedience. Corporal punishment is also still the norm in almost all families, in one way or another. In one extreme case, a 55 year old women burnt her two grandchildren on the lips with hot coals and then forced the coals into

their mouths, because they ate a piece of chicken without her permission (LAC, 2010). Resorting to such punitive behavior is often justified by the child "deserving" such punishment, by oneself having been brought up in such a way (and it hasn't done any obvious harm), or even a certain understanding of Christianity whereby the child would have to learn how to obey and fear God. Similar authoritarian patterns exist in Namibia's education system. Although corporal punishment is prohibited by law, many schools (mainly in rural areas) still practice this form of "discipline". Often students are hereby beaten for rather questionable reasons, for example, for merely asking the teacher a question that the teacher wasn't able to answer (Schernick, 2013). Sometimes teachers are even requested by the parents to do beat their children, because they want their children to behave and be "disciplined".

This points toward the great dilemma that many teachers and parents are facing. They are caught between either "being violent" or "doing nothing", as they have little to no other methods or skills available. So far, also little research has been conducted within Namibia to explore alternative ways of dealing with conflict (i.e., how conflict could be handled in ways that do not lead to violence [Endler, 2009]). Efforts from the Ministry of Education with support from organizations like the Legal Assistance Centre, currently focus merely on alternative ways of punishing but not yet much on alternatives to punishment (e.g., enhancing discipline and respect in much more facilitated, cooperative and relational ways).

This strong and persistent presence of violence as a means to deal with conflict is also strongly linked to fixed assumptions around gender roles in many Namibian cultures and traditions, that assign women a much lower rank and status than men (/Khaxas, 2010) or even objectify women (Mushaandja, 2012). Such assumptions are not only present in the older generation, but also in young people's minds, words and

actions, which contribute to the many incidents of violence. For instance, in almost all my yearly weekend-workshops with young aspiring leaders from the Youth Leadership Development Programmed (an initiative by the National Youth Council of Namibia), some of the young men in their mid-20s state that they, for example find it justified to beat a woman when she has burned food while cooking.<sup>27</sup> Broader quantitative and qualitative research, conducted by Van Rooi and other researchers from the University of Namibia in various prisons around the country, confirmed the correlation between existing cultural-based gender assumptions with men's violent behavior. Additional factors contributing to violent behavior were identified as "alcohol consumption, low levels of education, lack of employment, socio-economic marginalization, broken family systems, and poor socialization" (2006, p. xiii).

Even though there is a huge outcry and verbal response from Government, academic institutions, churches, civil society organizations and the general public, current activities to change this situation primarily focus on information and awareness raising campaigns, more research into the reasons behind gender-based violence, and calls for stricter punishments and longer prison sentences for the offenders. In addition, the Legal Assistance Centre offers free legal advice and support for marginalized groups and individuals, as well as advocacy and information around legal reform and people's rights. Lifeline/Childline offers counseling and training in counseling, as well as a free telephonic helpline for victims of violence, abuse and suicidal individuals. Also, organizations like Friendly Haven are now joined by Government in their efforts to establish women's shelters as temporary protection and support for victims or potential

---

<sup>27</sup> As facilitator I then support the group in becoming aware of the reaction that such statement (a "Hotspot", as explained on pp. 93) causes, which is often a great entry point for a deeper processing of gender-dynamics around conflict and violence and for reflecting on the power and rank that men traditionally hold in society.

victims of domestic violence, and there are a growing number of similar initiatives currently underway to address the phenomenon of violence.

However, none of these efforts is currently providing assistance in form of direct intervention or training on how to facilitate the actual conflict between victims of violence and the offenders, particularly with a focus on people's relationships. What is currently being implemented and advocated for is a "Protection Order", which officially forbids the offender to come closer than a certain distance to the victim or potential victim. This is merely a legal solution for a primarily social and relational problem.

The lack of facilitated support around the actual conflicts often leaves those having to deal with violent situations rather helpless and often silent towards their oppressor. Often the victims themselves even resort to some form of violent or authoritative behavior towards others in less powerful positions (e.g., ordering or demanding their children to do something), thus constellating the cycle of violence again and again. The huge problem with such repetition and recycling of unconscious violent behavior is also expressed by one of my Conflict Management students in his reflections, when he writes, "People are not requested to do things but our nation is used to the type of talking where people just demand. This demanding kind of talking is a type of talking where one is left with no choice but to do what they are told even if it is against their inner feelings." (Schernick, 2013). Various workshops, facilitated by myself or Namibian colleagues, have also shown the difficulties experienced by many Namibians, often based on their cultural upbringing, to acknowledge and allow feelings to come up, especially when these are feelings related to being perceived as weak.

Particularly when it comes to problems or conflict situations, "Just be strong!" is a very common advice among many Namibians across cultures and generations, which means to not show possible sign of weakness, and indicates how difficult it is to show

one's hurt or emotions and be vulnerable. In Process Work terms this mean that there is a strong edge<sup>28</sup> towards being vulnerable, which indicates a secondary process (i.e., something less known and potentially emerging) and therefore something that might actually be needed more. In support of this finding, Nigerian counselor and psychologist Moses Ikiugu in his essay on *Process-Oriented Psychology and African Cultures* (1992) points out that showing strong emotions in one's daily life was regarded as a taboo or a sign of weakness in many indigenous African cultures. However, there were particular ceremonies, such as celebrations, dances, and mourning rituals, which were places where strong emotions could deliberately be expressed and "all restrictions were momentarily lifted. This served to compensate for the strict cultural requirements to adhere to the collective primary process of being well behaved and following a strict code of moral behavior" (Ikiugu, 1992, p. 19).

The current ways of suppressing emotions on an interpersonal level (i.e., when people relate with each other) shows striking correlations with Namibia's "Policy of Reconciliation" and its underlying paradigm of "let's forget and move on". The inherent absence of showing feelings as a fundamental aspect of human relationship shows the level of work and focus on these aspects by any conflict facilitator interested in creating sustainable relations and community. Hence, a major question seems to be, "What ways of expressing underlying and suppressed emotions would be helpful and appropriate within the Namibian society today?" This is partially answered in Chapter 3, pp. 93-97.

**Conclusion.** Historical patterns of using of power, force, or authority to deal with differences seem to still have a major influence on patterns of handling conflict in Namibia today. Even when third parties get involved to help those in conflict to resolve

---

<sup>28</sup> An *edge* can be described as "...a point of contact between the everyday identity and an unknown or dreaming experience. It is the boundary between the primary process (everyday identity) and the secondary process (emergent identity)." (Diamond & Jones, 2005, p.126).

their disputes, they almost always makes a decision for the ones involved in a conflict by using the power and authority that is vested in them either by law or by their societal status (e.g., as traditional leader, teacher, or parent). The use of some kind of force is thus rather common and often accompanied by at least some kind of punishment for the wrongdoer. The most common alternative option is to remain silent and to not deal with the problem directly (e.g., by letting legal professionals deal with it) or to merely address them in rather superficial ways. The latter is, for example, visible in the country's way of dealing with its past by applying the 'Policy of National Reconciliation' and to "forgive, forget, and move on," without going deeper into the issues. It is also often visible in people's ways of dealing with day-to-day conflicts in their lives (e.g., in families or at workplaces) where people often avoid a possible confrontation or quickly compromise without fully expressing themselves or exploring the existing conflicts more deeply.

Handling conflict in ways that offer alternatives to these polarized approaches of either "being forceful/violent" and "doing nothing and move on" seem to be less known and practiced. This is where a facilitated approach, such as Process Work, might offer additional tools, skills, and perspectives to handle conflicts in more constructive and empowering ways, and this is also where Namibia, slowly but surely, seems to be heading (e.g., in terms of ongoing law reforms, handling of labor disputes in more alternative ways, establishing customary courts, finding new ways for dealing with issues around discipline at schools and in families, as well as exploring alternative and more effective ways for addressing the burning issue of gender-based violence).

## Process Work: Origins, Philosophy, and Application



Picture 1 - A sketch of some of the many aspects of Process Work

Source: <http://www.aamindell.net/category/processwork-theory-applications/what-is-processwork>

*Within what we call problems are paths we haven't yet explored.*

(Mindell, 2007, p. 6)

**Origins.** Process Work, also

known as Process Oriented Psychology, was initially developed by Dr. Arnold Mindell in the 1970s, after his studies in Physics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Psychology at the Jung Institute in Switzerland.

Mindell first worked with individual

clients making their dreams and body symptoms useful for their own process of healing and wholeness. His initial work then expanded to people in altered and extreme states of consciousness, such as coma and near-death, as well as into relationship issues and eventually into working with extreme conflicts in larger groups and whole organizations. Process Work, has its essential roots in ancient spiritual traditions, such as the Tao Te Ching and also African shamanism (Mindell 1991, p. xi), Jungian psychology, and modern Quantum Physics, and is based on very universal principles. However, it is within an ongoing process of development, hereby following its own evolutionary process in the various contexts in which it is being applied.

The theory and practice of Process Work is constantly changing, evolving and building on itself. Based around it is a learning community exploring these ideas and their applications. It is a dynamic model focused on the feedback of those using the model. Practitioners are constantly exploring and developing new ways in theory, effective application and transformation. (Schuitevoerder, 2000, p. 21)

Today, Arnold Mindell and his wife Amy (2013) describe Process Work as "an evolving, trans-disciplinary approach supporting individuals, relationships and organizations to discover themselves. [It] uses awareness to [...] illuminate and possibly resolve inner, relationship, team, and world issues."

**Philosophy and approach.** In essence, Process Work can be described as an awareness practice, as well as a way of transforming challenges in life by accurately following and genuinely trusting nature. Something that makes Process Work new and unique is that it "is a cross-disciplinary approach to individual and collective change" that "offers new ways of working with areas of life that are experienced as problematic or painful, [...] including those parts normally unseen, unappreciated, disturbing or marginalized" (RSPOPUK, 2013).

Instead of analyzing (i.e. inherently assuming one knows what is wrong or right) or prescribing a certain way of finding a solution, Schuitevoerder (2000) suggests that "the experience of an individual, couple or group is important and that the difficulties and challenges in life, once followed and unfolded, offer new insights and fresh perspectives to life's problems" (p. 21). This means that "within the very problem itself, once unfolded and developed, lies the meaning and at times the remedy to the difficulty" (p. 22). The main task for a Process Worker is therefore "to follow the course of the experience with awareness and openness, and to assist in the unfolding of this experience with respect and encouragement" (p. 22).

Hence, a typical Process Work way of working with an issue, would be to recognize, explore, unfold, and find meaning in each of our different experiences, even though our first reaction might be to fight or ignore them. Finding meaning and value in even the most disturbing experiences often results in the profound realization that "the other is me," (i.e., that what disturbs me in someone else's behavior on the outside, is in

actual fact a part of myself that wants to be more deeply explored and more integrated). This often provides helpful insights for individuals, groups and entire systems, so that they become more whole and increasingly aware of themselves, hereby allowing for more inclusive and positive change, as well as for genuine healing to occur. Besides regarding the disturbing experiences as potentially meaningful, another fundamental aspect of Process Work Philosophy is its constant attention to moment to moment interactions. Whatever shows up in the moment is part of the process, and potentially shows the way forward.

**Applications of Process Work.** Process Work offers a variety of helpful concepts, tools, skills, and metaskills<sup>29</sup> to increase awareness of oneself and others, and to work with such disturbances, including very challenging and even life-threatening experiences. Yet it is not based on rigid structure and intervention guidelines and procedures, but rather it is a very client-oriented and feedback-based system, allowing one to approach each individual situation in different ways. In this way, it is an empowering, interdisciplinary, and holistic way of dealing with social issues, conflict, and diversity on individual, relationship, group, and organizational levels.

The profound support Process Work offers for working with oneself and individuals is described in detail in *Alternatives to Therapy* by Amy Mindell (2006) or other works by Arnold Mindell (1985; 1987; 1991), Bedrick (2012), Diamond & Jones (2005), Goodbread (1987, 1997), and Reiss (2000, 2004a), while more emphasis on facilitating relationships, two-party conflict and group interaction is described in Audergon (2005), Menken (2001), Mindell (1989, 1995, 2002), and Reiss (2004b).

---

<sup>29</sup> Metaskills can be described as "...the feelings, attitudes, values and beliefs that deeply inform our way of working with others." (Diamond & Jones, 2005, p. 32)

For the past 10 years, Process Work has been increasingly applied to organizational systems and change processes. More specifically it is being utilized in the areas of leadership development, executive coaching, team work, organizational development consulting, and whole system changes.

#### Similarities and Differences to Other Approaches

Process Work, or Process-Oriented Psychology, is particularly different from other forms of psychology and individual work with clients. Mainstream psychology often pathologizes disturbances and tries to make them go away. This means that practitioners usually view or characterize something or someone as abnormal and treat the symptoms in order to fix the "patients" so that they then fit again into what is regarded by the majority within a particular society as "the norm".

Process Work, on the other hand, treats people and their symptoms differently by regarding everything as potentially meaningful. The focus is less on fixing or correcting but rather on co-creating awareness of where something or someone is stuck (i.e., at an edge - see footnote, p. 43), and helping them to unfold and discover the meaning of their disturbing experience (i.e., what is less known to them and therefore part of their secondary process - see footnote, p. 31). In order to explore symptoms and disturbances more deeply, Process Workers fluidly follow them as they present themselves through various "channels of experience", such as verbal, visual, proprioception<sup>30</sup>, movement, as well as relationship (e.g., interpersonal interactions) and world channels (e.g., synchronicities). Following a person's process through these channels by using signal awareness, often enables such person to gain a deeper

---

<sup>30</sup> Proprioception describes an inner body feeling, sensing and/or perceiving of one's own reality inside oneself. According to New World Encyclopedia contributors it is a "distinct sensory modality that provides feedback solely on the status of the body internally" (Proprioception, 2008).

understanding and insight about him or herself and what it is that is disturbing him or her. It is often the essence, the energy, or the deeper quality of the initial disturber that is actually useful for that particular person in that moment in his or her life. Finding ways to integrate these insights then forms the next step for that person, who was initially stuck, to come back into the flow of life. The fundamental difference is here that the initial disturber is not avoided, cut out, medicated away, or otherwise eliminated, but rather has in fact become an important teacher in terms of being a meaningful and integral part of the person's life.

An additional aspect is that from a Process Work perspective, an individual's social environment plays a significant role with regards to the person's disturbing symptoms and overall process, and vice versa. The symptoms that a person shows are often related to the people and culture around him or her, and processing a person's disturbing symptoms might carry important messages for others around him or her, and even the whole social system or culture they live in. For example, in Process-Oriented approach to therapy, a child's unusual loud and disturbing behavior may point towards the fact that its parents are suppressing their own playfulness by "trying to keep everything nice and tame" (Mindell, 2009, p.3).

These are some of the key aspects that make a Process-Oriented approach to individual work different from other approaches to therapy, counseling, coaching, or mentoring which are most commonly outcome-oriented and only focus on the individual who shows the symptoms and focus on getting rid of the disturbances.

### **Process-Oriented trauma work.**

*Trauma and its effects on individuals.* Trauma, in essence and as defined by Merriam-Webster (2013), is "a very difficult or unpleasant experience that causes

someone to have mental or emotional problems usually for a long time" (Trauma, n.d.). Renowned somatic trauma expert Dr. Peter Levine (1997, p. 24) elaborates that trauma can be caused by serious threats to one's life or physical, mental, or emotional integrity, and even serious harm experienced by those close to us, as well as other sudden life-changing experiences. The body hereby unconsciously perceives such events as threatening and responds with traumatic reactions, such as shock, helplessness, aggression, or denial. Levine explains that, "traumatic symptoms [...] stem from the frozen residue of energy that has not been resolved and discharged; this residue remains trapped in the nervous system where it can wreak havoc on our bodies and spirits" (Levine, 1997, p. 19).

This is clearly related to a Process Work perspective on trauma and working with trauma, as stated by Emetchi (2008, 5:28min):

When a person has a traumatic experience, they are overwhelmed, and rendered helpless by forces they cannot overcome or run away from. So, something gets caught in the moment of that experience, and something goes along in life. The effect of the past trauma in the present moment is a huge thing.

In other words, it means that "life goes on" and we continue to live our lives after traumatic incidents have occurred, yet there are severe after-effects that impact and influence our lives in the present moment. Some of the typical short term reactions, according to the American Psychological Association are "shock and denial", while the more "long term reactions include unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships and even physical symptoms" (Rowell & Thomley, 2013). A common diagnosis is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and is often described as "a response by normal people to an abnormal situation" (Smith & Segal, 2012).

Compared to many other approaches to therapeutic trauma work, a Process Work approach "goes beyond seeing the person at the receiving and of a traumatic

experience only as a victim, but relies on the inner resources of the person that are potentially transformative" (Buenger Baumgartner, 2011, p.iii). As further explained by Emetchi (2008), Process Work essentially supports the victim in an empowering way to pick up and integrate aspects of the disturber. However, the victim first of all needs to establish sufficient safety, stability, and inner balance in order to be able and ready to access the essence of the perpetrator's energy (i.e., the "disturber"). This does not mean to become similarly violent or aggressive but, for example means to become a bit more assertive or direct in his or her communication and interaction with others. Integrating different roles that are present within the field of a traumatic experience, as well as within the individual itself (such as "the victim", "the [uninvolved] bystander", "the [involved] witness", "the [often less represented] protector", and especially "the perpetrator"), a trauma survivor is able to reconnect to "the full range of his or her human experience and [becomes] able to enjoy life and take action needed to create her or his safety, as well as to engage fully in social life" (Buenger Baumgartner, 2011, p.45). A Process-Oriented approach can further support perpetrators in accessing the part of themselves where they emotionally experience themselves as victims, in order for them to then take full responsibility for their actions. Otherwise they will continue to channel their feelings of helplessness into aggression.

*Dealing with collective trauma.* Another difference between Process Work and many other approaches to working with trauma, is that it does not only focus on individuals but regards it as essential to work with whole groups, especially in cases of community-wide trauma. To hereby ensure the trauma is not repeated, "facilitators need special skills to help communities work with the volatile emotional, physical, social,

political and relational dynamics at the hot spots of their interactions<sup>31</sup>" (Audgeron, 2006, p.3). Audgeron, like many other Process Workers, has worked in postconflict environments where whole communities suffered from the after-effects of war, and emphasizes that

while there is increasing recognition that violent conflict traumatizes whole communities, and that trauma is both a response to violence and a vehicle for further violence, there is a profound need for a wider understanding of the collective dynamics of trauma and corresponding methods of working in a community (2006, p. 3).

Process-Oriented approaches thus do not merely aim at leaving the trauma behind and move on, because "it is important for whole communities to find pathways to include their traumatic history" (Audgeron 2006, p. 4). More information on collective trauma and how Process Work approaches deal with it is given at the beginning of Chapter 3.

**Conflict management/resolution vs. conflict facilitation.** Although there are huge similarities in terms of focusing on developing empathy and reaching mutual understanding, most of the currently taught and practiced ways of managing or resolving conflict are different from the Process Work approach to conflict, also known as Conflict Facilitation. One major and fundamental difference is that Process Work's primary focus lies on awareness, which means that the

resolution of problems is viewed as a by-product of developing awareness, rather than an end in itself. This approach can provide relief from problems, even when they cannot be resolved, by bringing about an expanded viewpoint. (Diamond & Jones, 2005, p. 148).

---

<sup>31</sup> Exemplary interactions of facilitators dealing with community-wide trauma are described in detail in articles freely available on her website: <http://www.processwork-audgeron.com/info/publications.htm>

Other differences are mainly related to issues around the perception of conflict itself, empowerment, compromise, relationship, neutrality, facilitator awareness, and working with large groups. They are discussed in the following sections.

***Perception of conflict.*** Many mainstream approaches to managing or resolving conflict focus on how the parties can overcome their differences, get the existing conflict out of the way, and find solutions and strategies on how to move on. However, a Process-Oriented approach explicitly sees and appreciates conflict itself not only as an opportunity but as actually needed in order to deepen relationships and to build community, thus fostering a deeply welcoming attitude towards the phenomenon of conflict itself. Mindell (2002), also speaks of a new paradigm, in which "conflict itself is the fastest way to community" (p. 4).

***Empowerment.*** A key difference between a number of ways to manage or resolve conflict, such as arbitration or problem-solving mediation, is that in Process-Oriented Conflict Facilitation, decisions are not made by outside authorities but are based on the parties' own innate wisdom. A Process Worker would simply facilitate the interactions between the parties involved and help them to gain a better understanding of themselves, their issues, relationship dynamics, and deeper levels of their relationship, without making a decision for them. This naturally creates not only much more sustainable solutions and relationships, but is also immensely more empowering for the individuals involved.

***Compromise.*** Many conflict management and resolution procedures, with the exception of approaches such as "Transformative Mediation" as described by Burgess (1997), are outcome-oriented. They aim at helping conflicting parties find a win-win solution, which unfortunately often expects both sides to compromise at least a little. Although this is often esteemed as flexible, compromising all too readily creates

unsustainable relationships as it prevents people from expressing themselves fully. Bedrick (in Willis Toms, 2013) elaborates that this does not really resolve but rather creates new conflict, because advising people to compromise also means making sacrifices (i.e., giving something away from oneself that is actually important). Hence, compromises often result in only temporary victories, create rather narrow solutions, and often leave people partially dissatisfied.

What looks like a 'win-win' compromise [...] is also a 'lose-lose' situation. It's going to come back to haunt us later, and if it lasts a long time it's going to come back to haunt us with resentment on top. (Bedrick in Willis Toms, 2013, 26:35 min)

A Process-Oriented approach, on the other hand, rather invites parties to the conflict to experience and express themselves more fully. For example, an important awareness and facilitation skill for this would be to pay attention to and pick up on often unconscious "double-signals", which are seemingly contradicting signals send out through different channels, e.g. somebody who says, "I am fine and agree to the suggested solution", while clenching his fist. Skillfully exploring and expressing what is behind that clenched fist would help bring something into the process of finding a way forward between the conflicting parties, which would probably have come out later in other and probably even more disturbing ways anyhow.

However, this means for that the facilitator would have to not only create an environment in which parties are open and safe to explore their issues on a deeper level but to also support a more open attitude towards conflict itself, as Bedrick (2012, p. 51) states:

Process-Oriented [conflict facilitation] offers an alternative. Instead of focusing on how to resolve conflict, as if it were a problem, it views conflict as something to embrace for purposes of growing and developing relationships. [It defines] conflict [not] by the content of people's disagreements but by the

processes, or relationship dynamics, which hold the potential for more meaningful and sustainable resolutions.

***Relationships.*** Contrary to mainstream conflict management approaches, Process Work focuses less on finding solutions for the conflicting parties but rather on the relationships between them and their process of interacting with each other. This brings much more attention to the underlying relationship dynamics and other less visible processes that influence long-term developments between the conflicting parties.

For example, arguments at home about who is doing necessary chores around the house (e.g. cleaning or doing the dishes) often end up being solved by coming up with duty lists or schedules; or when a couple says their differences are about money, most of the time a solution in financial terms is generated. Bedrick (2012, p.51)

describes the alternative a Process-Oriented approach would offer:

While the couple's conflict seems to be about money, the underlying processes may be much more around issues of power, (in-)equality in decision making, priorities in life, or various needs that had previously been ignored. Addressing and working on these issues would assist the couple in co-creating new ways of relating with one another that would then help them in many additional situations."

He further states, "Thus this approach does more than resolve conflicts; it revitalizes relationships by creating greater intimacy, energy, and well-being." (Bedrick, 2012, p. 51)

Many other extremely helpful approaches, such as *Nonviolent Communication* - developed by Marshall Rosenberg (2003), also focus a lot on empathy and genuine mutual understanding between conflicting parties. However, the explicit focus on (and the various methods developed for working with) relationship dynamics is a unique feature of Process Work and how it deals with conflict between two or more parties.

*Neutrality.* Another closely related and crucial difference between most mainstream approaches to handling conflict and Process Work is the issue of the facilitator's neutrality. Most conflict resolution teachings and practices highlight the importance a mediator having to be neutral all the time. However, Process-Oriented Conflict Facilitation is not so much about being strictly neutral but rather to be able and fluid enough as facilitator to support both sides in expressing themselves fully, thus helping them understand one another. South Africa's former Archbishop, Desmond Tutu's speaks pointedly as to why this form of consciously taking sides is so crucial:

If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality. (Desmond Tutu as cited in Quigley, 2003, p. 8)

In the context of Tutu's example, a Process-Oriented facilitator would momentarily and very consciously support the mouse in taking her side very strongly and clearly, so that the elephant becomes aware that he is standing on her tail. After having helped the mouse to express herself, the facilitator would then fluidly move to the other side and support the elephant in realizing the impact his foot has on the mouse, including the entire relationship between the two of them.

Process Work therefore requires facilitators to develop a great sense of awareness in their inner and outer experiences, and especially around where support is needed in each moment. It further entails a huge amount of fluidity to be able to not only be in a neutral or even all-party position, but to also consciously be on and speak for one of the sides in a conflict. This requires a huge amount of self-awareness from the facilitator around his or her own one-sidedness and how to use this very consciously and deliberately.

The following example illustrates the difference between a more "neutral" conflict management technique and a more "fluid" process work approach. A common accusation during a conflict between two people might be "Oh, you are so defensive!" A usual conflict management approach would probably recommend this person to reframe his statement in a more neutral fashion, for example by saying: "When ... happens I notice that ... and I feel ... " Alternatively, a Process Work facilitator (knowing there must be something valuable in the disturbing behavior of the other) might partially join that person (who is seen as defensive) and say: "Wow, you are protecting yourself and I think that is important. I am curious, could you say more?".

Such approach is often very transformational<sup>32</sup>, as it also enables the one party in the conflict to understand that the seemingly defensive behavior of "the other" is actually protecting something important, even though the manner in which it is protected (i.e. how the other expresses him or herself) is probably not very helpful. Realizing the value in and behind a specific behavior allows for deeper understanding, and after such understanding is established, a conversation about possibly changing this particular behavior is much easier.

***Facilitator Awareness.*** In addition to facilitating other people's conflicts as outsiders, Process Work has also developed certain methods and puts particular emphasis on facilitators being able to facilitate their own relationship conflicts. This means for facilitators to develop a dual-awareness, of being both party to a particular conflict and facilitator at the same time and to fluidly move between these roles as the process requires. The great advantage is that with sufficient awareness and skills,

---

<sup>32</sup> Many other conflict resolution approaches have their specific way of also emphasizing with the other, such as connecting with the other person's feelings and needs in Nonviolent Communication. However, Process Work's "taking the other side" provides much more flexibility, freedom, and choice as to how this is achieved, hereby not limiting the facilitators way of attaining an empathic connection to a certain way, style, or vocabulary.

Process Work facilitators are able to resolve many of their own conflicts with others without even having to always call in an outside facilitator. This is something that many other conflict resolution approaches and trainings do not place emphasis upon.

The development of such awareness for self and others is something that Process Work explicitly teaches and provides valuable tools for. An essential tool is Inner Work, where facilitators learn to work internally on themselves (even in the middle of difficult situations as needed) around issues that could potentially trigger strong reactions within them and which might otherwise cause possible bias or one-sidedness for them as facilitator. Any self-facilitated work on oneself by any individual in any situation can be called Inner Work. However, in the context of Process Work, Inner Work consists of a basic (1<sup>st</sup>) and a more deeper and spiritually grounded continuous 2<sup>nd</sup> Training. In connection with conflict facilitation, it enables facilitators to work on their own emotional issues and "burn their wood" so it cannot catch fire in the middle of a conflict (Reiss, 2004b, Chapter 8). It further helps them identify and work with challenging situations, underlying extreme polarities/energies behind existing conflicts, and seemingly irreconcilable differences. Especially during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Training, facilitators develop more and genuine fluidity in their inner work, hereby accessing an all-embracing universal wisdom. Such an intense focus on ongoing personal development for facilitators also seems to be a relatively unique feature of Process Work, as outlined by the Process Work Institute (PWI, 2013):

Understanding that emotions and personal experience are intrinsic to conflict and change, the program blends academic study and research with experiential skills, personal growth and awareness. It is designed to increase the facilitator's awareness of his or her cultural attitudes, communication style, relationship skills, and the effects these have on group life and conflict situations.

*Working with Large Groups.* Conflict Facilitation within the body of Process Work draws a lot from experiences in World Work seminars<sup>33</sup> and the concept and practice of Deep Democracy<sup>34</sup>. This means that it is of utmost importance that all the voices within a system need to be listened to, even the unusual and uncomfortable ones, as well as those that are not physically present within a group but are nevertheless present as Ghost Roles<sup>35</sup>. Only then can the message, which these voices try to bring across, be understood and integrated. This fundamental principle of Deep Democracy to have all voices and forms of expressions to be present and heard allows for an individual, a relationship, a group, or a whole organization to grow and evolve towards its own wholeness.

Working with large groups of up to hundreds of people on often highly controversial topics and heated atmospheres, allowing a wide range of emotions to be expressed (while facilitating these sessions in such a way that mutual listening and understanding is taking place) is another unique aspect of Process Work. Such work is referred to as World Work, and often includes a conscious polarization of the field in order to start a dialogue between various positions in the group, people stepping into different roles, and also speaking deeply personally to one another in front of the whole group. Facilitating such group processes often requires more than one facilitator (including the fact that even participants can temporarily step into the role of the

---

<sup>33</sup> Facilitated large group gatherings, conferences and/or training seminars that last for several days and allow for participants from all over the world to constructively engage in conflict work, diversity awareness, and community building around various social, political and environmental topics. It includes large group inter-action, small group meetings and one-on-one sessions. (Mindell, 1989, 1992, 1995 & [www.worldwork.org](http://www.worldwork.org))

<sup>34</sup> A term coined by Mindell (2002), describing a deeper kind of democracy that appreciates present democratic forms but adds to them the needs for awareness of feelings and atmosphere in moment-to-moment interactions and institutional practices (i.e., that even subtle and nonverbal experiences are articulated and valued).

<sup>35</sup> Ghost Roles are usually those issues, opinions, or people that are not directly represented within a group but that are spoken about or referred to. See more detailed explanations and examples at the beginning of Chapter 3, under "The Ghosts of History".

facilitator, which is then referred to as the "participant facilitator"), as well as great awareness for what is happening to the atmosphere in the room, different levels of interaction, holding down of Hotspots<sup>36</sup>, and noticing and framing of moments where a de-escalation or even a temporary resolutions occurs.

Another Process Work method for large group conversations is Open Forums which serves as a powerful and highly transformational approach. Open Forums, as described in Mindell's *The Deep Democracy of Open Forums* (2002), are structured deeply democratic meetings in which everyone feels represented. They are "based on awareness of and bringing forth the richness of our total diversity and complexity" (p. 5) and are usually brief, lasting about 2 hours. Open Forums provide a safe container for anybody to speak, listen, and "go through complex, emotional territory" (p. 29), so that existing conflict is actually used to build community. An exemplary reflection on one such Open Forum that took place in Cape Town, South Africa can be found in the appendix of this thesis.

### **Worldwide Application in Conflict Situations**

Since its initial development in the late 1970s, Process Work has been and is being applied within a multitude of sociocultural contexts worldwide, with various Process Work books, articles, and academic theses having been written in and translated into 17 languages. This wide-ranging body of literature confirms the almost universal applicability of Process-Oriented facilitation approaches for working with people from different cultural, historical, sociopolitical, and religious backgrounds.

Over the last 21 years Process Work methods, such as Open Forums and World Work, have been extremely useful to deliberately bring together very diverse groups of

---

<sup>36</sup> Hotspots are moments of intense emotions within a group and hold great potential when being worked on, or will otherwise come back and recycle in an escalated form - see Chapter 3, p. 93.

people to process highly controversial, emotionally charged, and often tremendously polarizing issues. These experiences underline the applicability and usefulness of a Process-Oriented approach to facilitating tensions, conflict, and diversity issues in different cultural and sociopolitical contexts worldwide.

Especially in countries and situations where appalling acts of violence and oppression were experienced on a large scale and over an extended period of time, Process-Oriented approaches have provided helpful new ways for bringing various sides together and for understanding and healing to occur, as well as for having authentic and open discussions about a way forward. Particularly positive experiences have been made with the application of large-group methods in various conflict and postconflict areas around the world such as Israel-Palestine (Reiss 2004b) or the Balkan (Audergon, 2005). Reflecting on such work, Audergon (2005) states that "in postconflict situations, in addition to Tribunals and Truth Commissions, there is a need for people to gather in community forums to deal with questions of accountability, reconciliation, and community building throughout various sectors of society" (p. 39).

**Process Work in an African context.** More than 20 years ago, Arnold and Amy Mindell travelled and worked in a number of African countries such as Kenya and South Africa. There, experiences of facilitating social tensions and conflict, as well as their interactions particularly with shamans and traditional healers enriched their lives, influenced their work, and have contributed to the development Process Work (Mindell, 1985, p. 24; 1992, pp. 68, 78, 124; 1993, p. 49).

Mindell (1995) observed that the "Eurocentric style of conflict-management emphasizes procedures, compromise and solutions" (p. 164), which has its weaknesses with regard to emotional and relational aspects of conflict. African cultures, on the other hand, "are more relationship-oriented" (p. 164). Indigenous belief systems worldwide,

and particularly in the African context, often emphasize the interconnectedness and importance of all people and beings, including ancestral spirits and their invisible yet at times very noticeable presence. Such holistic understanding is not only embraced but forms a fundamental part of Process Work philosophy and practice, especially within the concept of Deep Democracy (see footnote, p. 59) where all the different voices and forms of expression within a system need to be heard and represented. Indigenous African beliefs have therefore contributed substantially to the development of the spiritual aspects and foundations of Process Work. Especially the African concept and philosophy of Ubuntu (which roughly translated means "humaneness" and derives from the expression "umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu" = "a person is a person because of other people" or "a person can only be a person through others" (Anderson, 2003). Such profound understanding of interdependencies is linked to the deeply democratic realization that "the other is me" and "I am the other" (i.e., whatever disturbs me in the other person is actually also a part of myself which I have somewhat marginalized or am not identifying with), which often occurs in successful Process-Oriented conflict work.

Although a number of Process Work practitioners, such as Anup Karia and Stanya Studentowa (<http://www.astafacilitation.net>) have worked particularly in East Africa, and the global Deep Democracy Institute recently established a Regional Centre (<http://www.ddi-eastafrika.co.ke> - focusing on Process-Oriented Leadership, Group Facilitation and Coaching) in Kenya - there is not much literature which specifically describes or reflects on experiences of Process Work in an African cultural context. The most valuable contributions in this area stem from Kenyan psychologist and counselor, Moses N. Ikiugu (1992), who confirms that "the basic beliefs of Africans are similar to those that form the basic philosophy of Process-Oriented Psychology," (p. 18) and that

African traditional healers functioned similarly to modern day process workers by helping people to access and integrate parts of themselves they were less connected with and by helping natural processes to unfold.

In connection with the application of Process Work in African cultures of today, Ikiugu (1992, p. 19) stresses that "changes in religious, educational, social and political factors have brought about [...] cultural alienation and resultant loss of identity for the modern African." Hence, a

Process Worker in the African context needs to bear in mind, and indeed, emphasize with the inner conflict the modern African is experiencing due to the clash between the 'old' and 'new' cultures, resulting from the changes taking place in Africa. (Ikiugu, 1992, p. 20)

Ikiugu (1992) further cautions to "bear in mind how much suffering the African has gone through at the hands of white people" (p.21) which has contributed to the intensity of conflict on the African continent, and that a Process Worker in Africa would need to facilitate existing polarities, such as modern and tradition, love and hate, desire and rejection.

**Process Work in Namibia and Southern Africa.** In Namibia, only two other individuals<sup>37</sup> besides myself have attended Process Work seminars so far. Neither of them has published anything about their experiences with a Process-Oriented approach in the Namibian context, which puts myself in a rather unique position and makes this thesis the starting point for further exploration and expansion of this field in Namibia.

With the exception of neighboring South Africa, there is also no literature about Process Work and its application in other countries within the Southern African region. In South Africa, however, Process Work is being applied by a variety of practitioners in

---

<sup>37</sup> Both are white Namibians of German descent. One is working as a physiotherapist hereby partially applying process-oriented body work in physiotherapy, while the other works as communication trainer primarily using Marshal Rosenberg's (2003) *Nonviolent Communication*.

a number of ways. Among others, South African born Dr. Schuitevoerder (2000, 2013) "has worked together with communities, organizations and social groups on the transition to democracy and the challenges of diversity and race relations in South Africa" (2013). For more than a decade, a growing number of South Africans not only participated in workshops and seminars but became Process Work practitioners themselves (e.g., by graduating from accredited programs such as the MACF) and are continuing to take Process Work in South Africa to deeper levels, primarily by incorporating it into their own work as facilitators, trainers, consultants and community leaders<sup>38</sup>. Some of the public events that were facilitated were, annual Open Forums at the University of Cape Town on Race and Diversity<sup>39</sup> and an initial World Work Event in Johannesburg in 2011.

Because of its partially common history with Namibia, research and other documented experiences with regards to Process Work in South Africa is regarded relevant for the Namibian context. Two particular theses were identified as strongly relevant with regard to challenges and opportunities for Process Work in a South African and Namibian context: *Reconciliation thru Remembrance* by Zed Xaba (2011) and *Just Facilitation: Facilitating Sustainable Social Change in Contexts of Injustice* by Rebecca Freeth (2011).

In her final project, Xaba (2011) applies Process Work with a diverse group of mainly South Africans by facilitating a tour through historic sites and reflections on the effects of apartheid which the Truth and Reconciliation Commission could not fully and

---

<sup>38</sup> Websites of practitioners working in South Africa who are using a process-oriented approach are, for example: <http://www.processconsulting.org>, <http://www.feather.co.za>, <http://deep-democracy.net>, or <http://www.cdra.org.za> - For additional resources, please contact [ccchangeconsult@gmail.com](mailto:ccchangeconsult@gmail.com)

<sup>39</sup> The group 'Conscious Conversations', in cooperation with UCT's Student Representative Council and UTC's Transformation Services Office, organizes Open Forums since 2010, which are facilitated by the Process Work Institute. To witness the transforming nature of such a forum, see a participant's reflection in Appendix C, and this article: <http://dailymaverick.co.za/article/2012-04-20-uct-students-get-stuck-into-race-debate>

realistically address. She documented the project through video and captured her reflections in a contextual essay. Some of her findings touched on her own role as facilitator and that great awareness was needed, and how important it was for her to declare her own bias and potential one-sidedness (as a black person) against the strong impact of apartheid experiences. (p. 35)

Xaba (2011, p. 38) further highlights the huge differences in rank, and how crucial it is to notice and acknowledge the huge psychological and spiritual rank<sup>40</sup> many black South Africans have gained and earned during the struggle. This is something so powerful that it even made white South African participants with high social rank at times feel marginalized. She further stresses the importance of feelings to be expressed, and that there are still huge frustrations in the background, which makes people almost want to "go to war" (p. 41). In such heated moments, inviting "participants to speak personally about their experiences" and "really holding participants at their edges and making space for them to go into their own experiences", proved extremely helpful and supportive for their process (p. 41), and

a number of participants shared very personal stories that range from; being imprisoned with their mother as a little child for being in South Africa 'illegally'; to one's sister being raped by a white boss and later committing suicide after bearing a colored child, to being labeled 'mad' in the film industry for challenging racism.

One of the main difficulties Xaba (2011) noticed, was for people to talk about their differences, instead of focusing on what they have in common, which also applies for the Namibian situation. However, openly acknowledging that some have clearly more privileges than others, led to deeper personal sharing and insights. For example,

---

<sup>40</sup> In addition to previous explanations on rank (see footnote, p.11), psychological rank reflects a person's internal resources and abilities to address challenging situations and to deal with emotional stress, and derives from the self-knowledge emerging from having lived through and learned to deal with difficult life situations. Spiritual rank arises from a sense of meaning and a connection to something that is bigger than yourself, like something divine (e.g., God), following a higher purpose, or fighting for a just cause (e.g., against Apartheid).

Some white participants were talking about the need for justice. One white participant talked about how, in her own life she is beginning to use her financial resources (that she inherited from her parents, that were amassed on the back of black labor) to contribute to the upliftment of black people. (p.42)

Xaba's application of Process Work methods, skills, and metaskills led to deeper and more genuine conversations, as well as moments of connection across the racial divide, as captured in the following quotes from participants (p. 47):

Black woman: I want to be angry at you, I want to shout at you, instead....(cries)

White man: The reality is that I benefited from what happened, I still benefit currently from the system, the system is created to benefit me still. I agree that I need to take ownership, it is difficult sometimes.

Overall, Xaba's research shows the value and usefulness of applying Process Work in a South African context, particular for supporting the process of reconciliation between black and white. It further highlights attention to be given to the facilitator's own awareness about potential one-sidedness, acknowledgement of feelings and differences, and the importance of different kinds of rank, as well as the power of taking conversations to a level where people speak deeply personal which might require facilitators to help them overcome prevalent but hampering social conventions of "being nice and polite" (p.40). However, she cautions that issues of race are by far not the only social challenges South Africa is facing, and that there are also other burning issues which require processing, such as growing divide between the rich and the poor (p. 48).

The starting point for Freeth's (2011) thesis was a series of Process Work training modules in South Africa with a diverse group of 24 participants, where she "...was beginning to recognize [the training's] profound impact on my thinking about and experience of race and being white in a mixed race group" (p. 25). Freeth confirms that the TRC after the end of Apartheid in 1994 was not enough to create a genuine understanding and real justice across racial lines in South Africa. Key elements of her

thesis are interviews with participants from these training modules and her autobiographic reflections as a white person in the role of a facilitator for "social change in the direction of justice" (Freeth, 2011, p. 94).

Freeth (2011) highlights how Process Work approaches helped her since 2003 to gain much more awareness and skills, particularly around "the role of a facilitator working in contexts of injustice, and the tension between facilitator neutrality and facilitator activism" (p. 14), hereby underlining Xaba's findings around the strong need for facilitator-awareness around one's own rank and potential bias, especially as a white person in that role.

Although she did not deliberately apply Process Work methods, her thesis provides valuable insight on primarily race-related aspects within and around these Process Work training groups. The experiences of participants in these groups also formed the basis for some of her key findings around change and social justice, particular related to whites in South Africa. Freeth (2011) confirms that having participated in these workshops was a crucial wake-up and awareness point for many. The following quote highlights such a deeply personal moment and also contains much significance in the bigger transformational context that both South Africa and Namibia find themselves currently in:

A second member of the group reflected towards the end of his interview, "With all the rank that I possess in the South African context: white, male, Afrikaner, 50, in business, financially stable, etc. etc., you know, I also am at a stage where I need to step back and create space ... If I continue to occupy centre stage the space isn't there for what needs to come next ... I don't see it as giving over power or sacrificing; it's changing my role, changing my place, finding a different awareness..." He attributed this insight to a powerful exchange with a black man in the Process Work group. (Freeth, 2011, p. 104)

Her participation in these groups inspired Freeth to start hosting regular conversations among white South Africans, which later became the "White Accountability Initiative"<sup>41</sup>, and show the importance of developing awareness around one's own privileges, especially when being a member of a group with higher social rank and/or in the role of a facilitator. However, one of the challenges she discovered was to find white South Africans willing to attend regularly and commit themselves to an ongoing process of self-reflection around their own rank and privileges, and how they can use these for creating a better South Africa for all.

In conclusion, the existing literature so far describes Process Work methods in the South African context as very useful, especially when it comes to injustices based on issues around race, marginalization and segregation. It further suggests that self-awareness, (particularly around issues of rank and potential one-sidedness as facilitator) is a key issue, and that facilitating deeply personal conversations around people's differences can be very transformational in a positive sense. Although the Namibian situation is distinctively different from the South African one, these above mentioned aspects seem highly valuable, relevant and applicable for the Namibian context as well.

### **Concluding Remarks for Literature Review**

The existing literature shows that over the last century Namibia has experienced much and large-scale violent conflict and systemic oppression, particularly during colonialism and Apartheid times. This resulted in individual and collective trauma by

---

<sup>41</sup> A growing group of white South Africans who want to become more aware of the variety of rank and privileges that came and still come with being white in South Africa, and who wish "to engage white South Africans in courageous conversations that foster awareness, accountability for the past and to forge a greater sense of joint accountability for economic and other opportunities that provide for South African to feel even more vested in the future of the country; [and] to challenge white South Africans towards committed, meaningful and constructive participation in creating a healthy and prosperous South Africa for all of our children" (Freeth, 2011, p. 114).

which a large part of the Namibian population is still affected, in one way or another. It is also evident that little has been done so far to address these aftermaths of violence unlike in South Africa, although their process of Truth and Reconciliation did so far not fully succeed to heal all the wounds and "could not deal with the structural violence and discrimination on the basis of race and gender that was experienced by a majority of South Africans." (Xaba, 2011, p.4).

Existing literature on conflicts in Namibia rather focuses on documenting and analyzing these conflicts, yet facilitated dialogue between conflicting parties has not been much explored, and local capacities in this particular area of conflict facilitation are still in the process of being developed. It has become clear that existing ways of dealing with conflict and disturbing experiences in nowadays Namibia is still largely influenced by historic conflict handling patterns, allowing only for rather narrow ways of either responding in a violent or authoritative manner or remaining silent and trying to forgive, forget, and move on. More facilitated approaches to conflict that focus on relationship building and empowering the conflicting parties to find their own solutions to their own conflicts are not much explored and hardly practiced.

A vast variety of experiences around the globe and in different cultural and sociopolitical settings have shown that Process Work and its various methods for facilitating conflict (including dealing with individual and collective trauma) can be very helpful and effective for dealing with a variety of conflict situation in more sustainable ways than a number of current mainstream approaches. Yet, besides having part of its roots in indigenous African beliefs and traditions, Process Work is not widely known and applied on the African continent, and especially in Namibia it is a completely new field.

However, experiences with Process Work in neighboring South Africa over more than a decade have proven it to be extremely helpful in addressing intractable conflict, particularly around issues of deeply rooted racial and social injustices. The application of Process Work methods by skilled and self-aware South African facilitators started to create safe spaces for dialogue and deeper conversations. This allowed for a more genuine understanding and mutual connection to occur, hereby building relationships across existing racial divides and showing the need for more to be done, including other areas and burning social issues, such as gender, violence, poverty, education, corruption, and so forth.

### **Chapter 3: Discussions on Process Work in Namibia**

This chapter deals with the central question of how Process Work can make substantial and valuable contributions to addressing existing conflict, tensions, and diversity issues in Namibian society today, and how it can even support the country's process of reconciliation and healing of historical injustices.

The first part of the following discussions explains how past and present are generally interconnected and how many contemporary problems have their root causes in past events, particularly when the latter are not acknowledged and still unresolved. It highlights a few central issues that Namibia was and is currently facing and how they can be understood in their historic context through a Process Work lens. I will then elaborate on some Process-Oriented methods for addressing historical issues in a healing and reconciliatory manner, thus focusing on ways of working with whole groups and communities that allows for issues around individual and collective trauma to be addressed.

The second part of this chapter then looks into various contemporary challenges and opportunities that are related to the introduction and application of a Process Work approach and its methods in the Namibian context. In this second part I elaborate on selected aspects of Process Work and give examples of how I have experienced them as applicable during my work here in Namibia over the last few years. As it is impossible to cover all the various facets of Process Work, I chose the most relevant ones in the Namibian context, based on my own experiences with colleagues, students, and workshop participants. These particular aspects include some challenges and opportunities around introducing a Process-Oriented paradigm of working with conflict to Namibia, working with hotspots, understanding violence, focusing on relationship

building, rank awareness, spiritual aspects, as well as reflections on my own role as facilitator in the field.

The combination of the first and the second part of this chapter aims to provide valuable insight how a Process-Oriented perspective and approach may help to create a deeper understanding. In turn, this could provide practical support, as outlined in the then following conclusion and ways forward.

### **Dealing with a Violent Past**

The following sections aim to assess how far large-scale violence, systemic oppression, and grave injustices that occurred in the past might influence the Namibian society today. I will first look at the impact of such experiences in general, and then make a direct connection to the Namibian situation with some of its specific challenges, hereby showing how Process-Oriented methodologies might be helpful in addressing them.

**Collective and trans-generational trauma.** Based on profound experiences and research by Mindell (1995), Cabrera (2002), Fujisaki (2003), Schuetzenberger (2003), Reiss (2004b), Wirth (2006), as well as on my own experiences in Process Work seminars and trainings, the aftereffects of large-scale violence are still present in today's societies, especially so in previously war-torn areas or places where various forms of systemic injustices and oppression occurred.

Trauma, if not properly addressed and processed, is passed on from generation to generation, and blocks individual and collective development. For instance, children and even the grandchildren of Holocaust survivors suffered the same or worse psychological symptoms than their parents and grandparents, even though the actual conditions or the initial traumatic events had ceased to exist (Kuehner, 2003, p. 45). In

addition, individual, collective, and trans-generational trauma does not only affect the victims but also bystander, witnesses, and even the perpetrators themselves, as research with children of perpetrators during the Nazi-era in Germany has shown (Bar-On, 1993). How the cruelty of traumatic events also affects the perpetrators themselves is further highlighted by South Africa's first black president, Nelson Mandela who said after his release from 27 years of prison, that "the oppressed and the oppressor alike are robbed of their humanity" (Mandela, 1995, p. 751).

Years, decades, and even centuries after warlike experiences, even when those directly involved have died long ago, painful experiences and suppressed emotions are still present on all sides. They are often in the background with the tendency to repeatedly surface time and again in various forms and symptoms until they are being acknowledged, addressed, and resolved (Audergon 2005; Fujisaki 2003; Mindell, 1995, 2002). Traumatic historical events thus have an often less visible yet highly detrimental effect on today's society (i.e., on people's lives, and a country's social fabric and overall development). Although no explicit research has been conducted on specific Namibian situations so far, it seems evident that collective and trans-generational trauma are present within the Namibian society and influence people's attitudes towards and abilities to deal with conflict situations today.

### **How the past is present.**

*...the past, far from disappearing or lying down and being quiet,  
has an embarrassing and persistent way of returning and  
haunting us unless it has in fact been dealt with adequately.  
Unless we look the beast in the eye we find it has an  
uncanny habit of returning to hold us hostage.  
(Tutu, 1999, p. 2)*

Even though the following is not written by a Namibian but a South African icon of the liberation struggle, Mamphela Ramphele (2012), it is a reflection on what is happening, and the similarities to the Namibian situation are striking:

A large proportion of South Africans remain impoverished, undereducated, under-employed, as well as beset by a dispiriting array of social problems. It is clear that democracy has failed to reverse the far-reaching personal disempowerment inflicted on many black South Africans by the apartheid system. Unless this deep wound is healed, the country's liberation will remain incomplete and will be at risk. [...] Our past has left many deeply wounded. To be treated with disrespect because of the color of your skin or your gender or your geographic location is the ultimate trauma. This is particularly the case in a society such as ours, which is both hierarchical and one of the most unequal in the world. (Ramphele, 2012)

Ramphele (2012) emphasizes the impact of traumatic experiences of the past still have and how these are blocking those on the receiving end of Apartheid injustices from being able to move forward. Being affected by such trauma seems to be even more true for Namibians, as the South Africa which Ramphele speaks about actually went through a process of truth and reconciliation already. Yet, is still haunted by not only individual, but collective and even trans-generational trauma.

Unresolved historical conflict that took place on a macrolevel of society, often tends to manifest itself again on a microlevel (i.e., in form of violent conflict among individuals in families, communities, and at the workplace [Bedrick, 2012, p. 73; Mickley, 2004]). Recent research on violent crimes in Namibia underlines this and highlights the strong influence of collective and cultural factors on individuals' attitudes and behaviors (/Khaxas 2010; Van Rooy, 2006). Similarly, Matundu-Tjiparuro (2012) connects today's violence in Namibia with the country's violent history by saying,

as much as the killings may seem to be a new phenomenon, they are actually only new manifestations of an old and terminal phenomenon and ill that has for some time now been having the Namibian society and communities within its vicious grip unabatedly.

Although in-depth research and studies have yet to look into the effects of historic and collective trauma in Namibia, it seems evident that Namibia, with all the violence occurring in the past and exceptionally high rates of violent crimes today, is no exception. Hence, the following sections will explore more how past trauma manifests in Namibia today, and will provide a few suggestions on how they could be approached.

**The ghosts of history.** Process Work speaks of a ghost or more specifically of a "Ghost Role" being present when a particular person, behavior, attitude, or otherwise important aspect of a system is not directly present or represented, but is rather indirectly being referred to. For example, during the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, the nuclear strike was one of the big ghosts that was present in the background. Or at school, when a teacher discusses the issue of bullying in class with his students, the bully itself might be a ghost role at first, because nobody would voluntarily see him or herself in such role. However, bullies are real and so was the threat of a nuclear disaster during the times of the Cold War. Many families, groups, organizations, and even whole countries often struggle in dealing with difficult situation, because of the main threat or issue not being directly named and represented.

One of the methods that Process Work offers is to name these ghost roles that are present and to encourage people to consciously step into these roles, although it is often the facilitator who breaks the ice and steps into these difficult, uncomfortable and/or disavowed roles. Having these roles being physically filled and directly represented then enables real dialogue and more authentic conversations. Additional facilitation methods, such as holding down of hotspots (see p. 93), role-switching (i.e., allowing and inviting individuals to step into the role of "the other" and see how it feels to stand there and to speak from that position), and deepening interactions by inviting people to speak personally (i.e., focusing on a deeply personal and often strongly

emotional story that a person has to share) allows everybody to gain a deeper understanding of the whole situation and one's own involvement in it. This may lead to profound realizations around how we can even be in different roles at the same time, like a student in a class might well be both a bully and a victim. It is often a very healing experience to consciously bring these two disconnected and often polarized aspects of oneself together and into dialogue with one another. Whole systems, be it individuals, groups or organizations, learn more about themselves and their previously unacknowledged or disavowed parts and aspects that were troubling them.

As for the Namibian situation there are a number of possible ghosts, particularly from the country's history, that still linger around and show themselves time and again in different ways, asking to be addressed. For example, over the last few years, the public debates around the relocation of the controversial "Reiterdenkmal" (Equestrian Monument)<sup>42</sup>, the rather complicated and time-consuming repatriation of the Herero and Nama skulls (which were shipped to Germany for scientific purposes during the colonial period), the reoccurring questions around how far forceful repossession of land that was acquired by whites during colonial times should be part of Namibia's land reform process, and recent media reports of seemingly racially motivated attacks from whites against blacks on Namibian farms and in towns like Gobabis and Keetmanshoop, bring up the issue of how far "colonialism" (i.e., "the one who colonized") or "racism" (i.e., or "the one who has racist attitudes") are major ghosts that want to emerge and be consciously dealt with and worked on.

When using a Process Work perspective to help us understand, for example what was reported in the media as an apparently racist motivated murder of a black

---

<sup>42</sup> A colonial monument erected in 1911, showing a victorious German soldier on a horse and is commemorating purely the German losses during the years of battle against the indigenous Herero and Nama population.

community member by a white farmer on Farm Vergenoeg (Tjitemisa, 2013), then this is not merely a single and isolated event. Such events, according to Mindell (1995, p. 219-220) rather

illustrate a country's using an individual to work out national issues about racism [...]. The combatants are forced to be central timespirits for the world around them. What seems like a personal battle can turn into the whole field for [a country]. When this happens, privacy becomes impossible. You have to go into, rather than avoid, the issues at hand. I recommend to large organizations that they form a framework [...] in which a central conflict involving a few people can be facilitated. Others look on while the battle evolves. Conflicting parties can then be seen clearly as roles in the organization [or country].

This means that events like these happen and will continue to show up, unless the country as a whole has found ways for dealing with the discrimination and violence that has taken place in the past.

A less obvious but still striking example of a ghost role being in the field, can be observed around the lack of acknowledgement of wrongdoings. Based on newspaper reports and personal communications with police officers, lawyers, and magistrates, I established that most criminal offenders who are tried in courts do not acknowledge their wrongdoing, do not admit guilt, and do not even show remorse, even though there is overwhelming evidence against them. Although the set-up of Namibia's legal system plays a role in perpetuating such non-helpful behavior, Process-Oriented psychology offers an additional perspective. It seems as if the role of "the one who denies or ignores" is strongly present in the field (on a microlevel - in criminal cases, but also in schools and families), because the German colonizers (on a macrolevel) never officially acknowledged or apologized for the atrocities committed during colonial times and are not yet fully entering the repeatedly demanded genuine "dialogue" with the descendants of the affected population (Van Grassdorff et al., 2012). Of course, this is not the only explanation, but it offers a fresh and potentially helpful perspective on how the past

relates to the present, and how consciously dealing with it in the present can in return heal some of the wounds from the past.

It seems that also from within Namibia, this connection between macrolevel violence in the past, and microlevel violence today is becoming increasingly established, as the report on "Understanding the perpetrators of violent crimes against women and girls in Namibia" (Van Rooy [ed.], 2006, p. xiii) states:

The escalating violent crimes committed against women and girls in Namibia, poses a serious threat to the basic fabric of Namibian society, as this is just the tip of the iceberg, reflecting the country's social health in terms of the cultural aspects of our patriarchal society; and our violent colonial past that is perpetuated in post independent Namibia.

Such statements give the impression that the ghosts of history are beginning to come more and more into the collective consciousness, indicating an emerging awareness of and willingness to deal with important yet painful historic aspects that had and still have a strong impact on Namibian society.

**An arising need for reconciliation.** In September 2013, the daily Namibian Sun (2013) asked its readers whether they believed that Namibia should have had a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, similar to that of South Africa. Although not a representative poll, the results reveal that an overwhelming 12 out of 14 Namibians think that the country has missed an opportunity for reconciliation by not having had undergone such process.

In their responses, Namibians mention truth-telling, admission and apologizing as key aspects that should have happened before one could have forgiven and moved on. For example, one reader asks: "How do you forgive someone when they have not apologized?" (Namibian Sun, 2013, p. 5), and many also add that today's situation would be much better if something like that had taken place, for example by stating:

It would have sorted out a lot of issues that we have today. Our generation would have been more integrated and would not be carrying around the feelings of the past. (Namibian Sun, 2013, p. 5)

Others mention that openly speaking about the past would have brought more unity in terms of cultural integration "and a kind of closure for those who have suffered", and that "legislation alone was not sufficient to guide social reform" (Namibian Sun, p. 5).

Those who do not agree say that it "would have been a good gesture [but] would not have mattered," because "even in South Africa they still have racial issues", or that "the past is the past. We must just learn from it and move on" (Namibian Sun, p.5). The last statement seems to reflect the previously mentioned and prevalent attitude towards conflict in general, in terms of rather not looking too deep into existing conflicts and its underlying root causes.

The overwhelming majority of responses cited above seem to reflect a trend towards a actually wanting to find out more about what happened in the past and for seeking genuine reconciliation and healing. Other recent newspaper articles and opinion pieces (Hengari, 2011; Matundu-Tjiparuro, 2013; Melber, 2013) also indicate such growing wish and actual need for entering deeper dialogue around issues of the past in the spirit of reconciliation. This is further reflected in the ongoing efforts of primarily Hereros and Namas seeking dialogue with the German government, current initiatives to provide counseling for war veterans to help them coping with traumatic experiences, as well as in the arts (e.g., by recent theatre plays like "Meme Mia" or "Jacob Marenga" reflecting on unresolved issues from the times of the Independence Struggle and Colonial Resistance). Also in the political arena there are a few but growing indicators for a change towards generally more openness and dialogue, for example with President

Pohamba having started to have regular meetings with civil society representatives and even leaders of the opposition party, which had not been the case in the past.

Overall, it appears that there is a growing wish and willingness for entering dialogue, and even possibly addressing issues that so far have been avoided or not talked about in much depth and detail. Although consciously and skillfully addressing relevant issues might bring up old and painful memories, it would allow for genuine healing to occur and foster building of stronger and trusted relationships across an otherwise still not much connected Namibian society today.

### **Why only now?**

*Healing Needs Time and Safety.* Looking at the emerging wish and willingness to address issues of the past, a relevant question might be: "Why only now, about 100 years after the peak of colonialism and more than 20 years after the country's independence?" An answer to this may lie in experiences from other countries and societies affected by large scale violence and systemic oppression, which have shown that

the trauma stays in the fabric of family, community and society for generations. Just as individuals may need many years before he or she is able to tell the story, and begin to recover and return to life, narrative of the community trauma may begin to be told only in the next generations. If several years is not a long time for individuals to begin to be able to speak about their loss and trauma, 50 or 100 years begins to seem like a short time for a society to grapple with wide-scale atrocity and genocide. (Audergon, 2004, pp. 20-21)

From my own experiences as a German, who struggled to understand what happened during the German Nazi era, I learned that it took more than one generation to actually start addressing some of the atrocities committed in Nazi Germany on a deeper level. Although the Nuremberg trials (soon after the end of World War II) have legally dealt with the crimes committed by the main Nazi leaders, many perpetrators who took

part in committing the atrocities at the time were still living within the postwar German society without their actions during the Nazi era having been addressed. Very often, the children of these perpetrators were not able to actually confront their own parents. Only the generation of their grandchildren started asking questions about their grandparents' involvement in past atrocities and dared confronting them directly. Still up to this day, after many of the direct victims and perpetrators have already passed on, Germany is in the process of dealing with and working on the aftermaths of Nazi Germany on many levels of society.

Hence, it seems natural that historic events of such magnitude, like those that occurred on Namibian soil over a period of more than a century, cannot be quickly and easily addressed. They need time and a safe enough space to eventually come to the surface in order to be properly dealt with and for the wounds to finally heal.

***Unconscious Guilt.*** In addition to the above mentioned factors of time and (emotional) safety, there are other key aspects that may shed light on why addressing the past has not been happening so far, or why such process was even met by conscious or unconscious resistance. One reason for postcolonial Germany and German-Namibians (i.e., the descendants of German Settlers) to resist entering a deeper and open dialogue could be found in Prof. Maddison's research on *Postcolonial Guilt and National Identity* in Australia (2012). Her findings, with regard to white settlers, show that an unconscious "collective guilt" has developed, which "lead many to continue denying the extent of the harm done in creating the modern Australian nation and the impact of this harm on contemporary social relationships" (Maddison, 2012, p. 5), and that a natural need for belonging, identity ,and feeling good as member of a certain group "can lead to the development of explanations and justifications for immoral and unjust actions in the past; for example that these actions were not seen as wrong at the

time and that they were undertaken with good intentions" (p. 5). She further highlights that "many [white] Australians today avoid the experience of collective guilt through a rationalization of colonialism as just, inevitable and ultimately for the good of a 'primitive' race" (p. 6).

Namibia is in many aspects different from Australia, yet the overall dynamics and rationale behind the global phenomenon of colonialism are very similar. Many of my personal conversations with German officials and German-Namibians over the last 9 years confirm that there is some form of resistance and unwillingness to enter an deeply open dialogue on the colonial past. Maddison's (2012) findings offer important clues as to where such resistance might originate from, and I also recall a number German-Namibians giving similar justifications or rationalizations when asked about atrocities during colonial times, for example through statements such as: "They [Hereros] must not complain. We were the ones who developed and built this country."

Although this statement provides a glimpse into a German and the German-Namibian perspective, it is definitely not representative for all of them, as there is also diversity among the white German-speaking community in Namibia. However, it provides valuable insights into the role of the white settler and their descendants, which would need to be explored and eventually be brought into dialogue with others roles and voices in the field (e.g., the victims of colonialism and their descendants) in order to reach a deeper mutual understanding as part of a holistic reconciliation process. As much as statements like the above may trigger strong emotions and are often called reactionary or extremist, they must be regarded as actual and legitimate perspectives of some of the country's citizens and therefore be included into society's dialogue. If any "extreme" positions are merely condemned or criminalized they will go underground

and come back to haunt us by making themselves heard through violence. (Audergon, 2005, p.33).

*Skills for Facilitating Dialogue.* Bringing extremely polarized positions, such as the perpetrators of colonial atrocities and the victims thereof, together and into an open dialogue might initially seem impossible (or scary to say the least) because of the highly sensitive and emotionally loaded issues, as well as the potential explosive statements and possible reactions to them. Hence, such dialogue would not only require careful preparations, but highly aware, sensitive and skilful facilitation in order to provide a sufficiently safe container that allows for open and honest conversations without anybody getting hurt emotionally or physically. Although such genuine dialogue on historic injustices and contemporary challenges is ultimately needed in order for healthy relationship building and effective socioeconomic development to take place, there is a lack of sufficiently skilled facilitators to provide for such intense dialogues and conversations to happen.

One exemplary situation in which the absence of skilled facilitation became painfully noticeable to me occurred during the launch of the Oral History Project: *What the Elders used to say* (Erichsen, 2008), at the Goethe Centre in Windhoek in 2008. The project was the first of its kind and had brought together a diverse group of local researchers who went into different rural areas to interview elders from those communities affected by German colonial rule, in order to hear their side of the story and record their account of historic events on video. The launch included screening some extracts from these video interviews and it was clear that the topic itself was a highly charged and emotional one, with representatives from the affected communities as well as the German embassy (who had co-funded the project) being present in the audience. After the main presentations on the project, the facilitator of the evening (the

then director of the German Goethe Centre) invited the audience to ask questions or give comments. After some rather fact-based questions and comments from predominantly white members of the audience, a clearly moved elderly Herero man was given the microphone and started speaking personal about some of his own experiences and expectations with regard to the historic injustices. After being interrupted and asked 2-3 times by the facilitator to be keep it short, focus on the facts, and come to his specific question, the microphone was finally taken away from him. Afterwards the atmosphere in the room felt clearly different and somehow disturbed, and I observed that no other black participant wanted to speak after that incident. Looking at the situation from a Process Work perspective, it is important to note that besides the content of what people say, there are also different communication styles. For example, the usual style of communication during such public discussions is to not express what is really going on inside oneself (i.e., to express one's emotions) but to merely focus on facts and clear questions. However, when holding such event and considering its historic and contemporary context (i.e., still largely unresolved issues around reconciliation, claims for reparations, and biased historic facts due to significant underrepresentation of less literate indigenous population at the time) one can anticipate that there will be a need to acknowledge and allow for deeper feelings to be expressed.

The German facilitator's fact-oriented focus and her cutting off of the Herero speaker who shared some of the painful experiences that affected him personally, was according to the usual communication style and implicit communication rules but it was rather insensitive and not very helpful. The marginalization of feeling aspects around such an emotional topic (at least from the victims' side) and to use one's rank as facilitator to determine what contributions are seen as appropriate and which are not, is actually (yet unconsciously) reenacting an oppressive pattern of colonial and apartheid

history, because white people (and in this case Germans for that matter) are again "in control" and define the space or "demarcate the territory".

This is where Process Work methods and skills (as described in the following sections) may help addressing such highly sensitive issues. For instance, awareness of the composition of the facilitation team would have been a crucial aspect to start with. Having merely one party to the larger conflict represented among the facilitators, made the facilitator automatically vulnerable to unconscious bias. Further, the personal experiences and feelings of the Herero speaker would have needed to be at least acknowledged. Even if the nature of the event does not allow for deeper conversations, a good framing by a skilled and sensitive facilitator would at least provide for this particular speaker to feel heard and seen.

If such an event would allow for a group to go deeper, it would further be helpful for the facilitators to pick up the (non-represented) ghost role of the oppressor. The Herero man spoke about his experiences as member of a group strongly affected by colonialism (and therefore speaking from the role of the victim), and when the role of the offender (or colonizer in this case) is then not being filled or represented, then a real dialogue cannot take place and the situation is most likely going to cycle and escalate. Being aware of the different roles and ghost roles in the field is therefore as crucial as awareness around communication styles, such as the Eurocentric and particular German communication style of being rather fact-oriented. I chose this particular example to show some aspects of Process-Oriented facilitation and to highlight how intercultural differences (e.g., communication style) and the effects of historic trauma are not yet fully seen nor realized by the German community in Namibia.

## **Process Work methods for dialogue and reconciliation**

*Trauma associated with conflict, genocide and systemic oppression is a collective and political matter as well as a deeply personal and spiritual one.*

Audergon (2006, p. 3)

Having elaborated on the gradually emerging need and readiness for reconciliation within Namibia, in order to be able to let old wounds heal, take accountability, and build more genuine relationships, this section elaborates on specific Process Work methods. Community Forum can be helpful to facilitate dialogue in and between groups, particularly when people have been affected in one way or another by individual and collective trauma.

***Tribunals and Truth Commissions.*** In order to put specific Process Work methods into context, it is helpful to first elaborate on the function and limitations of relatively known national conflict resolution mechanisms such as Tribunals and Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, that are usually established by governments with support from international and nongovernment organizations. According to Audergon (2005), tribunals mainly aim at promoting "reconciliation through prosecution, trial and punishment of those who perpetrated war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide" (p. 30). Their intention is to create public platforms to lessen the victims' suffering by having their voices heard and to hereby also prevent entire groups from taking revenge through acts of violence. It also serves to avoid impunity, provide a sense of accountability, prevent historical revisionism, and help overcome collective guilt. However, tribunals have their limitations as they are only able to deal with a very limited number of cases (hereby leaving tens of thousands of additional cases behind), look merely at what has happened through the lenses of the perpetrators' criminal responsibility, and provide little space for dialogue. (Audergon, 2005, pp. 30-31)

Truth and Reconciliation Commissions are meant to research and provide insights into human right abuses during a specific period of time, hereby giving victims, their relatives, and perpetrators an official forum to give their personal accounts. Their aims are to create accountability for past abuses of power and to promote the process of healing and reconciliation for a country. The primary means for achieving these aims is truth telling, and in some cases it involves granting of amnesty while in other cases the collected records are forwarded to criminal courts. The value of truth telling on an individual level is that victims are able to share their stories as a first step towards healing, and perpetrators acknowledging what they have done can support this healing process even more. On a collective level, it fills in "the holes of information crucial for a society to establish as complete a picture as possible of the nature, causes and extend of gross violations of human rights" (Audergon, 2005, p. 34).

***World Work and Community Forums.*** In addition to these above mentioned approaches, experienced Process Work facilitators, such as Audergon (2004, 2005, 2006), Mindell (1989, 1995, 2002), and Reiss (2004b), have introduced and successfully applied World Work and Community Forums in different countries and postconflict situations. Audergon (2006), who worked with such methods over several years in former Yugoslavia after the civil war and ethnic cleansings, emphasizes that any "conflict resolution activities must address and transform community trauma to ensure that it does not turn into renewed episodes of violence" (p. 2). Audergon (2005, p. 39) further explains that although both Tribunals and Truth and Reconciliation Commissions invite victims and perpetrators to give often passionate, personal, meaningful and emotionally healing testimony in a public arena,

there can be very little interaction encouraged within these structures. Community forums, however, when well facilitated, can be highly interactive. There are opportunities to relate about different versions of 'truth', different

point of view and intense emotional experiences. Interaction is a crucial dimension for transformation and potential closure to occur around issues of accountability.

Audergon further elaborates on the need for dialogue and interaction within a safe and facilitated framework for transformation to occur. A key element within these forums is to support "interaction just at the point that communication usually breaks down, or threatens to erupt or escalate." (Audergon, 2005, p. 39) These points are called Hotspots<sup>43</sup> and may, for example "arise around issues of accountability where outrage about injustice and past trauma are triggered" (Audergon, p. 39). Instead of repressing the controversial and potentially volatile issues around these hotspots (e.g., through rigidly structured communication and ground rules, or by criminalizing or excluding those with extreme views), facilitators support the group in slowing down and consciously focusing on such hotspots. This enables people to hear and feel their viewpoints expressed and "also become interested and able to hear and feel their "opponent's" point of view and experience" (Audergon, p. 39). To authentically and deeply hear others and "feel into the shared tragedy can lead to a genuine wish to move on as a whole community" (Audergon, p. 39). The following section on "Working with hotspots" elaborates on these crucial and transformative moments and how they can be dealt with in facilitated group interactions.

Such World Work methods work even with large groups and communities with up to several hundred participants, incorporate elements from Open Forums, group processes, as well as facilitation of relationship conflict or even individual work in front

---

<sup>43</sup> A term coined by Mindell (1992) and describes a moment during a group's interaction that seems "too scary, too emotional, [...] yet they contain core, essential feelings and are good energy in which to 'cook' community issues. However these hot spots are often so hot at first, that the issues are avoided. Eventually you must explore them, because they are the places where fire and earthquakes can break out later" (Mindell, 2002, p. 60).

of the whole group. In reflecting on his experiences in such community forum, one participant (a former soldier) said,

It never occurred to me before that I had anything to do with what happened in this region. This feeling of responsibility does not make me feel guilty. It gives me hope for the future, knowing I can make a difference in my community. (Audergon, 2006, p.5).

The significant conclusion for the Namibian situation is that, despite the absence of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, World Work and Community Forums can be useful to address issues from Namibia's colonial past and apartheid era, as well as contemporary issues (e.g., racism, tribalism, or huge socioeconomic inequalities). Especially in the Namibian context where almost every family, group or community has experienced and/or still is experiencing some form of direct or systemic violence, oppression or discrimination of some kind this seems extremely relevant and applicable. However, facilitation of such processes requires skilled facilitators and necessitates various aspects to be taken into consideration, which is what the following part of this chapter focuses on.

### **Relevant Process Work Aspects & Challenges and Opportunities**

The selection and content of the following sections derives from my own experiences with the application of Process Work in Namibia over the last 4 years in various classroom and workshop settings. Key insights also come from a very first series of workshops I facilitated under the title "Welcoming Conflict" in 2011<sup>44</sup>, where a total of 15 participants from diverse cultural and professional backgrounds were given a practical introduction to Process Work. Their valuable feedback during and after the

---

<sup>44</sup> Facilitating this workshop series formed part of my internship requirement during these studies, and covered various areas, such as noticing different channels of experiences, working with attractors and disturbers, Inner Work (and dealing with intrapersonal conflict), two-party and relationship conflict (including escalation, de-escalation and rank awareness), and facilitation of a group process (application of World Work methods).

workshops provided helpful guidance in terms of relevant focus areas for the following sections, as well as possible challenges and opportunities for the application of Process Work in Namibia.

### **An unknown paradigm and approach.**

*'It's easier to shoot one another, than it is to [...] work through the feeling stuff.'*

(Arnold Mindell in Steinfeld, 2011; 32:11min)

Although the introduction of a Process-Oriented approach to conflict and the facilitation hereof appears to offer great opportunities for Namibia, there are inherent challenges as well. As human beings, we tend to stick to what we know (primary process), and have an edge towards what is more unknown (emerging secondary process). As mentioned in the second chapter, the predominantly known approaches to conflict in the past have been characterized by intense violence and have created painful experiences for many Namibians. It thus seems natural that a common reaction to and mechanism for dealing with conflict is to rather avoid it (or address it only as little as necessary if it cannot be avoided) in order to not evoke a violent reaction as it had been experienced far too often in the collective past. However, the conflict itself is hereby not really addressed but merely temporarily kept away or suppressed, potentially causing the old (also known) pattern to come up, which means using vigor, power and authority, or even physical force and means of punishment to reach a "solution".

Dealing with conflict in a facilitated way that allows more space for underlying (and previously suppressed) feelings to emerge, focuses more on relational aspects, and involves seeing and welcoming conflict itself as meaningful and a potential teacher is less known and more unfamiliar. For example, in their written feedback after the "Welcoming Conflict" series in 2011, participants confirmed the generally perceived

attitude of avoidance towards conflict by statements such as, "We don't speak about those things," or "brushing conflicts under the rug and papering over the cracks in organizations have become common in Namibian society." (Schernick, 2011, p. 11)

The majority also underlined how new this different approach was for them in terms of focus, skills, and attitude (i.e., metaskills). With regard to the Namibian society in general, my observation over the last 9 years has been that there was a noticeable absence of any courses on "conflict management" being offered by Namibian institutions or being advertised in local newspapers. My personal experiences with offering such courses further substantiates this in so far as there was little response and interest when directly offering courses on "Conflict Management". However, when I reframed the course title while basically offering the same content as "Teambuilding" (i.e., focusing on aspects of communication/cooperation without explicitly mentioning conflict), there is now a much more positive and increasing response and interest. Nevertheless, once such workshops start and a safe enough space has been created, people start to open up about at times massive conflicts between colleagues and within their organization as a whole. Participants are then positively surprised how it was possible for them to address and often resolve these issues without the conflict escalating uncontrollably.

These observations and experiences confirm that the currently predominant Namibian approaches for dealing with conflict are currently either "avoidance" or rather strong and aggressive way of seeking "confrontation". The fundamental core of applying a Process Work perspective is to hereby not judge these existing approaches (primary process) as being seemingly less effective and to promote a different and assumingly "better" approach instead. This would actually replicate painful patterns of colonialism and oppression in merely other shape and form, and would further generate

subtle resistance to change. Instead, it is crucial to genuinely see, acknowledge, and appreciate the value that each of these approaches holds. For example, what appears like avoidance is an extremely useful and effective protection mechanism in order to not be overwhelmed by the intensity of extremely violent and life-threatening conflict. Hence, this conflict handling strategy has been vital for survival and to keep oneself, one's family, and the whole social system functioning. Secondly, the seemingly aggressive and domineering way of handling conflict actually shows how important qualities of "standing strong" and "resisting discrimination" have been incorporated and given people the strength to not give up in face of incredible cruelties and injustices.

In addition to the high value that both existing conflict handling styles hold, it is important to realize how many Namibians have hereby developed enormous spiritual and psychological rank (see footnote, p. 14 and p. 65, and pp. 100-105) over years and decades of struggle, which is often less seen but extremely important to be recognized.

Hence, when introducing a different (more facilitative) style of dealing with conflict (which is seen as the emerging secondary process for Namibia in the moment), one needs to honor and build on the qualities of the existing styles of conflict, and offer additional methods and tools where these existing styles have their shortcomings. This further includes awareness around the framing of such a new approach, as well as continuously finding out more about the various reasons (i.e., edge figures) why people would not want to engage in conflict. This will help to navigate around the edge of not wanting to deal with conflict and helps people to build a healthier relationship with conflict itself. Such ways of befriending the phenomenon of conflict will then also make it easier to notice and be able to safely stay and work with emotional hotspots, as explained in the following section.

## **Working with hotspots.**

*When the water starts boiling it is foolish to turn off the heat.*

Nelson Mandela

One of the most important skills for facilitating conflict, especially in groups but also in relationship conflict, is to notice and work with "Hotspots" when they show up.

According to senior Process Worker, Gary Reiss (2004b, p. 69), hotspots are

strongly emotionally packed moments [and] can be compared to a wild fire erupting. Failure to address the fire often means the fire will spread and grow, and may end up dangerous and out of control.

Hotspots in a group can usually be recognized as in when someone happens to touch upon a charged topic and people immediately change the subject. A hotspot could also occur in a very brief and almost unnoticeable moment, followed by tense silence, laughter, tears coming up, someone abruptly leaving the room, or just an intense feeling or any other noticeable shift in the group's atmosphere. Hence it requires facilitators' sensibility and skills to notice and support a group in dealing with such hotspots when they occur.

Although it did not directly happen in the context of a facilitated group process, a local example of a hotspot happened when educational movies (such as *A Crack in the Wall* by OYO Namibia, 2008) are screened to a young Namibian audience, and both boys and girls in the audience started laughing when relatively brutal rape scenes are shown. Of course this is a "hot topic" and a shocking moment. However, the rather strong (and for me unexpected and atypical) reaction of the group shows how much of a hotspot this actually is and how much issues around sexuality, violence, and abuse of power would benefit from being focused on and more consciously worked with in Namibia.

As scary and potentially dangerous as these hotspots can be, they are also the moments with the biggest potential for transformation. Hotspots often indicate that the group as a whole is at an edge, which means that something new is about to happen if the group is able to focus and work on what is really happening instead of quickly trying to move away. It is quite typical that hotspots generally get by unnoticed and are not held down or focused on. According my own observations and those of other facilitator colleagues, this seems particularly to be the case in Namibia, compared to, for example neighboring South Africa. Although this might not seem to be a big problem at first, it actually leads to more and more escalation, because these issues will cycle, recycle, and come back in other ways. "When something that strong occurs, if not picked up, the group invites an even stronger experience to catch its attention" (Reiss, 2004b, p. 70).

An example of a such a Hotspot experience happened recently in one of my classes at the Polytechnic, where one female participant started sharing something deeply personal and was close to tears. There was a tense silence in that moment of vulnerability, and some male colleagues in the other corner of the room made some joking comments about the tea cups in the room. My intervention as facilitator was to ask the group and particularly the male students, if they would be willing and able to stay with that silence for a moment, although it may feel a bit uncomfortable, and if we could keep our focus on what is happening for the female colleague (student). The group agreed and this allowed her to eventually cry (with her fellow students next to her moving closer and putting a hand on her shoulder and offering her a tissue), and she shared even more deeply what has been so touching for her. In our reflections on the situation, she revealed that she had not been able to cry for the last 20 years and that she was actually close to leave the room to just be on her own, but that staying in the room and being allowed to express her feelings was extremely transformational for her,

although it also made her feel very vulnerable. Other members of the groups whole group also shared how touched they were by what happened, and the male colleagues explained that they were initially trying to divert from the situation because they themselves did not know how to handle such strong feelings of sadness. They said they themselves needed some emotional safety in that moment, which they felt was provided when I asked them if they were willing to stay with what was happening. Such way of holding down of a hotspot and focusing on emerging emotions to be expressed eventually turned into a transforming experience for the whole group. It then led us further into reflecting on existing cultural norms around "having to be strong" and how we often regard tears as a sign of weakness and something to be avoided.

We discovered and experienced together that emotional openness within a safe container actually allows personal healing to occur and that it creates genuine connection and deepens the relationships we have with one another. However, we also acknowledged that strong emotions can at times be overwhelming and may trigger experiences of oppression and traumatic incidences based on individual and collective experiences in the past. We further noticed that many Namibian cultures, communities, and families avoid these kinds of emotions in order to protect themselves from feeling and being overwhelmed, and that more tools and skills on how to facilitate such situations are very much needed.

**Understanding and processing violence.** The above mentioned example about the importance of expressing feelings and allowing ourselves to be more vulnerable is closely linked to issues and experiences of violence. Violence, often deriving from unprocessed anger or other suppressed emotions, is a growing concern for Namibian society, as reported cases of gender-based violence almost doubled from 2011 to 2012 (Haufiku, 2013, p.6).

From a Process Work perspective, anger and violence (e.g., on the offender's side) are actually seen as important and should not be merely "fought against" (which in itself is an act of aggression "against" the aggression). It rather needs to be explored more deeply and processed in alternative and more healthy and useful ways. Finding out more about it, where it is coming from, and what its message and meaning might be is not only important for the individual and the person's immediate social environment, but also potentially useful and meaningful for society at large.

Vice versa, the massive amounts of large-scale violence and injustices in Namibia's history still today affect individuals' behaviors. The unprocessed systemic macrolevel violence recycles and shows itself, for instance, in form of domestic and gender-based violence as well as suicide. Most likely it is as an attempt to express pain, frustration, and anger that is actually held against someone or something else, such as a bigger system or systemic inequalities, injustices, and oppression that is not fully represented. In a way it is helpful that the number of reported cases is on the increase and is causing nationwide concern, because this helps us to realize that it is not merely an individual but a collective problem, which is related to our past and other bigger yet still invisible issues that need to be explored. Participants of my initial workshop series on "Welcoming Conflict" in 2011, found Process Work principles and application very useful to become aware of their interconnectedness and able to see underlying conflict dynamics, even to the extent of the crucial realization of: "Conflict 'out there' (in society) has a lot to do with conflict 'inside' (in our minds, families, and personal relationships)", as one participant put it (Schernick, 2011, p. 2).

It is important to not ostracize and isolate the offenders of violence, but rather to help them process the underlying causes of their actions and help them find alternative and more constructive ways to express themselves and their emotions. This can take

place in form of individual counseling as well as by facilitating relationship conflicts. Large group methods, such as World Work and Community Forums also seem to be extremely helpful, particularly in an African/Namibian cultural context which is generally more collectively and community oriented, and where the understanding of "family" usually goes beyond the Western concept of a nuclear family and includes a larger number of people as extended family members.

Allowing for the phenomenon of violence to be approached and understood in such a way, will eventually also allow for making space to bring in less or so far unrepresented roles such as historic or outside oppressors. Over time, this may have a healing effect on the larger fabric of Namibian society as a whole.

**Focus on building relationships.** One of Process Work's most prominent and related features is its strong relational component (i.e., its focus on relationship between individuals and within communities). This holds great potential for the Namibian situation where disputes are often approached through legal means or by often authoritative and predominantly outcome-oriented decision making.

***Beyond legal solutions.*** Mere legal solutions allow very little space for relationship building and too often neglect and marginalize social root causes and dynamics, as well as the emotional aspects of the respective conflicts including the humanity of the particular person within such situations. Senior Process Work practitioners and teachers Diamond and Katrivanou (2006, 56:09 min) highlight how a focus on relational aspects can make a positive change in atmosphere and outcomes of conflicts. They speak about the fear that is often involved in litigation and give the example around medical litigation where "lawyers were saying that if doctors admit wrong-doing it would increase chances of a law-suit, because now that they admitted

something they would be open to being sued" (56:57 min). However, a study<sup>45</sup> found that if doctors admitted wrong-doing it decreased the likelihood of lawsuits, because people felt heard and a personal contact was made. Diamond further stresses that the fear of intimacy and emotionality in conflict can be scary, but the fact that people got heard and feel they made an impact actually deescalates a conflict situation.

Current law-reform efforts within Namibia slowly but surely are heading towards the introduction of Alternative Dispute Resolution, which will provide a solid legal framework for less litigation (i.e., shorter and more cost-effective procedures, more mutually amicable solutions, and more relationship building). Process Work methods could compliment these efforts through providing training, supervision and ongoing support to relevant implementing agencies and practitioners.

***Empowerment through choice.*** Other areas of society, such as in families and at the workplace, would similarly benefit from Process-Oriented approaches to conflict. According to my own experiences and research by over 200 Namibian students at the Polytechnic of Namibia over the last 5 years (Schernick, 2013), conflicts in rural and urban areas alike are often "solved" by a third party acting as an arbitrator by either making a decision for the parties involved or by otherwise advising and telling them which decision they should take. Such strongly authoritarian approaches inherently reduces aspects of choice on the side of the parties in conflict and also negatively affects their long-term relationships with each other. Supporting individuals and communities in having more choices in various aspects of their lives and having them participate much more strongly in finding solutions and making decisions on conflicts that involve and affect them themselves, will therefore have a huge empowering effect on the social

---

<sup>45</sup> *When Doctors Make Mistakes* by Boston surgeon Dr. Atul Gawande in 1999. His results were confirmed by another study by researchers at the University of Michigan and Brigham Women's Hospital in 2010.

fabric of Namibia' society. An example of the impact a stronger focus on relationships in conflict situations would have at the workplace, derives from my work with a corporate client. During interviews with the employees working in the department responsible for Internal Relations (in charge of disciplinary procedures) and Employee Wellness, it was revealed to me that a huge number of conflicts cycle and that the same patterns of disputes show up time and again, because the underlying relationship issues and dynamics are not addressed. The organization's internal disciplinary procedures only provide for rather confrontational, adversarial and fact-based approaches, and also little training on how to facilitate conflict in more relational ways is being given to those having to handle these cases. It was said that this situation is very typical for Namibian workplaces.

***Relationships in education and psychology.*** Additional areas where relational aspects of working with conflict would be highly beneficial are educational institutions, such as schools and universities. During a workshop with life-skills teachers from different schools in Windhoek, participants appreciated the new methods introduced to them. They said they especially need to be more empowered to deal with group (whole class) situations in ways that fosters relationships between them and the learners, as well as among the learners themselves. They stated that the currently offered teacher trainings merely focus on one-on-one counseling but does not equip them with skills to facilitate two individuals who are in conflict with one another, nor does it train them how to properly deal with conflict and tensions within a whole group of students, such as in class situations. A black Namibian psychologist with her own practice and lecturer colleague of mine from the University of Namibia (who teaches graduate and postgraduate psychology students) also describes her dilemma with current mainstream and almost exclusively Western models of psychology. She stresses that Western

therapy models have very limited effects, particular with nonwhite clients, as there is a different cultural understanding of relationship, which mainstream western approaches do not cater for, and which severely affects the client-therapist relationship. She concludes that there is a strong need for new models which embrace the diversity in cultures, relationships, and communication styles in Namibia.

**Awareness of rank, power and privilege.** Rank is a Process Work concept developed by Mindell (1992, 1995) and briefly stated, describes the sum of a person's power and privileges in relation to other people. Sources for rank are external (e.g., social or structural), internal (e.g., psychological or spiritual), and also contextual and situational. It is a particularly helpful concept in the context of a society that has been and partially still is experiencing systemic oppression and severe abuse of social and structural rank, and that suffers from huge inequalities with regard to expression of a broad variety of powers and privileges. Rank awareness is extremely useful for understanding relationship dynamics between people, how tensions and conflicts arise, and how they may be addressed and resolved.

It is essential to understand that we typically do not identify with the rank and privileges we have, but tend to see high rank in others and expect them to use their power and privileges to make the first steps or initiate certain changes. In this regards, Audergon says that "around issues of justice and conflicts generally, usually all sides identify as the victim, [and we hold] our capacity to see ourselves as victims, while persecuting others" (2005,p. 19). She further stresses that

having privileges in a particular area supports us to be unaware of what's going on for others who do not share the same privileges. The accompanying attitude that "it is not my concern" reinforces the isolation that occurs between people around dynamics of privilege. Privilege combined with naivety or disinterest and the certainty that we are right perpetuates the very problems that we think have nothing to do with us. When unchecked and unconsidered, this dynamic

creates institutionalized oppression of all kinds, such as homophobia, racism, [tribalism], sexism, or discrimination against people with disabilities." (p. 20)

*White privilege and unconscious racism.* Developing more awareness around rank seems particularly important for the Namibian society, which historically and still today is characterized by huge inequalities in terms of access to power and privileges. An example of how underlying rank dynamics play out in the Namibian context, particularly around issues of race and racial discrimination, e.g. in form of racial profiling by black security guards against black customers in shops. While white customers usually pass by these guards who are positioned at the exit of almost every shop or supermarket, black customers are required to show their receipts or are even subjected to body searches. This is still a widely happening phenomenon and described by Namibian journalist Kaylan Reid (2013) as an "offensive and humiliating experience". Yet, this is just one typical example of how racial discrimination is still experienced by nonwhite Namibians in their daily lives. How Process Work theory and practices around rank awareness may help dealing with such challenging situations is best described by a black participant from my workshops in 2011, who stated that especially the exercises on rank<sup>46</sup> were eye-opening and empowering to her: "When someone accused me of stealing, I stood up and spoke for myself. It awakened my qualities as a human being" (Schernick, 2011, p. 15).

However, most white people I had conversations with about this phenomenon of racial discrimination, including myself (prior to going into a shop, several years ago, together with a black friend of mine where I had an eye-opening firsthand experience),

---

<sup>46</sup> These exercises focused on becoming aware of one's own rank and powers, by first listing and celebrating the rank that one is aware of. Then one's partner in that exercise is asked to mention various additional rank signals and aspects that s/he sees in oneself, and to then feel and tap deeper into these less known aspects of one's own rank and power. Finally one asks oneself how such rank can be useful in challenging situations.

had little knowledge of its existence. This blind spot and unawareness around white privileges is confirmed by Charleen Agostini in her thesis on *Racism in Trinidad: Using the Approach of Process Oriented Psychology*:

Most of the white people I spoke with recently said that Trinidad was no longer a racist society and ethnicity was not such an important issue.  
Most of the black and Indian people I spoke to said that it was still racist.  
(Agostini, 2000, p. 11)

There are many and even more severe situations in Namibia around racial discrimination and prejudices that go by unnoticed by those who are not on the receiving end of it due to rank unconsciousness (i.e., privileges being invisible for the privileged). It is hereby important to note that the more we deny the privileges we enjoy due to our skin color, and the more we distance ourselves from the possibility of being/acting at least in some way racist, we actually become even less aware of our then unconscious racist behavior or remarks. In her research on *Trauma Transformation and Facilitator Development*, Corinna Buenger Baumgarnter (2011) underlines this by saying,

If I do not identify at all as racist and am unconscious of how my behavior is also shaped from a society, from a white mainstream and its central media, I might upset my black friends with my behavior and wonder why. (p. 36)

***Internalized Oppression.*** The scars and aftermath of systemic racial separation are also not only felt between black and white but also run along tribal lines and even within ourselves as individuals, as Namibian gender activist and relationship counselor, Ngamane Karuaihe-Upi (quoted in Reid, 2013) puts it: "White people did a marvelous job of teaching us to hate each other. The divide and rule strategy has worked up till today." His statement is built on the words of famous South African apartheid activist Steve Biko (1997) who said: "The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed", and is applicable to all situations where racial

discrimination and oppression have been experienced. It highlights the need for *Decolonizing the African Mind* (Chinweizu, 1987) and points towards the incredibly important fact that any form of oppression is not only experienced externally in interaction with others, but also occurs in form of Internalized Oppression. This describes a state of having internalized the voices from those (individuals or even a whole system) who have repeatedly told us in various ways that, for example "we are not good enough" or "we don't have a right to do or say this or that". This leads to the formation of a strong and highly influential "Inner Critic" that very effectively hinders individuals' progress and inner developments. Process Work offers a deeper insight into and various approaches to working with internalized oppression and inner critics, such as starting to recognizing them as such and then, for example, entering constructive inner dialogues with one's inner critic or even switch roles and become that critic for a while in order to feel its power and to understand it and oneself much better. This eventually helps in developing more awareness of and a conscious relationship with one's inner critic, and it may even turn this inner critic into becoming an invaluable ally (Straub, 1990; Udo, 2012).

*Understanding different rank dynamics.* It is important to note and understand that Social Rank is merely one particular form and source of rank. How important awareness, recognition, and good use other forms of rank is, may best be highlighted by an example from another corporate client in the Namibian hospitality industry, which was predominantly white-owned and still has a lot of white people in top-management positions. While working with the mixed senior management group, a number of young black managers spoke about their difficulties with their black subordinates because they were not being "taken serious" by them. The identified reasons were that power and authority were only being seen and recognized based on external factors (visible social

rank), such a skin color (whites are still regarded as "the boss"), age, or gender. Other more internal sources of power/authority (psychological and spiritual rank, and also less visible forms of social and contextual rank) were less recognized. During the group sessions and additional individual meetings, some of the black managers were encouraged to discover and become more aware of and connected to their more internal and less visible sources of rank (such as educational background, experiences, personal and so-called "soft skills", and their overall leadership qualities). They described this work as very helpful for dealing with their staff, and feel they are now being more respected for who they are and what qualities they bring to their workplace, although they do not fit into the conventional picture of "the white (old) boss".

Such focus on and awareness of different forms and internal sources of rank seems keenly important for Namibian situations, where more and more competent young black Namibians find themselves in management positions and have to fight against old odds of preconceived ideas of how a "boss" or a person with authority has to be. Similarly such awareness and conscious use of internal rank can generally be helpful for addressing conflict with people in positions of authority (i.e., with high social and/or structural rank), as it enables people to level the playing field in a fair, respectful and conscious manner.

In other words, developing more awareness of and access to one's inner and personal power, instead of only relying on external sources of power and authority, is quite literally a very empowering process and as stated by senior Process Worker Julie Diamond (2013) "the cure for the abuse of power is more [inner] power" (12:48min), yet in a conscious way.

***Noticing high and low rank.*** The following paragraphs conclude this section on Rank Awareness by providing a brief and more practical oriented insight into indicators

for high and low rank, independent from its (internal or external) sources. It also shows how unprocessed low-rank experiences tend to cycle and may even turn into violence or abuse.

People with high rank are more likely to speak than listen, follow their intuition and impulses rather than worry about what other people think, and rely on their own authority rather than look to others for affirmation. (Bedrick, 2012, p. 72)

By contrast, people with lower rank are more likely to feel challenged, bullied, or abused by higher-rank individuals or to act out or be depressed; to turn their reactions to such mistreatment into competition with others of similar or lower rank than to stand up to the high-rank people; and to retaliate against individuals with similar or lower rank, in safer, less direct ways and often unconsciously. For example, a man after being pushed around by his boss might come home from work and retaliate against his wife, children, or dog. Or children who have been abused might abuse animals, younger siblings, or their own children even years later. (Bedrick, 2012, p. 73)

Translating the above citations into a Namibian context may provide helpful explanations for tribalism (perceived superiority of certain tribes over others) as consequences of the racially discriminating colonial and apartheid system, as well as domestic violence as an unconscious reaction unfair treatment at the workplace, just to name a few examples of commonly experienced phenomena.

### **Spiritual aspects in the context of Christianity.**

*There are so many kinds of voices in the world,  
and none of them is without significance.*

1 Corinthians 14:10  
(The Holy Bible - New King James Version)

My experiences over the last 9 years suggest that Namibians across all racial and cultural backgrounds are more religious and deeply spiritual than the typical German or Western person. For example, Namibia is officially and by its constitution a secular country, but there is hardly any workshop of any kind that is not being opened and

closed with a Christian prayer (Namibian Sun, 2014, pp. 1-2). Although Christianity is an initially imported religion from Europe and many Namibians are in one way or another still connected to traditional beliefs, an estimated 90% of Namibians feel themselves as belonging to one of the many Christian denominations. This makes it relevant to also focus on the possible implications of such strong presence of Christian faith on Process Work and its application in the Namibian context.

The spiritual roots and aspects of Process Work derive from many different sources worldwide. Its core principles of loving and accepting people for who they are, embracing diversity, and to trust the flow of nature itself are found in almost all spiritual teachings worldwide, including "Christian contemplative practices" (Mindell, 1985b, p. 6). They are most strongly and clearly pronounced in Taoist principles or Taoism, as described in the *Tao de Ching* (Tzu, 1988), often represented with a Yin-Yang symbol.

The predominant Christian belief, particularly in Namibia, of the concept of evil and its relationship with such evil (i.e., what is morally wrong and should be approached as something that needs to be overcome, controlled or kept away) is something that would be put to a test when introducing of a Process Work approach. According to Vikkelsoe's (1997) criminology research, mainstream Christianity's moral approach to condemn and confine evil externally in society or internally in the individual, "does not easily allow the experience of so-called evilness to be brought to consciousness in individuals, groups or society" (p. 2). In individuals, this leads to "evil" characteristics being split off from one's consciousness and getting projected onto others, hereby turning them into enemies. Any system build on such moral grounds rather encourages that what it considers evil to stay hidden, hereby becoming a self-defeating system that "perpetuates the very ill it originally intended to cure" (p. 6).

Process Work offers an open approach that fosters a deeper understanding of and between these polarized perceptions of what is regarded as "good" or "evil", hereby focusing on an awareness that there is something holy in everybody and in all aspects of life (Tzu, 1988). That there is something of God in everyone is actually a key theme in the New Testament based on the teachings of Jesus Christ and has also become part of the fundamental principles of some Christian faiths, such as Quakers or Mennonites. However, mainstream Christianity in Namibia still has a rather conservative moral focus and a more condemning attitude towards what it perceives to be evil or morally wrong. An additional challenge for the implementation of Process Work in Namibia may lie in the fact that for many Namibians the Christian God is the one and only God and that His law (as written down in the Bible) is to be followed rigidly, as this leaves little room or openness for other spiritual teachings or worldviews. Some churches even teach that the Yin-Yang symbol is actually a "sign of the devil" and (similar to practicing yoga), something that "true Christians" should stay away from.

In the first series of Process Work trainings I facilitated in Namibia in 2011, similar questions about how Process Work and Christianity go together came up. Besides having deep conversations about religious tolerance and how different people may experience spiritual connection to a higher entity (in a Christian context referred to as God) differently, the best way to connect was actually through applying Process Work in practice. Especially when working with attractors<sup>47</sup>, participants were encouraged to consider biblical figures. For other inner work exercises it was helpful to refer to the "Holy Spirit" as a reference for the all-embracing universal force or principle which provides subtle guidance and that is often called "the Tao that cannot be

---

<sup>47</sup> People we feel attracted to are a possible doorway to accessing our secondary process, because we admire a person for certain qualities that we actually also have within ourselves.

spoken" by many Process Work practitioners. This helped participants to have genuinely helpful experiences for difficult situations they were facing, and some had even deeply spiritual moments in which they had very direct and personal experience of God or the divine being present within themselves. Participants could then relate these experiences to their own Christian faith without any contradiction. However, a slight sense of doubt often remained around the issue of seeing "the other" as a part of oneself, because many churches seem to intensely teach and practice that one has to just condemn disturbing issues or "such evil" and should get rid of it.

The lessons I learned about introducing Process Work in such a predominantly and rather conservative Christian context were that sensitive framing is required, and that it is helpful to introduce its underlying philosophy without too much initial emphasis on Taoism and Taoist symbols. It is further useful to familiarize oneself with the Bible, and discover passages that are in line with Process Work philosophies, such as the quote at the beginning of this section which highlights the significance of all kinds of voices in this world, which strongly resonates with the core values of Deep Democracy. Other Bible (2007) passages relate to embracing "the other" as part of yourself, as said by Jesus in Luke 6:27, "But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you", while others are linked to the metaskill of a beginner's mind, "Judge not, and you shall not be judged." (Luke 6: 37).

Awareness and flexibility around spiritual aspects when introducing Process-Oriented inner work techniques allows Namibians of Christian faith to have a more direct and deeply personal experience of "God" or the "Holy Spirit", which Mindell refers to as *Process Mind* (Mindell,2010) and is also mentioned in the Bible (2007), where it says: "...but you are able, for the Spirit of the Holy God is in you" (Daniel 4:18). This helps in realizing that Process Work is not only deeply spiritual in nature

and is in no competition or contradiction to the essential core of Christianity, even though Process Work requires a certain openness towards exploring deeper what might be regarded as "evil", instead of merely condemning and trying to avoid it.

**My own role as facilitator.** As I am a part of the field about which I am writing, this makes it crucial to also reflect on my own role. This is not only for my own process of learning and growth as a facilitator, but also to share important insights from the following self-reflections as they seem partially relevant for others and the development of Process Work in Namibia as a whole.

*Awareness of one-sidedness and rank.* The first aspect that is important to me, is my awareness (as facilitator) of my own bias and potential one-sidedness, which was already highlighted by Xaba (2011), and I further noticed it through my own experiences as facilitator and consultant in Namibia over the last couple of years. It is also happening "in the moment", as I am writing this thesis, whereby I notice that some issues and sections, such as the ones touching on German colonial history and present reconciliation efforts, take much longer for me to formulate the "correct" sentences without too much unconscious bias. I have thus realized that it is easy for me to get caught in the role of the Social Activist, who in the face of huge historical injustices wants to side with those who were previously disadvantaged. Yet, it is crucial for myself as facilitator not to be against or marginalize the oppressor ("the other side") and disregard the perspectives, feelings, and experiences from the German-Namibian settlers and their descendants, as well as the many "other sides" that are present in such a complex setting like Namibia and the many voices and realities that want to be recognized, listened to, and understood. It is further important not to be totally "neutral" because the energy behind the (role of the) Social Activist is actually a great motivator and driving force for positive social change. Hence, one has to be aware and transparent

about one's own partial identification with one side, so that it is easier to notice and work with it when its inherent bias is about to happen or has possibly influenced one's interactions already.

A similar second major aspect regarding my own role as facilitator in Namibia is my awareness and transparency around my own rank. In order to practically explain what I mean, I am listing some of the social rank that I have, of which some is earned (e.g., that we have studied or worked hard for) and some is unearned (privileges merely dependant on how, where, and under which circumstances we are born and grow up, e.g. having parents that can help financing one's studies). I am white (still an influencing factor in post-apartheid Namibia), male (in a strongly patriarchal sociocultural environment), European (my passport allows me quick, easy, and almost unlimited global travels), German-speaking (which allows for deeper conversations with German-Namibians), formally educated (three different University degrees), self-employed (able to choose when and from where to work, and to make a living out of it), married (important status in an African and also Christian context), almost 40 years old (age plays a major role in African cultures in terms of being respected and/or regarded as authority) etcetera.

This beginning of a list of social ranks shows and demonstrates how much social rank I actually hold and which the vast majority of people around me does not have. This naturally and unavoidably influences my interactions with the world around me, whether I want it or not. There is no way to actually hide one's rank. So, it is recommended to be open and transparent about it, so that it can become useful and a resource for oneself, others, and social change in the world (Mindell, 1995; Reiss, 2004b). Other people will anyhow see, hear, sense, or otherwise notice one's rank. This is why trying to ignore or deny one's rank would merely make oneself less conscious of

it, and there are only a few things that are more escalating to a conflict situation than rank unconsciousness, whether it is happening on the side of a party to the conflict or (even worse) on the side of the designated facilitator. Being aware of one's rank in the role of a facilitator also serves as important role-modeling in a societal context with so much inequality and huge rank differences, and where over the course of history a social rank imbalance has been deliberately created and systemically enforced by means of laws, education, segregation, social exclusion etcetera.

***One-sidedness and guilt.*** One key realization around my own bias and one-sidedness are that it is somewhat related to and is at times fuelled by issues and feelings around guilt. I noticed that feeling guilty can push me into becoming too much of a Social Activist, hereby not being able to keep my one-sidedness in check.

My own relationship with guilt started as a teenager growing up in Germany. I remember having discussions with my father about the Nazi regime and the Holocaust. The key lesson from these discussions was that I am *not guilty* for what happened in the past, but that I am, however, *responsible* for similar atrocities not to happen again (in other shape and form) in my lifetime. It became particularly important for me to learn more about German history and the power dynamics and patterns of discrimination that were involved, for example in the rise of Nazi Germany, in order to notice them early when they are still small and to try to prevent them from escalating further.

While working and living in Namibia, I noticed that first of all the feeling of guilt is actually a reality and something that occurs from time to time, as much as my rational mind tells me that I don't have to feel guilty. This reoccurring feeling of guilt, that often dwells in the background, is something that I therefore want and have to be aware of, work on, and integrate by means of doing my own inner work, in order to not fall victim to unconscious bias and one-sidedness. Secondly, I realized that history is

not (only) in the past, but as long as people still carry the past memories within them and bring them out in interactions with others, it is very much "present" in the current moment. It therefore cannot be denied or neglected, because it is an existing reality and has to be acknowledged and dealt with. Hence, my responsibility to not let history (and the trauma thereof) repeat itself in other forms, also includes helping myself and others to deal with the past (that is still present) on an individual as well as collective level.

Through my experiences with Process Work over the last 4 years and due to my privileges of being able to travel and study, I now have not only more awareness but also methods and tools for outer and inner work on these issues. Hence, I would like to share one exemplary way of dealing with inner disturbers, such as the above mentioned inner feeling of guilt, which has been one of the root causes for unconscious bias and one-sidedness for me. The following approach is based on the principles of Deep Democracy (i.e., that all voices need to be heard, including the diversity of voices inside ourselves) and that of something valuable being in the disturber ("the other is me") applied to intrapersonal processes. In this particular case, there is a part of me that at times feels guilty. This in itself means that there must also be another part/voice in me that says something like: "You should feel guilty!". This voice can be called my Inner Critic<sup>48</sup> which is a part of myself that I am less aware of and not really identified with. Focusing on, getting in dialogue with, and picking up this less known part internally (i.e., fully feeling into and embodying that voice) will help me to get to the deeper message, meaning, and essence behind what exactly this guilt-invoking voice is trying to tell me. Guilt is hereby merely my own reaction to it, and if I only identify with that feeling of guilt without noticing my inner diversity, it blurs and covers up the essential message that wants to be heard. So, by shape-shifting and internally becoming "the

---

<sup>48</sup> As explained under "Internalized Oppression", pp. 102-103

messenger" I gain a much better access to the message itself and where it is coming from, which eventually leads to a deeper the understanding of myself and the whole situation. However, this is just one of many ways of dealing with an inner critic or processing intense and disturbing feelings within oneself.

In my particular case, when stepping into the role of the one that tells me, "You should feel guilty" (and hereby shape-shifting into my own Inner Critic), I can literally feel the strength and determination that is on that side, combined with a very clear sense of responsibility and accountability for whatever it is that I do in life. I hereby became aware that I sometimes have a tendency to not take everything too seriously (which in itself is not bad, just not always helpful) and realized that I can actually use more of this strong, powerful and more determined energy for myself in my personal and professional life. Thus, what initially started off as a feeling of guilt, turned out to be an important message that is indeed very useful for me, and something that I actually need more of in my life.

The above mentioned insight around my own bias/one-sidedness and my inner work around feelings of guilt, as well as awareness of the existence and use of my rank in the role of a facilitator are just a few key issues identified for this section which hold even deeper personal insights that I did not mention here. There are many more deeply interesting issues, such as "Insider-Outsider Dynamics of being German (foreigner) in Namibia", "Intercultural challenges", "How Rank or Social Activism shows up in different other contexts (e.g., around strongly patriarchal cultures, gender-based violence and sexual oppression, or highly authoritarian systems and behaviors)" etcetera.

However, I decided to limit it to only these described aspects, in order to give a glimpse of how such ongoing introspection and inner work is not only very helpful and

enlightening for any facilitator but actually necessary. Any facilitator who is not aware of his or her own bias, one-sidedness, rank, inner critics, and unresolved personal and underlying emotional issues, may unknowingly escalate a situation or get triggered. This unconsciously adds more fuel to the fire (conflict) and makes the situation become unhealthy or even dangerous, instead of facilitating and helping those involved.

## Chapter 4: Conclusions

### Summary of Findings

The following section presents key findings from the last two chapters in a recapitulated form. The focus lies on the Namibia's situation on the one hand, and identified possible contributions of Process Work for the country's transformation process on the other.

**On the Namibian situation.** Namibia is a country with highly diverse cultures and a rich yet often painful history, having gained political independence only 24 years ago. With regard to socioeconomic aspects it is still characterized by prevailing huge inequalities, and faced by a number of different other challenges, such as education and land reform, frequently occurring labor disputes, and an ineffective and unsustainable civil and criminal justice system.

The huge conflicts Namibia has been facing in the past, particularly during the systemic violence and oppression during times of colonialism and Apartheid, have left their often invisible scars on a large part of the population. It has become clear that individual and collective experiences of trauma have been passed on over generations, and still influence relationships and the overall social fabric of society up until today. The absence of sufficient processes and initiatives to comprehensively address its painful history may moreover have a negative impact on overall socioeconomic development of Namibia today, although this thesis did not particularly focus on the impact of collective past trauma and violence on the economy. However, there is definitely a strong influence with regard to how Namibians today deal with conflicts that happen at the workplace. It has also been established that the primary ways of handling conflict in Namibia are either "avoidance" or "using force", both of which are

valid and in themselves valuable responses to conflict. However, they only offer a limited spectrum of possible responses and are not always the most effective ones. Over the last couple of years, there has been a strong and growing concern over levels of violence in the country, particularly around gender-based violence, but also in schools and various other areas of society.

Besides all these challenges, there seems to be a growing openness and willingness to not only tackle the current phenomenon of violence and learn more about alternative ways of dealing with conflict, but to also slowly but surely address still unresolved issues of the past. Hence, it seems that the current transformation process, which is often referred to as a political and economic one, also has huge social, psychological, intercultural, and even spiritual dimensions.

**On Process Work's contributions.** As outlined in the literature review, Process Work methods, skills, and underlying philosophies have established themselves as highly valuable approaches for the facilitation and transformation of conflict. Although Process Work's roots are close to many indigenous African traditions, there are only few communities of practitioners on the African continent in the moment, and none so far in Namibia. However, experiences from post-apartheid South Africa highlight specific benefits of a Process-Oriented approach, such as helpful aspects of dealing with difficult rank/power dynamics and the importance of facilitators' self-awareness, which is suggested to be similarly applicable for the Namibian context.

Overall, it is clearly evident that Process Work has something to offer with regards to past and present issues of conflict and violence, including the healing of traumatic experiences. As it was elaborated on in Chapter 3, the possible contributions or Process Work seem to be most significant and helpful around the following areas:

***History and Community Forums.*** The first part of Chapter 3 underlined the existence of collective and transgenerational trauma and brought to light how Namibia's unresolved past is still present in different aspects of nowadays conflict situations, especially when subtle or direct violence occurs. It further revealed a growing wish and willingness within Namibia's society to deal with the collective past, and explained how starting such a process of reengaging with large-scale traumatic experiences naturally takes decades or even centuries after the painful events and atrocities have occurred.

In addition or as an alternative to other approaches of dealing with the past (e.g., Truth and Reconciliation Commissions), Process Work methods for working with large-groups, such as Community Forums, have been successfully applied in various postwar countries and offer ways of addressing and transforming collective and historic conflicts. Given the Namibian situation, such Community Forums or related methods for dialogue seem well-suited to support the country's process of dealing with its past and how it still effects relationships between groups and individuals today. Particularly when dealing with the colonial past, research from other settler-societies and experiences from my own process of self-exploration indicate that being aware of and processing underlying and probably suppressed feelings of guilt may be crucial for such kind of work.

Based on Process Work literature, as well as observations and experiences within Namibia itself, the importance of self-aware and well-prepared teams of facilitators for such large groups dialogue methods cannot be overemphasized.

***Hotspots, violence, emotions, and relationship focus.*** As explained through a variety of practical examples in the second part of Chapter 3, the awareness around and skilled facilitation of hotspots within a group or relationship conflict, can have a huge and transformational impact. Not only does it prevent violence, but it also allows

underlying emotions to be expressed and processed in a safe environment that leads to deeper insight around underlying issues. It also creates better understanding and empathic connection among the parties involved and supports development of genuine and more sustainable relationships. By focusing less on the outcome, but more on underlying feeling issues and relationship-aspects people are enabled to make own decisions. This constitutes a much more empowering approach than offered by many outcome-oriented conflict management methods.

***Rank and power.*** Process Work's understanding of rank and power dynamics, as well as its various methods for noticing and accessing one's personal power has been identified and described as one of the most relevant aspects of Process Work for the Namibian context. Awareness and skilful facilitation of rank and power dynamics are especially important in an environment where power imbalances are still extremely high and predominantly based on social rank (e.g. skin color, gender, age, physical attributes, level of education, status or position). My own experiences, particularly with young black Namibian managers, have shown the detrimental effects of merely relying on such external sources of power. Instead, when becoming aware of one's internal sources of rank/power and learning how to access and utilize them in positive ways, personal and work-relationships have improved if not even transformed. Such improved access to one's inner resources is not only "empowering" in the literal meaning of the word, but it is also an incredible useful instrument for healing and prevention of abuse, especially with regard to the abuse of power.

Additional rank-related aspects where awareness and facilitation skills from the field of Process Work seem very useful are the phenomena of Internalized Oppression (with often strong yet hidden inner critics) and the harmful unconsciousness around white privilege.

As the section on *Spiritual aspects in the context of Christianity* has shown, such access to inner experiences of power is not only helpful in relationships with other people but also in strengthening one's personal relationship to what can be referred to as God. Some of Process Work's inner work techniques explicitly invite and allow access to often deeply spiritual experiences of inner wisdom that helps finding meaning and guidance for seemingly intractable and extremely polarizing inner and outer conflict situation. Through accessing one's inner wisdom a deeper connection gets established, which can be related to the essence of what is usually provided in many religious teachings in form of external sources or outside authority figures, such as preachers or books. This in no way devalues the importance of teachers and scriptures as source for guidance and inspiration. Further, a number of biblical passages are related to underlying Process Work philosophy and can be helpful for its introduction and application in Christian contexts.

***Role of the Facilitator.*** As highlighted in both the literature review and in one exemplary situation in Chapter 3, awareness of one's own role as facilitator is crucial. Such self-awareness includes aspects of rank and how one is perceived by others, and also being aware of one's own internal issues and areas where one can get easily triggered or "catch fire." Facilitators therefore can significantly benefit from Inner Work techniques to work on these issues ("burn their wood") before, during, and after facilitation, also partially explored through my reflections on my own role as facilitator.

An additional recommendation that emerged is for facilitators to not facilitate alone but to work in a team, ideally one that is reflecting the diversity of the respective group one is facilitating. For example, as a white male facilitator it is wise to co-facilitate with a black female facilitator colleague. However, if there are obvious or even just fine rank differences (e.g., if one is clearly more senior/experienced and is

therefore doing most of the talking), the facilitators as a team needs to be clear about these rank-related issues among themselves. They might further need to state some of these issues clearly and transparently in front of the group. Such awareness and openness about facilitators' own rank and existing relationship dynamics provides more safety for the entire group and generally helps conflicts from going underground. It is also an immensely valuable role-modeling for others to see facilitators handling their own potential relationship conflicts. Thus, it is almost an imperative for facilitation teams to invest time and effort in preparation and de-briefing sessions, and to facilitate any own-relationship conflict that will inevitably and naturally arise.

***Introducing Process Work.*** Finally, a crucial realization is that the introduction of Process Work and a more facilitated approach to conflict must not happen or come across as "just another approach from the outside" that is brought into this country. Instead, it needs to organically develop and build on qualities of existing ways of handling conflict<sup>49</sup>, while also offering valuable additional options and alternatives where existing approaches seem to have their natural shortcomings. This would be in line with the fundamental Process Work principles of not analyzing and suggesting a fixed solution, but to rather follow feedback in from moment to moment interactions. It values the country's primary process (known and existing ways of doing things), while being aware of an emerging secondary process (less known and new ways of doing things), and supports Namibians to become more fluid in applying a diversity of methods for dealing with conflicts during this ongoing transformation process.

---

<sup>49</sup> See pp. 91-92

## **Conclusions**

Through this thesis process, it has become clear that large-scale experiences of violence, injustices, and systemic oppression that have occurred in Namibia's history still dwell in the background of people's daily interactions, show up in nowadays phenomena of conflict and violence, and influence the way in which these conflicts are handled. Through my research and reflections, I further established that Process Work methods and approaches can offer valuable contributions to carefully bring these underlying aspects more into awareness and to the surface, and offer helpful skills and tools for facilitating past and existing conflicts in more safe and conscious ways.

**Namibia's own pace of dealing with history.** The fact that Namibia has chosen to not (yet) address historical injustices through a comprehensive nationwide process, such as South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, may be criticized as insufficient. However, it seems to have been a wise decision at the time. When comparing the country's wounds with that of an individual patient in hospital, it might be clear that from the severity of her wounds (e.g., much internal bleeding) surgery is required. However, adequately trained medical personal is needed (both in terms of quality and quantity) in order to assure that the operation will be successful and the patient sufficiently treated and not just be cut open and left to bleed.

In the case of Namibia's historical wounds, it seems obvious that the capacity to deal with the past (i.e., in form of proper sociopsychological and facilitation skills within society) is still in the process of being developed in order to safely hold and facilitate such a process. The current introduction of Process-Oriented conflict facilitation skills into the Namibian context comes at a time where a growing need for alternative ways of handling conflict and a willingness for dealing with the past is increasingly developing within the country itself,. Finding meaning in even painful

experiences from the past will conclusively prove invaluable for dealing with the after-effects of collective trauma and current challenges around violence. Such enhanced capacity of dealing with conflict and building more authentic and sustainable relationships will therefore contribute positively to the country's overall transformation process.

**Social aspects of transformation.** As mentioned in the introduction, Namibia's current transformation process primarily focuses on political and economic aspects, which are indeed of fundamental importance. However, it is clearly evident that although political independence has been achieved, the struggle for economic independence, social justice, reconciliation, and the "decolonization of the mind" (see pp. 102-103) still continues. Simply, becoming independent is a complex and ongoing process with many different layers and levels.

A Process Work's focus on social, psychological, and relational aspects of transformation is therefore seen as complementary to the existing focus areas. In a way, it could even be regarded as a kind of missing link for the revolutionary change that is taking place. Process Work founder, Arnold Mindell (1995, p.226), states that,

Through revolutions, important aspects of the world have changed. [...] Issues and problems have changed, but the manner in which we get along has not. [This means that], revolution of social structures has not changed the individual or our consciousness of relationship.

Mindell continues by saying: "We need changes, not only around specific political and environmental issues, but in our awareness of how we get along together." (Mindell, 1995, p.228)

This particular awareness around relating with one another is an area that has not been much in the focus of the Namibian transformation process so far, yet this is where Process Work would have a lot to offer, in terms of theoretical knowledge, practical

methods and skills, and spiritual practice to further develop inner attitudes and metaskills for genuinely honoring and living our diversity in all its various aspects. Hence, the various efforts of pre- and post-independence nation building under the guiding philosophy of "Unity in Diversity" have been crucial for bringing people together, and Process Work methods can provide valuable additional components to further strengthen these efforts (i.e., to explore people's inner and outer diversity, facilitate genuine dialogue, and support healing and transformation in a way that not only builds community but that also helps in building the nation at large). How and in which areas such methods will actually be applied, and how this in turn affects the country's socioeconomic development and overall transformation are the subject of future research projects.

### **Contributions to the Field**

This thesis explores the usefulness and application of particularly conflict-related aspects of Process Work within the Namibian context. It therefore makes contributions to the ongoing development of Process Work theory and practice, as well as to Namibia's ongoing transformation process.

Reflections on the Namibian situation and the current applications of Process Work in Namibia provide Process Workers and other conflict facilitation practitioners who consider working in this country with valuable insights and background information. They will be more informed and sensitized, able to build on and deepen their experiences already gained, as well as contribute to capacity building and skills development in this crucial area. Some of the findings may further be useful for introducing and applying Process Work in environments where it is not yet known, especially in countries with similar cultural, historical, or religious or backgrounds to Namibia. This thesis also makes a contribution towards the understanding of the

relationship between historical and contemporary conflicts and their dynamics, especially on the effects of traumatizing experiences of colonialism and Apartheid on individuals and society today.

This thesis further contributes to the overall development and transformation process of Namibia, especially around social aspects of peace and reconciliation. Bringing in global experiences with Process Work in relationship to my own experiences here may help Namibians to recognize and address existing conflict and to more deeply understand the phenomena of violence and underlying issues, such as individual and collective historic trauma. A much richer understanding of the connection between violent conflict and oppression from the past and how these affect present day life and realities is therefore another key contribution to Namibian students, fellow facilitators, academics, and other interested individuals.

It further contributes to growing awareness among Namibians on critical issues, such as rank, power and privilege (including empowering methods for overcoming existing inequalities and marginalization) and relational dynamics in conflict situations. Those who (still) hold high rank and have various forms of privileges (often without actually being aware of these privileges) are herewith given an opportunity to learn more about their actual privileges and how to use them for the benefit of the whole, instead of unconsciously perpetrating past injustices in other forms or shapes. This may usefully contribute to greater awareness and eventual overcoming of still existing, often very subtle and unnoticed aspects and patterns of racism, colonialism, and oppression.

Ideally this thesis also contributes to the development of a more embracing and welcoming attitude towards conflict, for it to be facilitated in more effective and constructive ways. The introduction of Process Work concepts and tools in this thesis are meant to inspire Namibians to try applying these in their own day-to-day realities. It

also encourages communication with the author around the topic, especially inviting diversity in opinions and viewpoints.

Finally, this thesis serves to inform and invite Namibians to participate in upcoming seminars and academic programs (to be established at educational institutions within Namibia). In order to make a real and practical contribution to Namibia's transformation process, it will be instrumental to establish a network of practitioners who can provide training and helpful interventions in various conflict situations across different sectors of society.

### **Next Steps and Ways Forward**

In the moment, Process Work in Namibia is at a very early stage with not yet many practical and in-depth experiences, some of which are reflected upon in this thesis. Hence, the following next steps and ways forward aim to highlight possibilities to increase the existing theoretical knowledge and to practically learn more about the actual application of Process Work in different areas and to network with interested groups and individuals.

**Further research.** As this thesis merely provides a first and pioneering glance into the application of process work in Namibia, future research is needed to continue painting a more complete picture. Here are additional possible areas for such research that I was only able to touch on the surface and would be worth exploring in much more depth and detail:

- Explorations into various indigenous ways of conflict resolution within Namibian tribal and cultural groups, and how indigenous conflict resolution knowledge and practices can be made more useful for dealing with today's conflicts?
- Finding out more about how unresolved conflict at the workplace, in families, and in society at large affects the economy and the overall socioeconomic development.

- More in-depth focus on the colonial past, i.e. the atrocities committed during 1904-08, and how Process Work could support dialogue and reconciliation to take place.
- Looking specifically into the Apartheid-Era, including the Struggle for Independence and how Process Work perspectives and methods could help these wounds to heal.
- Critically reflecting on future application of Process Work methods and approaches in different Namibian contexts, and exploring necessary adaptations hereof.

However, these are just few out of many possible areas of further theoretical and practical research around the future application of Process Work in the Namibian or even a broader Southern African context.

**Training and study opportunities.** Although it would be immensely valuable for other Namibians to also take on similar studies in the area of Process Work and Conflict Facilitation at the Process Work Institute in the United State or at other accredited institutions in Europe, the financial implications would not make this a viable option for many. Hence, I would like to map out some alternative and more locally available options to participate in Process Work trainings, to learn more about its theoretical background, and to practically experience it.

**Namibia.** As from 2014, I will offer independently organized workshops and training seminars as a way for Namibians from different cultural and professional backgrounds to gain theoretical understanding of and practical experiences with different Process Work methods, particularly Process-Oriented ways of facilitating conflict. It is hereby important to take the existing economic disparities into consideration by offering some form of discount or scholarships for people from less privileged socioeconomic backgrounds.

In addition, international MACF graduates and faculty from the Process Work Institute (<http://www.processwork.org/faculty-directory-2>) expressed their interest and availability for visiting and offering workshops in Namibia. Two senior Process Workers have already planned workshops in Namibia as from 2014. Lukas Hohler (2006 & <http://www.change facilitation.ch/en>), is going to introduce a Process Work based program for teachers (see: <http://teachersempowered.net>) as a pilot project at the Waldorf School in Windhoek in February 2014. Experiences from this pilot may lead to an expansion of this program, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, at other Namibian schools. South African born Dr. Stephen Schuitevoerder (2000 & <http://processconsulting.org>) will also come to Namibia in November 2014 and offer a 2-day workshop on Process-Oriented approaches to conflict in groups and organizations.

In terms of local academic programs the Namibia University of Science and Technology (former "Polytechnic of Namibia") already offers three BA-programs which include conflict management related courses, in which I incorporate few aspects of Process Work in the capacity of part-time lecturer for these courses. In addition, a soon accredited postgraduate program in the Faculty of Humanities will include one particular course on "Conflict Management and Indigenous Knowledge Systems" that will explicitly introduce Process Work approaches and methods to support students in exploring indigenous conflict handling practices and practically applying these in their respective professional and social contexts. A few years from now, there might even be a whole conflict-specific postgraduate study program that would then have a strong component on Process-Oriented ways of facilitating conflict. It is further envisioned to develop and offer an accredited 3-year Diploma Course at the one of the Namibian

Universities in cooperation with the Institute for Process Work in Switzerland (Institut für Prozessarbeit, IPA - <http://institut-prozessarbeit.ch>).

***Other African countries.*** In addition to these local training opportunities, there is a growing number of Process Work trainings and seminars being offered in South Africa (see "Networking" section below), as well as a variety of Process Work seminars in Kenya, through the Deep Democracy Institute - East Africa (<http://www.ddi-eastafrika.co.ke>).

**Networking.** In addition to practical workshops and training, it is crucial to look into opportunities for communication, connection and possible mutual inspiration and support around Process-Oriented ways of facilitating conflict in and around Namibia. Based on global and South African experiences, the use of email strings (e.g., Yahoogroups) and social networking sites (e.g., Facebook) seem to be suitable technologies to stay in touch after and in between real-life events, such as training workshops, conferences, and World Work seminars. Currently there is only a regional email string for people interested in Process Work in Southern Africa (<http://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/pw-southernafrika/info>) and a South African Process Work Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ProcessWorkSA>).

Local Namibian structures will probably be set up from 2014, after workshops with Lukas Hohler and Dr. Stephen Schuitevoerder have taken place. This will then provide initial networking structures and allow for exchange and discussions around Process Work in Namibia to begin. Over time, this may expand in other ways of electronic and face-to-face networking (e.g., through regularly meeting practice groups for ongoing learning and reflection around the application of Process Work on issues that Namibians are facing in their daily lives), as requested by participants after the initial workshop series in 2011.

Networking with practitioners of other related approaches, such as Nonviolent Communication (NVC - <http://www.cnvc.org>), Systemic Work (such as family constellations or *ecl* - <http://www.now-here.com/ecl>), The Work of Byron Katie (<http://www.thework.com>), the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP - <http://www.avpinternational.org>), and so forth is seen as an important element to further advance the development and evolution of Process Work and Process-Oriented approaches to facilitating conflict in Namibia.

**Dialogue forums.** In light of rising levels of violence and the still largely unprocessed painful history, my intention is to connect more with local and international organizations and individuals who are actively involved in addressing issues around crime and violence, and see how local capacities to facilitate actual relationship conflicts between victims and offenders (e.g., in conjunction with existing community policing initiatives, government programs, or projects from civil society and faith-based organizations). A particular focus will be on facilitating and establishing some form of Community Forums and (with support from other facilitators and process workers) to build more local capacity in dealing with the phenomena of violence in more Process-Oriented ways that will allow whole groups and communities to explore and process such phenomena constructively and in more depth.

This also entails addressing historic injustices and how these are still present today. My personal focus will be on addressing Namibia's colonial past, and will initially lead me to approach particularly the German-Namibian community to see how they could become more involved in participating in such dialogue processes. The eventual vision is to have a culturally mixed team of facilitators that would organize and facilitate Dialogue Forums with participants from various backgrounds, including descendants from the communities affected by colonial atrocities and Namibian of

German descent. This team would also have a more broader focus on issues around race, history, as well as contemporary inequalities, and which would explore ways on how a deeper and more genuine sense of justice and reconciliation could be achieved.

**Working on men's issues.** The worryingly high levels of particularly gender-based violence, mixed with a personal concern about us men using our social and physical rank and power well, further motivate me to engage Namibian men in exploring issues around "being a man" in relationship with women and also with one another as fellow men, hereby using Process Work methods, such as facilitated group processes and other World Work approaches. Especially in the context of a patriarchal society like Namibia, I sense the need to look at issues around masculinity more deeply and to create platforms where men can safely and openly talk about their feelings and experiences of what it means "to be a man", including reflections on existing cultural norms and perceptions and how we can get in touch with both our sensitive and powerful sides in ways that are less harmful to ourselves and others. Although the fact that I am white and an "outsider" (growing up in Germany, Europe) sets me apart from many black men and their experiences of growing up in various Namibian cultures, I believe there are many commonalities around the experience of being a man. In addition, being aware of my own role and experiences as an "outsider" might enable me to offer new and potentially helpful perspectives and ways of approaching this crucial topic. I envision exploring aspects such as how to be connected to and able to express one's emotions in nonviolent ways. This might lead to another even more powerful ways of being courageous, integrating the inner warrior, and learning alternative ways of being in positive and supportive relationship with oneself and other men, women, and also with people from rather marginalized groups, such as those affected by HIV and Aids or those with a different sexual orientation.

**In conclusion: planting a seed...** As initially stated in the introduction, this thesis provides merely a first glance into the possible contributions of a Process-Oriented approach and perspectives to the huge and complex transformation process Namibia finds itself in. Hence, the next steps and ways forward outlined in this last section are far from being final. They are rather meant to plant a seed and encourage further initiatives (i.e., in the forms of research, training, networking, and other ways of taking action) by committed and enthusiastic individuals who feel inspired to work on these crucial issues around conflict, diversity, and community building in Namibia and around the globe.



## References

- Agostini, C. (2000). *Racism in Trinidad: Using the approach of Process Oriented Psychology*. (Final Thesis). Retrieved from <http://processwork.org/files/Finalprojects/Agostini-RacisimTrinidad.pdf>
- Anderson, A.M. (2003). *Restorative Justice, the African Philosophy of Ubuntu and the diversion of criminal prosecution* - Paper presented at the 17th International Conference of the International Society for the Reform of Criminal Law, the Hague, Netherlands.
- Audergon, A. (2004). Collective trauma: The nightmare of history. *Psychotherapy and Politics International* 2 (1). London, UK: Whurr Publishers Ltd. - Retrieved from <http://www.processwork-audergon.com/PDF/coll%20trauma.pdf>
- Audergon, A. (2005). *The war hotel: Psychological dynamics in violent conflict*. London, UK: Whurr Publishers.
- Audergon, A. (2006). Hot spots: Post-conflict trauma and transformation, *Critical Half - Women for Women International* 4 (1). Retrieved from [http://www.processwork-audergon.com/info/documents/HotSpots\\_2.pdf](http://www.processwork-audergon.com/info/documents/HotSpots_2.pdf)
- Bar-On, D. (1993). *Die Last des Schweigens: Gespräche mit Kindern von Nazi-Tätern*. [The burden of silence: Talks with children of Nazi-perpetrators]. Frankfurt, Germany: Campus Verlag.
- Bedrick, D. (2012). *Talking back to Dr. Phil - Alternatives to mainstream psychology*. Santa Fee, NM: Belly Song Press,
- Bible, the Holy (2007). *New King James Version - English*. London, UK: Thomas Nelson
- Biko, S. & Mpumlwana, T. (1997). *I write what I like: A selection of his writings*. London, UK: Bowerdean
- Brankamp, H. (2012). *Communal land disputes in Namibia: Actors, patterns, procedures - Report in April 2012*. Windhoek, Namibia: German Development Corporation (GIZ).
- Brown, R. (2011). *The Gini-coefficient: A monkey finally off the back?* Article on Umuntu Media Website, Retrieved from <http://www.inamibia.co.na/news/local/item/12040-the-gini-and-namibia%E2%80%99s-three-wishes.html>
- Brown, S., Cervenak, & C., Fairman, D. (1998). *Alternative Dispute Resolution practitioners' guide*. Washington, DC: Centre for Democracy and Governance, U.S. Agency for International Development.

- Buenger Baumgartner, C. (2011). *The dark side of the moon: Trauma transformation and facilitator development* (unpublished master's thesis). Portland, OR: Process Work Institute. Retrieved from [http://www.processwork.org/files/Finalprojects/Corinna%20Buenger\\_FP.pdf](http://www.processwork.org/files/Finalprojects/Corinna%20Buenger_FP.pdf)
- Burgess, H. (1997). *Transformative mediation: A summary by Heidi Burgess*. Retrieved from <http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/transform/tmall.htm>
- Cabrera, M. (2002). *Living and surviving in a multiply wounded country*. Retrieved from <http://www.envio.org.ni/articulo/1629>
- Chinweizu, I. (1987). *Decolonizing the African mind*. Lagos, Nigeria: Pero Press
- Clark, N. (2011). *South Africa - The rise and fall of Apartheid* (Seminar Studies in History Series, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). London, UK: Routledge.
- Diamond, J. (2013). *Personal learning about the use of power, and professional research on the concept of using power and awareness*. [Video Log]. Portland, OR: Process Work Institute. Retrieved from <http://www.processwork.org/?p=2677>
- Diamond, J. & Jones, L. S. (2005). *A path made by walking: Process Work in practice*. Chicago, IL: Lao Tse Press.
- Diamond, J. & Katrivanou, V. (2006, January 25). *Making conflict work: Facilitating public dialogue and dispute*. Public lecture (Audio file). Retrieved from <http://www.processwork.org/files/media/lecture-conflict.wma>
- Dierks, K. (1999). *Chronology of Namibian history: From pre-historical times to independent Namibia*. Namibia Scientific Society, Windhoek. Retrieved from <http://www.klausdierks.com/Chronology/index.html>
- Doëseb, A. (1990). *Namibia, Land of the Brave - National anthem of Namibia*, Retrieved from <http://www.nationalanthems.info/na.htm>
- Elemotho (2003). *Kgala! Namib* (Song) - *On: 'The system is a joke'* (CD). Windhoek, Namibia: Author. Available from <http://www.elemotho.com>
- Emetchi (2009). *Trauma and Deep Democracy research symposium, 8 March 2009*. (Audio recording), Process Work Institute, Portland, OR. Retrieved from <http://processwork.org/files/media/Trauma%26DeepDemocracy.mp3>
- Endler, D. (2009). *The Alternatives to Violence Project in Namibia: An investigation of the effects of the basic workshops on the participants* (unpublished bachelor's thesis), Retrieved from University of Twente, Netherlands [http://essay.utwente.nl/59067/2/scriptie\\_D\\_Endler.pdf](http://essay.utwente.nl/59067/2/scriptie_D_Endler.pdf)

- Erichsen, C. W. (2008). *What the Elders used to say: Namibian perspectives on the last decade of German colonial rule*. Windhoek, Namibia: Namibian Institute for Democracy and Namibian-German Foundation.
- Ford, J. (1999). *The viability of divorce mediation for Namibia - A research project*. Windhoek, Namibia: Legal Assistance Centre,
- Frederick, L. (2009). *Legal grounds for the Herero compensation claims* (unpublished bachelor's thesis). Windhoek, Namibia: University of Namibia. Retrieved from <http://www.wisis.unam.na/theses/frederick2009.pdf>
- Freeth, R. (2011). *Just facilitation: Facilitation sustainable social change in contexts of injustice* (unpublished master's thesis). Cape Town, South Africa: University of Stellenbosch - Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences.
- Fujisaki, A. (2003). *Inherited memory: A qualitative study of how World War II influenced the Japanese post-war generation* (unpublished diploma thesis). Portland, OR: Process Work Centre of Portland, Graduate School. Retrieved from <http://processwork.org/files/Finalprojects/Fujisaki-InheritedMemory.pdf>
- Fujisaki, A. (2008), *Finding a jewel in the dump: Using Process Work to help street children in Bangladesh*. Unpublished article for the International Association for Process-Oriented Psychology (IAPOP) . Available from [ayakofujisaki@gmail.com](mailto:ayakofujisaki@gmail.com)
- Galtung, J. (2000). *Conflict transformation by peaceful means – The Transcend Method, trainers manual*. United Nations Disaster Training Management Program (DMTP). Retrieved from [www.transcend.org/pctrcluj2004/TRANSCEND\\_manual.pdf](http://www.transcend.org/pctrcluj2004/TRANSCEND_manual.pdf)
- Galtung, J. (2004). Violence, war and their impact – On the visible and invisible effects of violence. Published in Polylog - Forum for Intercultural Philosophy. Retrieved from <http://them.polylog.org/5/fgj-en.htm>, in *After violence: 3R, Reconstruction, Reconciliation, Resolution*. Available from [www.transcend.org](http://www.transcend.org)
- Gaomab II, M. (2005 September 15). *Black Economic Empowerment in Namibia and its relation to the economy*. Windhoek, Namibia: Namibia Economic Society. Retrieved from <http://www.sarpn.org/documents/d0001616/index.php>
- Gaomab II, M. (2010, May 26). *The relevance of Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) to the implementation of competition policy and law in Namibia: Is it an imperative?*. Windhoek, Namibia: Namibia Economic Society. Retrieved from [http://fesnam.org/pdf/2010/SpeechBEE\\_CompetitionPolicyf.pdf](http://fesnam.org/pdf/2010/SpeechBEE_CompetitionPolicyf.pdf)
- Geingob, H. (1999, April). Namibia: Making democracy work - An interview by Peter Mwaura. *Africa Recovery*, 12 (4), 20. "Namibia: Country in Focus" - Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/en/africarenewal/subjindx/124namb4.htm>

- Geingob, H. (2012, November 11). Can Hage butter your bread? Interview with Prime Minister Hage Geingob. *The Villager*. Retrieved from <http://www.thevillager.com.na/articles/2920/Can-Hage-butter-your-bread>
- Gewald, J.-B., trans. (1999). *Herero heroes*. J. Currey, UK: Oxford University Press
- Goodbread, J. (1987). *The dreambody toolkit: A practical introduction to the philosophy, goals and practice of Process-Oriented Psychology*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Portland, OR: Lao Tse Press.
- Goodbread, J. (1997). *Radical intercourse: How dreams unite us in love, conflict, and other inevitable relationships*. Portland, OR: Lao Tse Press
- Goodbread, J. (2010). *Befriending conflict: How to make conflict safer, more productive and more fun*. Process Oriented Psychology Publications, CreateSpace.
- Gordon, R. J. (1992). *The Bushman myth: The making of a Namibian underclass*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Groth, S., trans. (1996). *Namibia - The wall of silence: The dark days of the liberation struggle*. Cape Town, South Africa: David Philips.
- Haufiku, M. (2013, December 12). GBV cases on increase. *New Era*, p. 6
- Hengari, A. (2011, May 13). My Namibia, my country, my pride: Unpacking a political facade. *The Namibian, Front page*. Retrieved from [http://www.namibian.com.na/indexx.php?archive\\_id=79733&page\\_type=archive\\_story\\_detail&page=1](http://www.namibian.com.na/indexx.php?archive_id=79733&page_type=archive_story_detail&page=1)
- Heywood, A. (1996). *The Hendrik Witbooi Papers*. (2<sup>nd</sup> enlarged ed.). Windhoek, Namibia: John Meinert
- Hilukilwa, P. (2011, June 30). Women and Men Network against Crime. *Namibian Sun*. Retrieved from <http://www.namibiansun.com/node/13526>
- Hinz, M. O. (1998). *Customary law in Namibia: Development and perspective* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Windhoek, Namibia: Centre for Applied Social Sciences.
- Hinz, M. O. (2010) Traditional courts in Namibia - Part of the judiciary? Jurisprudential challenges of traditional justice. In M.O. Hinz (Ed.), *In Search of Justice and Peace - Traditional and Informal Justice in Africa*, Windhoek, Namibia: Namibia Scientific Society.
- Hohler, L. (2006). *At the point of no return: Intervening when physical violence escalates among teenagers*. Retrieved from <http://www.processwork.org/files/Finalprojects/At%20The%20Point%20of%20no%20Return.pdf>

- Hohler, L. & Goodbread, J. (2011). *Teachers empowered: A handbook for the empowerment of teachers*. (ed. June 2011). Zurich, Switzerland: Schulkraft / Changefacilitation GmbH
- Hopwood, G. (2004). *Guide to Namibian politics: Including A-Z of political personalities*. Windhoek, Namibia: Institute for Public Policy Research & Namibia Institute for Democracy.
- Hubbard, D. (Ed.). (2000). *Proposal for divorce law reform in Namibia*. Windhoek, Namibia: Legal Assistance Centre, Gender Research and Advocacy Project. Retrieved from <http://www.lac.org.na/projects/grap/Pdf/divlawref.pdf>
- Hubbard, D. (2005). *New law reform proposals on divorce*. Windhoek, Namibia: Legal Assistance Centre, Gender Research and Advocacy Project. Retrieved from <http://www.lac.org.na/projects/grap/Pdf/divlaw2005.pdf>
- Hubbard, D. (Ed.). (2006). *Rape in Namibia: An assessment of the operation of the Combating of Rape Act 8 of 2000 - Summary report*. Windhoek, Namibia: Legal Assistance Centre
- Hubbard, D. (Ed.). (2010). *Corporal punishment - National and international perspectives*. Windhoek, Namibia: Legal Assistance Centre.
- Ikiugu, M. N. (1992). Process-Oriented Psychology and African culture. *The Journal of Process Oriented Psychology: At the Edge of Process Work*. 4 (1), 11-22.
- IRIN. (2005, December 2). *Namibia: Germany's Herero reconciliation efforts rebuffed*. Retrieved from IRIN - Humanitarian News and Analysis Website <http://www.irinnews.org/report/57451/namibia-germany-s-herero-reconciliation-efforts-rebuffed>
- Jauch, H. (2011, November 7). The NEEEF: Who is empowering who? *The Villager*. Retrieved from [http://thevillager.com.na/news\\_article.php?id=530&title=the+neef+who+is+empowering+who](http://thevillager.com.na/news_article.php?id=530&title=the+neef+who+is+empowering+who)
- Katjavivi, P. (2006). Namibia: Interview with Peter Katjavivi, Namibian ambassador to Belgium. Interview by *World Investment News* on 28.06.2006. Retrieved from <http://www.winne.com/dninterview.php?intervid=1845>
- /Khaxas, E. & Frank, L. (2010). *Violence is not our culture: Women claiming their right in Caprivi region*. Windhoek, Namibia: Women's Leadership Centre
- Koetze, C. & Lang, L. (1993). *History for Namibian schools - A new perspective, Grade 10*. Windhoek, Namibia: Gamsberg Macmillan.

- Kuehner, A. (2003). *Kollektive Traumata: Annahmen, Argumente, Konzepte - Eine Bestandaufnahme nach dem 11. September*. [Collective trauma: Assumptions, arguments, concepts: Reflections after September 11]. Berlin, Germany: Berghof Foundation for Conflict Studies. Report No. 9.
- LeBeau, D. (2005). *An investigation into the lives of Namibian ex-fighters, fifteen years after independence*. Windhoek, Namibia: P.E.A.C.E. Centre
- Lederach, J. P. (1995). *Preparing for peace: Conflict transformation across cultures*. New York, NY: Syracuse University Press.
- Lederach, J.P. (1997). *Building peace: Sustainable reconciliation in divided societies*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace
- Levine, P. (1997). *Waking the tiger, healing trauma: The innate capacity to transform overwhelming experiences*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books.
- Mamdani, M. (2001). *When victims become killers: Colonialism, nativism, and the genocide in Rwanda*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press
- Mandela, N. (1995). *Long walk to freedom: The autobiography of Nelson Mandela*. London, UK: Little Brown
- Mann, P. (2007). *The tale of the Bushmen* (Documentary film). Namibia/France: De Visu Productions. Available from <http://www.pierremann.com/37.html>
- Matundu-Tjiparuro, K. (2012, October 12). Killings are rooted in the Exploitative System. *New Era*, Retrieved from <http://www.newera.com.na/articles/48366/Killings-are-rooted-in-the-exploitative-system->
- Matundu-Tjiparuro, K. (2013, February 15). How long German insensitivities, arrogance, deviousness, intransigence? *New Era*. Retrieved from <http://www.newera.com.na/articles/50453/How-long-German-insensitivities--arrogance--deviousness--intransigence-->
- Melber, H. (2013, February 2). German-Namibian relations remain fragile. *The Namibian*. Retrieved from <http://www.namibian.com.na/columns/full-story/archive/2013/february/article/german-namibian-relations-remain-fragile>
- Memmi, A. (1965). *The colonizer and the colonized*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press
- Menken, D. (2001). *Speak out! Talking about love, sex and eternity*. Tempe, AZ: New Falcon.
- Meredith, M. (2006). *The state of Africa: A history of fifty years of independence.*, Jeppestown / Johannesburg, South Africa: Jonathan Ball.

- Mickley, A. (2004). *Seminar on peace education*. Personal collection of A. Mickley. Potsdam University of Applied Sciences, Germany
- Mickley, A. (2005). *Initiative for Active Conflict Transformation - Project description*. (Translation from German) Retrieved from [http://sozialwesen.fh-potsdam.de/mickley\\_namibia0.html](http://sozialwesen.fh-potsdam.de/mickley_namibia0.html)
- Mindell, Amy. (2003). *Metaskills: The spiritual art of therapy*. Portland, OR: Lao Tse Press.
- Mindell, Amy. (2006). *Alternatives to therapy: A creative lecture series on Process Work*. Portland, OR: Lao Tse Press
- Mindell, Amy & Mindell, Arnold. (1991). *Riding the horse backwards: Process Work in theory and practice*. Chicago, IL: Lao Tse Press.
- Mindell, Amy & Mindell, Arnold (2013). *What is Process Work? A few Process Work details*. Retrieved from <http://www.aamindell.net/category/processwork-theory-applications/what-is-processwork>
- Mindell, Arnold. (1985a). *Working with the dreaming body*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Mindell, Arnold. (1985b). *Working on yourself alone*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Mindell, Arnold. (1987) *The dreambody in relationship*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Mindell, Arnold. (1989). *The year I: Global Process Work*. London, UK: Arkana.
- Mindell, Arnold. (1990, March/April). Field of dreams - interview by Stephan Bodian. *Yoga Journal*. Retrieved from [http://www.sonic.net/~billkirk/mindell\\_interview.html](http://www.sonic.net/~billkirk/mindell_interview.html)
- Mindell, Arnold. (1992). *The leader as martial artist: An Introduction to Deep Democracy*. San Francisco, CA: Harper San Francisco.
- Mindell, Arnold. (1993). *The shaman's body: A new shamanism for transforming health, relationships, and the community*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.
- Mindell, Arnold. (1995). *Sitting in the fire: Large group transformation using conflict and diversity*. Portland, OR: Lao Tse Press.
- Mindell, Arnold. (2002). *The deep democracy of open forums: Practical steps to conflict prevention and resolution for the family, workplace and world*. Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads.
- Mindell, Arnold. (2007). *Earth-based psychology: Path awareness from the teachings of Don Juan, Richard Feynman, and Lao Tse*. Portland, OR: Lao Tse Press

- Mindell, Arnold. (2009). *Army Mindell: Process Work (Process-Oriented Psychology)*. [Interview Audio File and PDF-Transcript]. Retrieved from the Somatic Perspectives on Psychotherapy Website <http://somaticperspectives.com/2009/03/mindell>
- Mindell, Arnold. (2010). *Process Mind: A user's guide to connecting with the mind of God*. Berkeley, CA: Quest Books.
- Mushaandja, J. (2012, June 8). Objectifying women in Namibian music. *The Namibian: The Weekender*, Windhoek, Namibia.
- Nakale, E. K. (2007). *Effects of prejudice and discrimination on the San in Ekoka* (unpublished bachelor's Thesis). Windhoek: University of Namibia
- Namibian Sun (2013, September 20) Did Namibia need a truth commission? *Namibian Sun*, p. 7
- Namibian Sun (2014, January 10). State unrepentant about Christian bias. *Namibian Sun*. Retrieved from: <http://sun.com.na/government/state-unrepentant-about-christian-bias.61243>
- Nashuuta, L. (2013, January 25). Namibian genocide reparations: Excessive demands are impeding progress *The Southern Times*. Retrieved from [http://www.southerntimesafrica.com/news\\_article.php?id=7940&title=Namibian%20Genocide%20Reparations&type=83](http://www.southerntimesafrica.com/news_article.php?id=7940&title=Namibian%20Genocide%20Reparations&type=83)
- Niemeyer, L. (2010). *Einflüsse des 'Peacebuilding'-Prozesses auf die Raumwahrnehmung am Beispiel der Landreform in Namibia* [Influences of peacebuilding processes on spatial perceptions, based on the example of land reform in Namibia] (unpublished Magister Artium thesis). Wuerzburg, Germany: Julius-Maximilians University.
- Ntinda, A. (2009). *SWATF/Koevoets not 'war veterans' - 'Over my dead body,' President Pohamba*. Retrieved from [http://www.swapoparty.org/zoom\\_in\\_74.html](http://www.swapoparty.org/zoom_in_74.html) & [http://www.swapoparty.org/swatf\\_koevoets\\_not\\_war\\_veterans.html](http://www.swapoparty.org/swatf_koevoets_not_war_veterans.html)
- Olusoga, D. & Erichsen, K. (2010). *The Kaiser's holocaust: Germany's forgotten genocide and the colonial roots of Nazism*. London, UK: Faber & Faber
- Owasanoye, B. (2001). *Dispute resolution mechanisms and constitutional rights in Sub-Saharan Africa, in Alternative Dispute Resolution methods*. United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) Retrieved from [http://www2.unitar.org/dfm/Resource\\_Center/Document\\_Series/Document14/Bolaji/1Intro.htm](http://www2.unitar.org/dfm/Resource_Center/Document_Series/Document14/Bolaji/1Intro.htm)
- Paulus, P. (2012, March 14). Therapy for war veterans. *New Era*. Retrieved from <http://www.newera.com.na/articles/44942/Therapy-for-war-vets>

- Peace Pledge Union (2013). *Talking about genocide: Namibia 1904*. Retrieved from [http://www.ppu.org.uk/genocide/g\\_namibia1.html](http://www.ppu.org.uk/genocide/g_namibia1.html)
- Pohamba, H. (2006, October 5). War veterans get their own Ministry. Article by B. Weidlich. *The Namibian*. Retrieved from [http://www.namibian.com.na/index.php?id=28&tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=29146&no\\_cache=1](http://www.namibian.com.na/index.php?id=28&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=29146&no_cache=1)
- Pohamba, H. (2012, May 7). Cassinga remembered. Article by A. Nakale. *New Era*. Retrieved from <http://www.newera.com.na/articles/44740/Cassinga-remembered>
- Proprioception (2008, April 2). *New World Encyclopedia*. Retrieved from <http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/p/index.php?title=Proprioception&oldid=682500>
- PWI. (2013). *Process Work Institute: Information on the Master of Arts in Conflict Facilitation and Organizational Change program*. Retrieved from <http://www.processwork.org/academic-programs/master-of-arts-in-conflict-facilitation-and-organizational-change-macf>
- Quigley, William P. (2003), *Ending poverty as we know it: Guaranteeing a right to a job at a living wage*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press
- Ramphela, M. (2012). Healing the wounds of the past. (Speech at the annual Durban Chamber of Commerce and Industry Dinner). *The Mercury*. Retrieved from: <http://www.iol.co.za/mercury/healing-the-wounds-of-the-past-1.1275008>
- Reid, K. (2013, March 27). Racial profiling still the norm. *Windhoek Observer*. Retrieved from <http://observer24.com.na/national/1198-racial-profiling-still-the-norm>
- Reiss, G. (2000). *Changing ourselves, changing the world*. Tempe, AZ: New Falcon.
- Reiss, G. (2004a). *Angry men, angry women, angry world: Moving from destructiveness to creativity*. Eugene, OR: Changing Worlds.
- Reiss, G. (2004b). *Beyond war and peace in the Arab Israeli conflict*. Eugene, OR: Changing Worlds.
- Republic of Namibia (1990). *The Constitution of the Republic of Namibia*. Retrieved from <http://www.met.gov.na/Documents/Namibian%20Constitution.pdf>
- Republic of Namibia (2000). *The Traditional Authorities Act, No. 25 of 2000*. Retrieved from [http://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/text.jsp?file\\_id=223560](http://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/text.jsp?file_id=223560)
- Republic of Namibia (2003). *The Community Courts Act, No. 10 of 2003*. Retrieved from [http://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/text.jsp?file\\_id=223543](http://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/text.jsp?file_id=223543)
- Republic of Namibia (2004). *Vision 2030: Policy framework for long-term national development*. Retrieved from <http://www.met.gov.na/Documents/Vision%202030.pdf>

- Republic of Namibia (2007). *The Labor Act, No. 11 of 2007*. Retrieved from: [http://www.parliament.gov.na/acts\\_documents/81\\_3971\\_gov\\_notice\\_act\\_11.pdf](http://www.parliament.gov.na/acts_documents/81_3971_gov_notice_act_11.pdf)
- Romanowski, S. (2009). *Analysis of an apology: A critical look at genocide in Southwest Africa and its effects on the Herero/Nama people*. (Research Paper). Santa Barbara, CA: University of California. Retrieved from <http://www.history.ucsb.edu/faculty/marcuse/classes/133p/papers/096RomanowskyHereroGenocide.htm>
- Rosenberg, M. (2003). *Nonviolent Communication: A language of life*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Encinitas, CA, Puddle Dancer Press
- Rowell, K. & Thomley, R. (2013, August). *Recovering emotionally from disaster*. Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/recovering-disasters.aspx>
- RSPOPUK (2013), *Research Society for Process Oriented Psychology in the United Kingdom - The theory and practice of Process Work*. Retrieved from <http://www.rsopuk.com/processwork/what-is-process-work/theory-and-practice-of-process-work>
- Schernick, B. (2011). *Feedback from participants from the first Process Work workshop series: June - August 2011*. Unpublished summary of participants' written feedback (pre- and post-workshop questionnaires). Windhoek, Namibia
- Schernick, B. (2013). *Traditional ways of conflict handling*. Unpublished essays from students (2008 - 2013), based on their interviews with Namibian Elders. Windhoek, Namibia: Polytechnic of Namibia.
- Schuetzenberger, A. (2003). *Oh, meine Ahnen! Wie das Leben unserer Vorfahren in uns wiederkehrt*. [Oh, my ancestors! How our ancestors' life relives itself through us]. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Heidelberg, Germany: .Carl-Auer-Systeme Verlag.
- Schuitevoerder, S. (2000). *Process Work contributions to men and power: Introduction to Process Work* (unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Western Sydney-Hawkesbury. Retrieved from [http://www.processconsulting.org/static/files/010/phd.\\_complete.doc](http://www.processconsulting.org/static/files/010/phd._complete.doc)
- Schuitevoerder, S. (2013). *Process consulting: Community change*. Retrieved from [http://www.processconsulting.org/community\\_change](http://www.processconsulting.org/community_change)
- Schulz, S. & Hamutenya, M. (2003). *Juvenile justice in Namibia: Law reform towards reconciliation and restorative justice?* Windhoek, Namibia: Polytechnic of Namibia. Retrieved from <http://ir.polytechnic.edu.na/bitstream/10628/90/1/Schulz.%20Restorative%20justice.pdf>
- Schwarz, P. (2003). *Young Namibians and HIV & Aids – Briefing paper based on the 2003 UNICEF Namibia AHPP baseline study*. Retrieved from <http://www.wisis.unam.na/hivdocs/BaselineBriefingpaper.pdf>

- Shamir, Y. (2003). *Alternative Dispute Resolution approaches and their application. Technical Documents in Hydrology, PC→CP Series (7)*. Retrieved from <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001332/133287e.pdf>
- Skotnes, P. (Ed.). (1996). *Miscast: Negotiating the presence of the Bushman*. Cape Town, South Africa: University of Cape Town Press.
- Smith, M., Segal, R. & Segal, J. (2012). *Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) - Symptoms, treatment, and self-help*. Retrieved from <http://www.aaets.org/article194.htm>
- Spies, C. (2006). *Resolutionary change: The art of awakening dormant faculties in others*. Berlin, Germany: Berghof Research Centre for Constructive Conflict Management. Retrieved from [www.berghof-handbook.net/documents/publications/dialogue5\\_spies\\_comm.pdf](http://www.berghof-handbook.net/documents/publications/dialogue5_spies_comm.pdf)
- Steinfeld A. & Mindell, Arnold. (2011). *Arnold Mindell on the Process Work* (Interview audio file). Retrieved from <http://www.newrealities.com/index.php/component/k2/item/1203-arnold-mindell-on-the-process-work>
- Straub, S. (1990). *Stalking Your Inner Critic: A Process-Oriented Approach to Self-Criticism* (unpublished doctoral dissertation). Zurich, Switzerland: The Union Institute. Retrieved from <http://www.processwork.org/files/Finalprojects/Straub-StalkingYourInnerCritic.pdf>
- Swales, J.M. & Feak, C.B. (1994). *Academic writing for graduate students*. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press
- Thomas, A. (2013, December 15). A Second Chance: Namibia condemning crime, rehabilitating the offender. *The Southern Times*, p. 5
- Tjitemisa, K. (2013, October 11) Vergenoeg murder beast in court. *New Era*. Retrieved from <http://www.newera.com.na/2013/10/11/vergenoeg-murder-beast-court/>
- Toetemeyer, G. (2010). *Church and the state in Namibia: The politics of reconciliation*. Freiburg, Germany: Arnold-Bergstraesser-Institute,
- Transformation (n.d.). *Merriam-Webster: Online Dictionary*. Retrieved from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/transformation>
- Trauma (n.d.). *Merriam-Webster: Online Dictionary*. Retrieved from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/trauma>
- Tutu, D. (1999). *No future without forgiveness*. Cape Town, South Africa: Doubleday

- Tzu, Lao (1988). *Tao Te Ching: The book of the way*. English Translation by Stephen Mitchell. New York, NY: Harper Collings
- Udo, O. (2012). *Emergence of Yakubu: A Process Work response to internalized oppression* (unpublished master's thesis). Portland, OR: Process Work Institute. Retrieved from [http://www.processwork.org/files/Finalprojects/Udo-Emergence\\_Yakubu.pdf](http://www.processwork.org/files/Finalprojects/Udo-Emergence_Yakubu.pdf)
- UTN- Urban Trust Namibia. (2013). *Building safe and caring communities: Violence prevention initiative Namibia - Safety audit report*. Windhoek, Namibia: Author.
- Van den Bosch, S. (Ed.). (2013, October). SME focus good but.... *SME Gazette: Essential Reading for the Namibian Entrepreneur. 5 (III)*, p. 3. Retrieved from <http://www.emergo.com.na/sme-gazette/SME-Gazette-Issue-5-oct-2013.pdf>
- Van Rooy, G. et al. (2006). *Understanding the perpetrators of violent crimes against women and girls in Namibia: Implications for prevention and treatment*. A study commissioned by Women's Action for Development in collaboration with the Ministry of Safety and Security and the University of Namibia. Windhoek: University of Namibia
- Van Grassdorf, E. et al. (2012). Germany's genocide in Namibia: Unbearable silence, or how not to deal with your colonial past. *Pambazuka News 577: Special Issue - Germany and genocide in Namibia*. Retrieved from <http://www.pambazuka.org/en/issue/577>
- Vikkelsoe, J. (1997). *Beyond guilt and innocence: Towards a Process Oriented criminology* (unpublished doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <http://www.iapop.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/dissertations/vikkelsoe-guilt.pdf>
- Von Wietersheim, E. (2008). *This land is my land! Motions and emotions around land reform in Namibia*. Windhoek, Namibia: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Namibia Office.
- Willis Toms, J. & Bedrick, D. (2013). *Embracing (rather than fixing) our authentic selves* (Interview audio file). Retrieved from <http://www.newdimensions.org/program-archive/embracing-rather-than-fixing-our-authentic-selves-with-david-bedrick>
- Winslow, R. (2002). *Crime and society; A comparative criminology tour of the world: Namibia*. San Diego State University. Retrieved from <http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/faculty/rwinslow/africa/namibia.html>
- Wirth, H.-J. (2006): *Sozialcharakter, kulturelles Gedächtnis und kollektives Trauma*. [Society's character, cultural memory and collective trauma]. In: Busch, Hans-Joachim (Ed.). *Spuren des Subjekts. Positionen psychoanalytische Sozialpsychologie*. Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Verlag.

Worldbank. (2013, October). *The World Bank: Namibia, overview - Context*. Retrieved from <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/namibia/overview>

Xaba, Z. (2011). *Reconciliation thru remembrance - Contextual Essay*. Portland, OR: Process Work Institute. Retrieved from [http://processwork.org/files/MACF\\_3/Zed%20Xaba\\_FP.pdf](http://processwork.org/files/MACF_3/Zed%20Xaba_FP.pdf)

Zehr, H. (2005). *Changing lenses: A new focus of crime and justice (Christian Peace Shelf; 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.)*. Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press

## Appendices

### A - Students' Assignment on Traditional Ways of Conflict Handling

*Polytechnic of Namibia, 2008 - 2013: Alternative Dispute Resolution - ADR 312S, Mediation Communication - MCM 312S, and Conflict Management - CMT 620S*

#### **"Exploring and Reflecting on Traditional Ways of Conflict Resolution"**

Consult and/or interview family elders or senior community members (in particularly those coming from or still living in rural areas) on how they have dealt with conflicts and disputes in the past and how they deal with such issues nowadays, with emphasis on historic, cultural, and social aspects. Find out what kind conflicts had to be addressed and how exactly these were dealt with, e.g. by using a rather managing, resolving or transformational approach.

How far is what was described to you a genuinely traditional and established way of dealing with conflict in that particular culture? Since when and why is this tradition in place, and where did it come from? In which ways and for what reasons has it been adapted over time?

Write at least three pages (full text or interview style), and add your own comment (at least half a page) which contains your personal impressions and reflections, including your own perspectives and opinions. Overall number of words: 1,500 – 3,000.

Feel free to use the following guiding questions, and change and adapt them as you see fit. Furthermore you can read the following sections in your Study Guides:

"African Conversations", "About Traditional Meetings", as well as the following excerpt from the book: "*Preparing for Peace – Conflict Transformation Across Cultures*", by John Paul Lederach, an international trainer for intercultural mediation and conflict transformation.

*"In many settings where I have lived and worked, I have heard people say, "This conflict resolution thing is new. It doesn't exist here." What they mean is that formal, explicitly acknowledged, and institutionalized modalities of alternative dispute resolution do not exist outside of socially sanctioned mechanisms such as the police or courts. I often reply by describing conflict resolution through the metaphoric image of a river. In any given community, conflict exists, like rain. Into every life a little rain will fall. The interesting [...] question is this. Where does the rain go? Where do the tributaries and then the rivers of conflict run? I assume there is a river of conflict that leads somewhere. In other words, in a given community, and even more importantly, in a given cultural group within a multicultural community, including those more established and those that are very recent arrivals, conflict ends up on somebody's doorstep. Where and to who in a community does conflict flow [and how do they deal with it]?"*

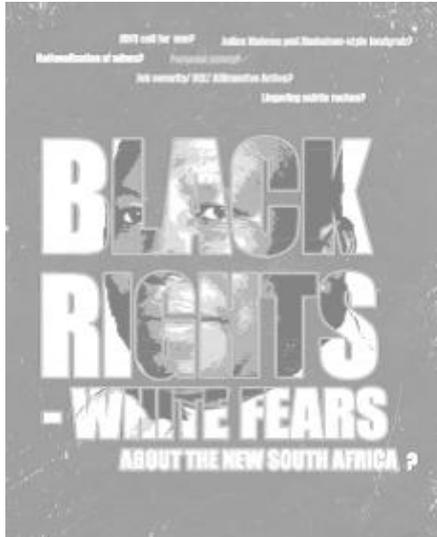
## **GUIDING QUESTIONS**

*...please take these questions as mere guiding questions, i.e. you will have to find, formulate, develop, and add your very own questions according to the dynamics you will encounter during your interviews.*

- ✓ *What kind of conflicts had to be dealt with? Who had been involved? How?*
- ✓ *How escalated did the conflicts need to become before they were being addressed?*
- ✓ *How were these conflicts addressed and eventually managed / resolved?*
- ✓ *Who was asked to resolve these conflicts? Who else was involved in the process and if so, in what ways?*
- ✓ *Who made the final decision? Could this decision be reviewed, questioned, appealed?*
- ✓ *If yes, how could one proceed and challenge/question/review the decisions made?*
- ✓ *Which role did elders, women and children play in the entire process?*
- ✓ *How did the entire resolution process look like, from the beginning to the end?*
- ✓ *Since when are these procedures or traditions in place? Where do they originate from?*
- ✓ *Did these traditions change over time? How? Influenced by whom? Why?*
- ✓ *How far has using force or violent means been part of these processes and procedures?*
- ✓ *Were there any ritualized actions involved? Can you tell us more about these?*
- ✓ *How important were aspects of nature, traditions, ancestors, spirituality, ritualized talking procedures and other cultural elements? How important are they still today?*
- ✓ *Which of the above mentioned cultural/spiritual/traditional aspects are particularly helpful to resolve conflict constructively, and which aspects are rather unhelpful or even barriers to finding a good resolution?*
- ✓ *Could helpful cultural/spiritual/traditional aspects be integrated in current/modern ways of dealing with conflicts and disputes? Where could that be? How could this possibly look like?*

## B - Letter from an Open Forum Participant in South Africa

I am sitting down to write because I just experience what I think I will remember as the best 2.5 hours I have experienced during my entire time in South Africa. Yes... out of EVERYTHING I've written about... this is it. And I apologize right off the bat because I know that there is no way that I will be able to describe the intensity, emotion, and



mind-blowing power of tonight. This also may be a bit disjointed because I'll be writing this, in a sense, as a journal entry. I just need to reflect. And this reflection is LONG. So thank you for indulging me.

“Black Rights. White Fears.”

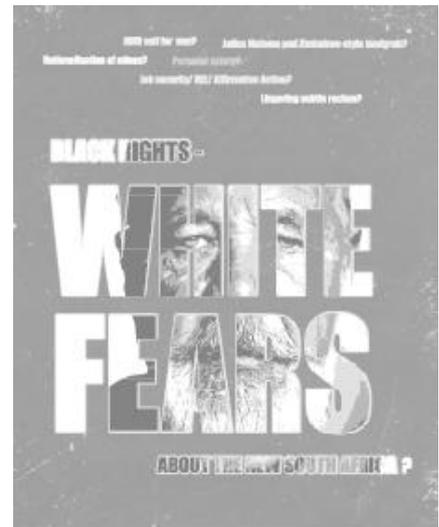
The poster was hung around campus for about two weeks with a picture of Julius Malema and Eugene Terre'Blanche (I could write an entire email just on those two political figures so you might want to google them to learn more). But BRIEFLY, Julius Malema is a controversial black ANC politician who has the reputation of being the personification of corruption and racism.



Terre'Blanche is the controversial leader

of the AWB (South Africa's white supremacist movement that was the biggest resister of the end of apartheid) who was murdered a couple of weeks ago by his black workers for an alleged wages dispute.

I thought it would be interesting to go but I figured it would just be a bunch of people politely saying, “I completely understand where you're coming from but I thought I might express my humble opinion on the matter as well.” Very PC. Very American. Don't offend anyone. And... I had this giant essay I'm supposed to be writing now, so I figured I didn't have the time. But then after class yesterday my beautiful friend Wanelisa told me that she was asked to speak at the event, and would I go to be there for her? So off I went.



“Black Rights. White Fears.”

I'm horrible with number guesstimates, but I'd say about 200 people sat in a pseudo-circle in the African Studies Department Gallery. The event was set up by a classmate of mine, Mpumi, who I am very privileged to now call a friend. The crowd was as diverse as they come. Every age. Every color. Every accent. Every personality.

The goal: to have an open forum to talk about race. No political correctness. No censoring words. Just honesty. Utter, unadulterated honesty, feelings, and emotion.

Look at that. I've already written a page just leading up to the content...

Mpumi and her mother Zed, welcomed everyone with words of gratitude for coming, and excitement at the prospect of having a REAL conversation about the issues no one actually talks about. Rather, that no one talks about across racial lines.

W was the first to speak. And boy did she set a precedent for the rest of the night. "I'm angry. I'm REALLY angry." W is one of the most passionate, emotionally brilliant people I have ever met. As she spoke about her resentment for whites because of her upbringing in a township, you could see the entire suffering of black South Africans' history bump between her lips. Her hand rigid with the cry of every other resentful black South African still living in shacks, still victims of township crime, still mourning relatives lost during apartheid. She spoke for the mothers who lost children, and the children debased by white power. After the event I overheard a black student come up to her and say, "Thank you. I had all those feelings too but didn't know anyone else felt the same way. I didn't know I was allowed to say those things. Now I know how many other black people feel this way too." We finished strong, confident, angry... honest.

The next student to speak was a white male. I need to stop right here with a disclaimer. I do not remember everything everyone said. It was too intense for that. But there were many things that struck me and many words that still ring in head. At the end of this young man's speech he said, "And yes I have hope for complete integration in the future. But look at the lunch tables in res [resident halls] and there's a black table and a white table. Really – and I'm hesitant to use such a simplifying metaphor – but you don't see zebras and giraffes just chilling together." It took a second for the crowd to realize what he had said... There wasn't quite booing, but there was a low groan that resonated deeply in that room.

Next a young black man who spoke quite emphatically in support of Malema and called for the white man to "pull us up."

Last, a friend of mine, a young white student. She brought a new face to the discussion. She spoke about her mother, who lost her job to a less qualified black person because of affirmative action. And she talked about her dad, also fired for racial restructuring. She said that whites aren't scared of black people. She has black friends. It's not racism. It's that whites are scared of not being able to provide for their families. You lose a job. You fear. And why did you lose your job? Because a company wanted to fill their quota of blacks.

For the next two hours the floor was open. And boy do I wish this was recorded. I'll write the things that stuck with me the most.

The first of which were the words of a black female law student. "I am not looked at the same way as a white person. And I will live my entire life looked at as lesser. When a white person gets a job it's because of merit. When I get a job it's because the law firm needed to fill their quota for affirmative action. When that white person messes up, our boss will say, 'Eh, he's fresh out of law school. He'll learn.'" When I mess up they say I

shouldn't be there in the first place because I am not qualified. We have the same education but I will always be looked at as black.”

A young black male: “I went to private schools throughout my life so I all my friends were white growing up. And I get legitimacy by mimicking whites. The way I talk. The way I dress. Even the way I gesture. It's all white. Because in order to be taken seriously, I need to be as white as possible. I won't regain my dignity until I can gesture with the rhythm that beats freely in my heart.”

The words that probably resonated with me most. A middle aged white woman: “As an Afrikaaner woman I know that I debase black people every day. And I don't even know I'm doing it. I little while ago my colleague and I [she points the middle aged black woman sitting next to her] were interviewing very prominent white businesswoman. If I said her name you would all know who she is. And the entire meeting this woman would only look at me. The one time she looked at [her colleague] was when she said something about toilets and [sorry... I can't remember the other thing... but it was “a black issue”]. And I didn't say anything! I didn't say anything! I didn't say, ‘excuse me miss, but you're insulting my colleague.’ No! At that moment I let down my friend. I fucked up. I fucked up! And I have fucked up, and will continue to fuck up. I for that I apologize. I'm sorry. So please, if you ever see me do anything, or not say something that perpetuates black debasement, call me out on it. Please stop me and tell! I'm trying but it's bloody hard to do.”

The response by a young black female student: “I just wanted to say how much that meant to me. I can't tell you how much I needed to hear that and how few people actually say that. So really I just wanted you to know how much I appreciate everything you just said. Thank you so much.”

A middle aged white woman: “I just wanted to say... And I'm sorry if I get emotional. That... [starts to cry]... that... It's really hard. With my family. Recently my family has been emailing back and forth and... and... there were some really hurtful things said, and pictures sent, and... And my dad said some incredibly racist things. And I took him on. That's difficult though because he's my father and I love him. And he probably will actually never change. He'll always thing that way. So it's just hard because there's a lot to do just within my own family.”

Many other people spoke with completely uninhibited emotions and stories. One young female black student pleaded that the white authority in South Africa just needs to band together in some act of symbolism to take responsibility for apartheid, apologize, and promise to work towards a better, more equal future. A middle aged coloured man said how he studied at UCT and that we are making progress. That there's no way this could have happened when he was a student – openly expressing opinions like these – without fearing that someone was going to follow you home and beat you up. A black male student said, “I was the only black rugby player in school, the only black student in my class, and the only black person to step foot in my school friends' white homes. And when I got there their parents would always ask, ‘but how is your English so good?’ And I would think, ‘what kind of image do you have in your mind of black people!?’”

Another black student got up and said, “Maybe zebras and giraffes don’t chill together, but giraffes and buffalo do.”

One of the last people to talk was my friend. And this was after a lot of emotional talks, personal stories, and passionate calls for honest dialogue and open anger.

My friend said, “I went to private school all my life and so all of my friends were white. And they had me over their houses and their families loved me. But the thing I would always lose friends over was money. We’ve already done all the symbolic stuff. We won the rugby cup together. We had the Peace and Reconciliation Committee. I can sit here with you [puts his hand on the shoulder of the white man next to him] and I can be friends with you [points to the white woman next to him], but nothing will actually get done until – and I call it the Robin Hood effect – until the money gets to the poor black people.”

I didn’t think it was my place to stand up and say anything. But of course the entire time I was thinking about what I would say if I said something. And by the end of this night my entire body was shaking with nerves and engulfed emotion. I thought, “I feel insignificant and small in a room with so much history and powerful passion. I am an outsider here. I am American. And the only thing I can offer is the lens I look through. I have only been here for four months and it’s fascinating for the first time to really see this through your eyes. I work in Khayelitsha so I see the disparity. I’ve talked to W so I’ve heard the resentment towards apartheid. But honestly, when I walk around campus, I just see a beautifully diverse, amazing country. And that gives me hope that that trend will continue. I was born in the United States in 1989. But I am still white. And the thing I’m realizing is that a lot of times it’s very difficult to admit blame, or rather that we don’t think we need to apologize for anything because it’s not our fault. And even though for a very long time I didn’t even know what apartheid was, I apologize. I apologize for what happened and what is still happening today.”

I don’t know whether or not I have the authority or am in any position to apologize. Should I apologize just for being white? I still don’t know. But someone has to.

It’s four pages later and the truth is that these snippets don’t even glaze the tip of the iceberg of the emotion, controversy, passion, anger, misunderstanding, miscommunication, pride, love, hope, power that this evening embodied. I am so thankful that W told me to come. And I’m so thankful that Mpumi put everything together.

I have just barely over a month left here and I know that I will miss this incredibly beautiful society so much. I can’t even begin to show how much I have learned, and what amazing people I have met. So I’ll be holding on to these last few weeks... Thank you for sharing this journey with me as I go along.

With much love the world over.

+++

*Forwarded from an unidentified participant through e-mail, received on 28 April 2011.*