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## Transcend

The Transcend Method is based on the central thesis that to prevent violence and develop the creative potential of a conflict, there has to be transformation. At the root of the method is the understanding of conflict as incompatible goals, meaning as a problem to be solved; not as incompatible parties (persons, countries etc.), and meaning as one or more parties to be controlled (usually not oneself).

Transforming a conflict requires transcending the goals of conflicting parties, defining other goals, disembodying the conflict from its original situation and embedding it in a more promising place. This is achieved through dialogue based on empathy, non-violence and joint creativity. Failure to transform conflicts leads to violence.

A conflict has its own life cycle. Normal conflicts are complex and involve many actors, goals and issues. Incompatible goals can breed contradictions, which - combined with attitudes of hatred and violent behavior - generate conflict. Violent cultures (which legitimize violence), violent structures (which exploit and alienate) and violent actors can combine to produce basic conflicts, which, if unattended, can spiral into meta-conflicts. The task is to transform conflicts, through a focus on cultures, structures and actors, by finding positive goals for all parties and imaginative ways of combining them.

The Transcend Method has six basic premises, drawn from Hindu, Buddhist, Christian and Daoism, Islamic and Judaic thought respectively. These include:

- Mapping the conflict formation: all parties, all goals, and all issues;
- Bringing in forgotten parties with important stakes in conflict;
- Having highly empathic dialogues with all parties singly;
- Each conflict worker may specialize on one conflict party;
- In these dialogues identify acceptable goals in all parties;
- Bring in forgotten goals that may open new perspectives;
- Arrive at over-arching goals acceptable to all parties;
- Arrive at short, evocative, goal-formulations;
- Help define the tasks for all parties with that goal in mind;
- Disembodying the conflict from where it was,
- Embedding it elsewhere,
- Bringing in forgotten parties, goals;
- Verify how realizing that goal would realize parties' goals;
- Help parties meet "at the table" for self-sustaining process;
- Withdraw from the conflict, go on to the next, being on call

Ultimately the Transcend Method aims to help bring parties together in a self-sustaining process. Transcendence means redefining the situation so that what looked incompatible is unlocked, opening up a new landscape. Creativity, and its application to contradictions, is the key. It is important to map out the conflict formation and to include all parties, goals and issues, remembering to bring in forgotten stakeholders.



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Specific goals should be identified that are acceptable to each party individually in order to arrive at overarching goals that are acceptable to all parties collectively.

The primary tool is empathetic, respectful dialogue that explores the conflict. Important considerations are included in the code for conflict or peace workers applying the Transcend Method:

- Identify positive elements in the parties and the conflict itself to create the potential for further development. Emphasize shared roots and responsibilities, rather than distributing blame and guilt.
- Be creative and suggest alternative courses of action. Collectively find a short, memorable outcome formula, for example 'sustainable development', that may not do justice to all complexities, but may facilitate communication.
- Do not demand consensus, commitment or co-operation from parties who are not ready. Equally do not 'deform' the conflict by pushing agendas too far away from the parties' immediate concerns.
- Do not manipulate. Be open and honest with yourself and others about aims and feelings, remembering that the conflict worker's task is to empower.
- Do not judge. Retain confidentiality and do not seek publicity or gratitude.
- Remember that conflict work is the art of the impossible, requiring optimism, idealism of the heart and realism of the brain.

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