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In this essay, I apply a rhizome metaphor to explore the ways transparency functions in three humanitarian sites. Using a case study method, I investigate how transparency functioned in a resettlement program following communal violence in Indonesia, an emergency response program following Cyclone Nargis in Burma, and a gender-based violence program in Sudan. Through my analysis, I suggest that transparency is a communicative act that has both short and long-range implications for all parties involved, however removed, from the research or intervention project.

Keywords: Rhizomes; Transparency; International Humanitarian Response; Suffering; Reflexivity

> *"There are times in life when the question of knowing if you can think differently than one thinks and perceive differently than one sees, is absolutely necessary if one is to go on looking and reflecting at all."*
>
> Michel Foucault (*The Use of Pleasure*, p. 8)

Two pressing questions guide this essay: (1) In what ways does transparency function in international humanitarian programming? (2) In what ways could a rhizome metaphor illuminate these functions? These questions are particularly salient in my research trajectory and emerge from two prominent experiential knowledge nodes. First, my adult work life (at the time of this writing, I am a 48-year-old Ph.D. candidate) has centered on working with individuals and communities that experience varying levels of oppression and suffering, and in international contexts often defined as humanitarian sites. In a generalized form, humanitarian assistance is constituted through actions designed to save lives, alleviate suffering, and maintain and protect human dignity throughout multiple time points during

and following emergencies. Humanitarian assistance is offered regardless of the nature of the emergency, e.g., whether large-scale emergencies following natural disasters, restorative work during prolonged conflict, or ongoing threats resulting from interpersonal familial violence. These past years of lived experiences have influenced my worldview, continue to challenge my epistemological stances, and greatly influence the ways I approach research questions.

I seek methods and theoretical frames that first will assist me in my dissertation research, stabilize that research trajectory even while that trajectory is constantly emerging, and add to existing communication theory. I therefore strive to cultivate various inquiry skill sets, data management methods, and writing processes that develop and support an emergent research agenda that is situated firmly within an emancipatory orientation; an orientation that is openly ideological and seeks to create social change. The two aims of this essay—the identification of transparency as an actor participating in international humanitarian sites and exploring ways to apply rhizomatic metaphors and methodologies—focus my attempts to understand the complexities of chaotic, power-infused discourses and practices employed within humanitarian spaces. By adopting a rhizomatic metaphor, I attempt to respond to Foucault's call to cultivate new ways of thinking and seeing.

The essay is organized in the following manner. I begin by describing three different situations, or *lines of flight* in rhizomatic terminology, that converge and then rupture to release the main inquiries guiding this essay. These lines of flight are (1) a conversation with one of my academic advisors, (2) logical framework thoughts, and (3) reflections on sites of suffering. I then discuss characteristics of a rhizome metaphor, and its application in this essay. After this contextualization process, I explore ways transparency functioned in different spaces.

Transparency is investigated through three case studies where I worked with large western INGOs (international non-governmental organizations) in Indonesia, Sudan, and Burma during the years 2002-2009. I characterize transparency in these sites as: (1) *contextual transparency* in a community re-integration dialogue project in Maluku, Indonesia; (2) *appropriated transparency* in the large scale Cyclone Nargis Response in the Irrawaddy Delta, Burma; and (3) *intentional transparency* in preparation for a controversial and polarizing press release documenting sexual violence in Darfur, Sudan.

These particular case study sites, localized within volatile and fluid governing structures, are characterized by immense suffering due to ongoing or protracted conflicts, or after-effects of natural disasters. The inherent danger, both physical and psychological, that could influence unintentional outcomes of operating in these types of environments highlights the importance of critical reflexivity and group feedback processes whenever decisions are made or actions implemented. I use the term *reflexive* in ways

that follow Kim England's (1994) definition, "Reflexivity is a self-critical sympathetic introspection and the self-conscious analytical scrutiny of the self as researcher" (p. 244). The implications of acting from a place of naivety or a one-dimensional understanding of transparency can precipitate dire, even lethal, consequences for individuals who participate in humanitarian efforts. The case studies presented in this paper illustrate the nuanced and different effects transparency may form depending on function, strategic value, and political context. In this essay, I define *transparency* as practices performed by researchers (or programmers) that demonstrate an awareness of methodological choices, the responsibility to understand the consequences of those choices, and the ability to discuss those choices in responsible and ethical ways with parties involved in the research or program.

As I begin the rhizomatic journey described, it is important to establish a shared entry point, a task especially problematic within a rhizomatic frame. One of the characteristics of a rhizome is that it has no beginning nor end nor center; it is always in a process of becoming (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Deleuze and Guattari's (1980) rhizomatic conception emerges from the material plant. A rhizome is a plant that runs on the surface, but at any juncture or disjunction it can erupt into more plants. It is a root system that does not reproduce in a horizontal, orderly fashion, but rather as a network of shoots and nodes that erupts and expands endlessly and in a number of directions; a rhizome has neither a beginning nor an ending point. When a rhizome ruptures, which is how I conceive this essay, it is helpful to understand the forces that converged and forced the eruption. My first challenge in this essay, then, is to identify a shared starting place so that readers can contextually understand why these specific case studies were included in this paper. It seems appropriate, therefore, to explain how the idea of using a rhizomatic method to explore acts of transparency in international programming sites characterized by trauma and suffering erupted in the first place.

Intersecting Lines of Flight or How Did We Get Here?

The starting place for us in this essay is a juncture informed through three intersecting lines of flight: a conversation with one of my faculty advisors, logical framework thoughts, and reflections within sites of suffering. I briefly describe these different lines in the following sections.

Site of My Advisor

I begin with this description in order to illustrate my positionality as I write this essay. This node erupted recently during a meeting with one of my advisors to discuss my progress in an independent study. Originally, I had agreed to analyze interviews gathered from recently resettled refugees in order to learn more about gendered experiences of Iraqi refugee resettlement in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Once I started to become intimate with the data and to hear the voices, however, I realized my inquiry needed to address

different issues. I was very excited by this "mining the data" exercise; I had so many new ideas! I eagerly anticipated sharing my new thoughts with my advisor, but was slightly apprehensive about her reaction. After listening to my excited ramble for a few minutes, she took a sip of her coffee, looked me straight in the eye, and asked, "Do you see a pattern here?"

I could understand where my advisor was coming from and had gingerly anticipated such a reaction. I seemed to be flitting from one idea and notion to another, yet I hoped I could find some way to map the intersections within my movements. I hoped to identify some pattern(s), but I did not have a theoretical frame that would give form to the intersecting and interwoven patterned rationale. A rhizome metaphor, however, is an apt organizing system capable of illuminating conceptual and spatial maps, multiple voices, and interchanges between multiple sites.

I cannot disregard lessons learned from twenty years of direct service work, most within international contexts working with social change organizations. Yet rigorous and reflexive research methods require me to be transparent about the ways that I arrive at certain places of inquiry. As I reflect on this particular site, an academic site, I am reminded of the contradictions inherent in attempts to seamlessly connect fluid lived experiences within contexts that appear to be stable. This particular thought extends into the next line of flight—the logic of reasoning within illogical spaces.

Logical Frameworks in Illogical Spaces

In addition to working directly with people impacted by crises, my employment with INGOs has been characterized by assuming leadership, managerial, and design tasks necessary to support the INGO and its work. These tasks included developing and monitoring multi-million dollar budgets, representing the organization at local and national forums, and designing projects that use donor funds to achieve different goals. For the most part, and in order to accommodate the broad goals of the INGO, the format for these projects is usually quite similar: they are standardized and designed to fit a *logical framework* or *log frame*.

A log frame is a common programming tool used among international humanitarian agents to monitor and evaluate programming interventions and their outputs. Although components of the log frame may be interchangeable and reconstructed depending upon the donor, the dominant framework is consistently grounded in a linear and causal orientation that signifies a social scientific paradigm supporting notions that problems can be identified, solutions can be identified, and a clear path connecting these spaces will emerge through this logic. Furthermore, many frameworks are insistent in their collection of quantifiable indicators as a process monitoring and evaluative tool designed to assess the efficacy of the intervention relative to the stated, logical paths outlined in the plan. The nagging issue I had, and continue to have, in response to a logical framework is that programs

often operate in *illogical* places and in *illogical* ways. Linear models do not necessarily accommodate reflexive, participatory practices nor envision interchange points that allow for new cultural paths or ways of understanding to emerge.

For example, in the three sites visited in this essay—Indonesia, Burma, and Sudan—the illogical aspect is illuminated because these are sites of suffering. By this I mean that a logical framing is both conceptualized and situated within a stable context, a standardized context. Sites being explored in this essay are neither stable, nor can characteristics be uniformly standardized. Sites described in this essay are inhabited with groups of people still engaged in active conflict or negotiating through post-conflict or post-disaster ruins.

These traumatized conditions, characterized by the material destruction of communities and the concurrent unraveling of social and cultural structures, effectively foreground the immense differences between those who intervene as program implementers and those who are the "beneficiaries." In effect, community relationships and structures that existed prior to the conflict(s) or natural disaster(s) are severely and chronically assaulted to such a degree that a community's ability to assist in the recuperation and recovery process is compromised. A logical and prescribed intervention package is not prepared to respond within a chaotic, rhizomatic site that is characterized by destruction, suffering, and ambiguity. At most, a critical review of intervention practices could highlight multiple impacts of programming efforts.

One characteristic of a humanitarian intervention is that often it employs a top-down strategy informed through an upward compilation process of best practices and lessons learned in similar situations. At the same time, however, the intervention also enacts the INGO's vision and its desire to nurture the good political will and funding from donor countries. Ledwith (2007) warns against a singular top-down approach that is rooted in a linear thinking and discourages the acknowledgement of multiple routes and concludes that this type of intervention is arrogant and "fails to locate our understanding in local lives, taking lived realities seriously, and share power with those who are involved in the research as cultural invasion" (p. 608). Yet if an INGO provides protective measure for its employees, then a top-down approach might create spaces for programming and rebuilding governing structures. Very little sustainable work can occur if people who are affected are unable to form collective responses and actions.

Working within spaces tightly controlled by governments such as the military junta government of Burma, the regulatory government of Indonesia, and the ideological government of Sudan challenged efforts to create spaces where individuals and groups of individuals could collectively speak about their experiences. Despite the constraints placed on individuals and programming in oppressive environments, conflict and destruction present

opportunities for new knowledge and practices to emerge since systemic chaos precipitates crevices and cracks that allow for that emergence. The emerging nodes from these traumatized sites, however, are dependent upon their interconnections and adaptability to the context. People who inhabit a context best understand the contextual factors that influence recovery and reconstruction. Logical frameworks conceptualized outside of a specific context are not equipped to accommodate the structural organization needed to engage different actors in order to politically organize a destructed context in an emancipatory frame. My aim, then, is to explore ways that transparency is discursively animated within a INGOs programming space in destructed sites as well as sites of suffering.

I pay close attention to characterizing these sites as places of suffering because of meanings I attribute to the term *suffering*; meanings that include extreme distress, an existential crisis of not being able to make things better, and a deep-seated despondency that others will not respond in ways that affect change. I recall the words of my colleague Sibinty, a gender-based violence program manager based in El-Fashir, North Sudan, recounting experiences of Darfurian families fleeing from repeated assaults on their homes and bodies and seeking refuge in crowded, sprawling camps. "The women are suffering," she said. I do not routinely apply the concept, but when I do, I consider *suffering* code for extreme distress, psychic pain, and a cautionary cue to proceed with great care and mindfulness.

Sites of suffering

The sites of the three case studies are characterized by immense suffering. All have national governments that exercise a great deal of control over the general population and create political contexts in which the lack of attention to the implications of being transparent results in a range of multiple undesirable outcomes. First is the possibility of death or physical injury. It is generally accepted by INGO employees that national staff and their families, individuals who are subjects of the nation state, are more vulnerable to veiled and explicit threats. This is especially true if and when the employing international agency is forced to leave or is unable to raise funds to remain active in the country.

Second, repressive governments can aptly and legally regulate access to humanitarian space by restricting movement in or out of refugee or internally displaced camps, or within the affected areas of destruction. Reduced humanitarian space often leads to a breakdown in accountability whereby external actors can no longer monitor and document human rights violations or the extent of suffering endured by individuals. Furthermore, as a result of international law acknowledging sovereignty to UN-recognized nation-states, internally displaced persons (IDPs) residing within host government camps could, in effect, be held hostage under the auspices of protection. A sovereign state can legally regulate space by manning checkpoints throughout

a city, issuing curfews and travel bans on its citizens, and creating extensive bureaucracy to obtain travel documents that infringe on citizens' rights to free movement.

Finally, national organizations could be charged with crimes against the State, the staff imprisoned, while international organization could face expulsion from the country. Deep structures represented within State-controlled governments can be highly effective at sustaining bureaucratic mazes. Bureaucratic processes can further restrict and frustrate delivery of humanitarian services, as well as the political work that necessarily accompanies it.

These formative and often quite profound experiences working within sites of suffering have informed and given form to my sense-making in general, but also situate my research orientation in an emancipatory framework. My lived experience has not produced neat categories that are necessarily causal or logical in nature, nor has time facilitated a linear memory of events. Specific incidents and the subsequent insights gleaned from those incidents do not take root and grandly shoot upwards to bear the fruit of new knowledge as illustrated by the tree metaphor. Rather, instances and awareness permeate and erupt in response to different situations and, in different contexts, provide new insights. These eruptions become spatially and chronologically inscribed and are therefore dense and fecund. Yet too often, in an academic context, scarce attention is paid to discussing ways lived experiences, affective experiences, and theoretical perspectives complicate, consummate, or contradict the other.

My search for methodologies that assist in connecting spaces of separate but interconnected knowledge nodes is informed through Saukko's (2003) rationale in using a rhizomatic analysis to interrogate how multiple discourses constituted the experiences and meaning-making of women and girls who experience or had experienced anorexia. Saukko explains, "I wanted to conceive the relationships between the women's self-analysis in more 'rhizomatic' or 'crabgrass' like terms pointing to different directions, both to commonalities and discrepancies" (p. 91). Likewise, I wanted a methodology that could accommodate connections that were multidirectional and crossed years as well as continents, a method compatible with the eruptions and disruptions of knowledge and experience. Thus, I approach this inquiry using a rhizomatic metaphor. In the following section, I elaborate a rhizomatic metaphor and describe the case study settings for exploring transparency in action.

Rhizomes

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) first conceptualized and introduced the notion of a rhizome in their text *A Thousand Plateaus*. Although this specific methodology or orientation is not widely applied, it has been acknowledged as a practical way to frustrate existing knowledge trajectories and highlight the

emergence of new knowledges that manifest within disparate yet connecting lines. Mansfield (2000) describes Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic notion as "inventive and adventurous" and further describes the impact of this new way of conceptualizing subjectivity by reflecting, "Their aim often seems to be the demolition of the sacred cows not only of Western Academia, but also of the apparently obvious and commonsense logic on which we normally depend" (p. 136). What, then, is a rhizome and how can a simple metaphor become as powerful as suggested by Mansfield?

The Rhizome

A rhizome is a plant that runs on the surface, but at any juncture or disjunction it can erupt into more plants. Whenever a rupture occurs, the rhizome will send roots down into the earth while also shooting up stems. It is a self-sustaining entity and has no beginning or end; it is sustained through an underground communication nutrient system. It runs horizontally and can become multi-dimensional at any point. In particular, a rhizome network contrasts sharply with the most prominent metaphor in Western philosophy, the tree of knowledge. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) argue that a rhizome metaphor is "capable of strangling the roots of the infamous tree" and by doing so is capable of contesting the binary logic and symbolized order systems of thinking represented by the tree. As Mansfield (2000) explains:

> Where a tree is a single vector aimed at a specific goal, the rhizome expands endlessly in any number of directions, without a centre. The multiplicities that are the tree's final achievement can be traced back to the trunk and roots as its origin and meaning. A rhizome, pushing in a number of directions at once, lacks this sort of unity. Its multiplicity is part of its nature, not its by-product. (p. 143)

Mansfield suggests that by contrasting these two botanical structures as metaphors, the rhizome and the tree, Deleuze and Guattari intend to illuminate the contrasts between a dominant philosophical orientation that adheres to the tree metaphor—an orientation that permeates Western philosophy in its insistence on fixed, stable, ordered realities—and the philosophical attention to the ever emerging, intersecting, and erupting realities represented by the rhizome.

A rhizoanalytic approach takes the figuration of a rhizome to explore multiplicities in data, interpretation, thinking and writing (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). A rhizoanalysis redirects analysis away from identifying stable meanings of interactions to mapping possibilities produced through interactions. Thus, the analysis of meaning is important, but meaning and analysis are fluid, divergent, interrelated, and dynamic (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). A rhizome metaphor provides this examination the rich opportunity to analyze and assess transparent acts in three settings that are spatially located in different geographical regions across nine years. The case

studies to be explored include: (1) *contextual transparency* in a community re-integration dialogue project in Maluku, Indonesia; (2) *appropriated transparency* in the large scale Cyclone Nargis Response in the Irrawaddy Delta, Burma; and (3) *intentional transparency* in preparation for a highly controversial and polarizing press release documenting sexual violence in Darfur, Sudan.

Transparent Lines or The Case Studies

In the following three case studies, I explore ways transparency functioned in humanitarian sites characterized by chronic or immediate crises. The first site is a community re-integration and restoration dialogue project I directed from 2002-2004 in Maluku, Indonesia. The next site is Burma, where I worked as an Emergency Area Manager in a large-scale Cyclone Nargis emergency response in 2009. The final case study site is a highly contentious advocacy site created while I was working as the Senior Gender-based Violence Coordinator in Sudan, 2005-2007. In each site, transparency is located and analyzed according to its properties and function.

Contextual Transparency Eruptions in Maluku, Indonesia

In Maluku, Indonesia, I was employed by an INGO to implement the first stage of a community re-integration dialogue project in an area characterized by conflict and displacement. The project's goal was to facilitate communication between communities and groups who had been displaced by communal violence so that displaced communities could return to their original homelands. The conflict in Maluku, often characterized rather simply as a conflict between Christians and Muslims, erupted in 1999 and left over 5,000 families displaced. When I arrived in June 2002 in Ambon, the capital of the Maluku Province, Laskar Jihad affiliated soldiers, who had arrived *en masse* by boat from Indonesia's main island Java, had just left Ambon town. The 250,000 residents remained on the alert for signs of conflict. I worked in an office located on the sixth floor, the top floor, of a building that was a hotel annex. The immense rooftop overlooked the expansive Ambon Sea. Our office walls were lined by cracks (semiotic reminders of the tremor experienced earlier in the year) and pockmarked by bullet holes left from the most recent clash. Our office, as well as the second floor flat I rented from the Chinese-Indonesian family who operated a grocery store on the ground floor, was located along the neutral zone lines separating Muslim and Christian populations.

The project I managed and directed presented a unique programming opportunity in a post-conflict setting: create opportunities for meaningful and safe dialogue. With a staff of 12 (Muslims and Christians) we set out to do the work. The neighboring island where we first worked, Seram Island, had experienced mass displacement of villages, and our goal was to help

communities find ways to return and rebuild their villages. We worked together as a small team and eventually expanded our programming reach by writing new grants to fund new projects. Although the original plan was to work with communities on neighboring Seram Island, we eventually secured funds for work in Ambon town itself, a town of 250,000 citizens located on Ambon Island. To support the new program, we hired new staff.

The program manager for the Ambon-town based dialogue project was highly competent and committed to working with the affected communities. She had previously managed multiple small grants, was attentive to detail, and introduced a cost-benefit analysis tool to analyze the costs of the different program components. In the end, she calculated the cost per dialogue session and proposed that we present these findings to the 16 communities involved in the project and ask them the following question: "Would you like to allocate these funds for dialogues or would you rather have the funds to do some other type of work?" This question definitely would have provoked a great deal of discussion, generated new community-identified ideas, and possibly promoted more conflict.

Although I welcomed the transparency and empowerment facets of this suggestion, I was confused by the possible implications and reluctant to move forward with such a bold and open display of transparency; it just was not contextualized. After all, we as field staff were not in positions to authorize a reallocation of funds. We had made contractual promises to our donors to produce X number of dialogues, with X as outcomes. Nothing, however, stopped us from fully disclosing the processes used to determine spending and allocation of unrestrictive funds to support our work with communities and the community's work with us.

The idea of contextualized transparency highlights the need for awareness in understanding ways differing levels of transparency might influence contexts. Communities deserve to know the monetary value of the aid or services that are allocated to them. Communities also deserve the knowledge of understanding the constraints or parameters of engagement. In terms of reciprocity, the implementing or researching agents expose their vulnerabilities and gain informed participation by being as open as possible about the constraints surrounding the funds and subsequent activities. Communities, then, reciprocate within this leveled powered field by being clear on the ways that they can be involved in the project, identify points of negotiation, and establish more equitable relationships.

In this situation, transparency could have been a potential conflict trigger. Yet, it also highlights the imperative to provide communities with as much information as possible about decision-making parameters in project design and financial allocation. Here the power balance and vulnerability is exposed: the researching, implementing agent is required to be forthright on the constraints of the project but still ask for participation while the researched are aware of the constraints while also being cognizant of their role in enabling

the researching agent to accomplish their contractual agreement. This type of transparency was particularly helpful in negotiations with participating communities around regulatory issues of compensation for individual participation and access to block funds for community development projects. What could have been a highly contentions power struggle—allocation of funds between different communities—turned into opportunities for creative and collective visions to be imagined and articulated.

Appropriated Transparency Eruptions in the Irrawaddy Delta, Burma

This site illuminates visual representations of transparency. I was hired to work as an Emergency Area Programme Manager with the largest INGO working in Burma in response to Cyclone Nargis's devastating sweep across the Irrawaddy Delta along Burma's western coastline. The suffering was intense: the United Nations estimated that up to 100,000 died, over 200,000 were missing, and 1.5 million people were displaced as a result of the cyclone (Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, 2008). Entire villages were swept away in the storm. My job was to support an operating environment among four field offices so that the INGO could respond to the immediate needs and rights of the persons affected.

An important responsibility of an emergency manager is to facilitate donor visits. On-the-ground staff, national and non-national, uses these opportunities to educate donors about operating environments (impacts of war, natural disasters, effects of climate change and deforestation) as well as cultivate partnerships in order to secure new and ongoing funds. Although not formally orchestrated, often a certain tour-route emerges for international donors to visit. The chosen sites are usually the most appealing sites. This means touring villages where people have rebuilt houses, visiting markets that have materials and people shopping, opening reconstructed schools, and talking to residents in places where the overall ambience seems to have transformed from a place of horror and mourning to one of hope and opportunity. A colleague of mine referred to these jaunts as *Refugee or Disaster Tourism*.

On one of these site visits, I discovered a splattering of INGO branding and markings across the cyclone-impacted area. Small dugout boats, jerry-rigged with rebuilt engines, were adorned with the primary colored, grounded logos of different INGOs. Schools that had been rebuilt or rehabilitated had placards assigning ownership to the community and the partnering INGO. Each reconstructed village had bright blue UNHCR (United National High Commission on Refugees) tarps fluttering on the rooftops and children were trudging through the mud and rain with colorful, blue UNICEF backpacks. In those places where INGOs were active, I saw INGO stickers, tee shirts, backpacks, and logos everywhere.

In this situation, the INGOs were within a reasonable realm, from their particular position, to be comfortable with their processes of branding

material objects that they were instrumental in procuring. This straightforward transparency acknowledges the source of funds but does not privilege the material labor of the end product or of the costs paid by the communities to receive the services. Like many concepts, transparency is responsive to modifiers that alter its functionality. In one sense, it is helpful for citizens to know which organization manages which types of resources. Likewise it can be helpful to know which organization is best prepared to respond to their needs if community members seek assistance with water systems, reservoirs, funds to start a small business, or education for their children. However, from a community recovery perspective, what are the implications of appropriated transparency? Put another way, who benefits from this application of transparency?

I suggest that in this site, transparency functioned to undermine opportunities for citizens and communities to recognize their efforts in rebuilding their communities. Therefore, it constrained spaces for emancipatory knowledges to emerge. The insistent branding suggests an unequal powered relationship with the INGOs and allows for INGOs or the government to assume a greater share of leadership, decision-making, and ownership, at the expense of local communities, in reconstruction efforts.

Intentional Transparency Eruptions in Sudan

I was employed as a Senior Gender-based Violence Coordinator for the Sudan-wide country program, a program reach that at that time included the now sovereign nation of South Sudan. Because the Government of Sudan (GoS) publicly rejected the notion that sexual violence had ever occurred, much less that rape was a systematic on-going strategy executed by government and different rebel forces, we could not announce, in one function of transparency, that we were implementing a gender-based violence prevention and response program. Instead, we framed our program as situated within "Women's Health." Although this slight reframing of the program label was necessary for programming to occur and to enhance the safety of national staff, it introduced an element of partial transparency. To suggest that our organization, which operated out of approximately 20 field offices, was attempting to conceal something from the GoS put many employees, program participants, and organizational assets at risk. This partial transparency was constantly negotiated through different mediums: in reports to donors and headquarters, in coordination meetings, and by individual national program officers who were questioned on a regular basis each time the team cleared the security checkpoints, monitored by GoS soldiers, designed to monitor movement in and out of the camps. On several occasions, notebooks were confiscated and the female program officers were asked to show the medicines that were used in the "Women's Health" programs. It was not unusual for project officers to receive harassing phone calls.

In early August 2006, I received a phone call from the field office in Nyala, South Darfur: there were groups of women who wanted to testify about mass sexual assaults that had recently occurred. We agreed to help organize the meeting. Staff in Nyala began collecting narratives and accounts from survivors, while I contacted representatives from DFID (the U.K. Government Department for International Development,) USAID (United States Agency for International Development) and relevant UN agencies to attend. The Irish, British, and U.S. American embassies were contacted and representatives were invited. In the end, we organized a meeting held in one of my employing organizations' sponsored Women's Center in the Kalma Camp in Nyala, South Darfur. Up to 300 participants attended the meeting and women publicly testified to incidents of sexual violence and other physical harm.

Following the meeting, we began strategizing on how to use this information as a press release to keep international attention on different types of violence—especially the use of wartime rape—that women and girls experience during protracted conflicts. Multiple meetings were held between the Sudan country program and headquarters. While HQ staff was busy looking for strategic media outlets, we in the country program began crafting a communications strategy—a strategy that was one of the most transparent and accessible documents produced in the program. The strategy addressed the following concerns:

- talking points for field managers in case international media contacted;
- evacuation plans for staff if violence erupted;
- contingency plans for people who might be stranded in a particular site if the GoS decided to halt all movement to and within Darfur;
- emergency plans for staff who worked in Khartoum, in case the GoS retaliated against the main office;
- travel plans for key staff to be in field offices to help manage communications.

In this site, the level of intentional transparency was greatly influenced by a concern for employees, especially those who were in the field and those whose employment status put them at risk of being targeted by the GoS. The official press release precipitated an immediate harsh movement restriction on national and international staff: the GoS shut down the "Women's Health" and "Rule of Law" programs, and three of the five members of the senior management team were expelled from the country. Nonetheless, several members of the Women's Health team expressed pride and satisfaction that the voices and experiences of these particular women had been heard across the world. The enactment of intentional transparency demonstrated a high regard for employees and their contributions to the organization, as well as a strong regard for the women who wanted to tell their stories.

Conclusions

I explored two notions in this essay. First, I illustrated ways transparency functioned in humanitarian sites characterized by suffering in three different sites: (1) a community reconciliation project in Maluku, Indonesia; (2) a large-scale emergency response effort in the Irrawaddy Delta in Burma; and (3) a human rights, wartime rape advocacy effort in Darfur, Sudan. I concluded with final reflections on how transparent acts can be responsive and generative within sites of suffering. Second, I explored ways a rhizome metaphor could assist in that particular inquiry. In this essay, I applied a rhizome metaphor to connect my lived experiences working in contexts of suffering with my current experience as a doctoral candidate. I also used a rhizome metaphor to illustrate ways three disparate experiences informed the major inquiry in this paper—the role and function of transparency.

In humanitarian sites, transparency is strongly related to accountability and reciprocity. Transparency most often emerges within conversations about funds and expenditures, especially since huge amounts of funds are dispersed into areas that had, prior to conflict or natural disaster, a much smaller cash flow. Yet, researchers or humanitarian workers also can implement transparent acts as paths that potentially can erupt into new opportunities for those directly affected by the destructive forces to engage as political subjects, even though available resources and the control of those resources are often skewed. Although any singular act may not have a pronounced or lasting effect on the redistribution of power, knowledge, and resources, acts chained together, as a rhizomatic emergence, can create conditions that disrupt unequal powered relationships.

Transparency is a communicative act. The effects of transparent practices rhizomatically run to impact and influence actions and circumstances of people who might appear far removed from the actual enacted transparent act. There are myriad ways that transparency functions. Some are beneficial to researchers and researched; yet without close attention, mindfulness, and understanding, transparent practices can be harmful. Although transparency is enacted as a communicative tool, it is imperative to engage vigilance in noticing its function. As Foucault (1985) reminds us, new ways of conceiving and perceiving are necessary to engage with the constant fluidity of circumstance. This suggests that while I have interpreted ways transparency functioned in the three sites reviewed in this essay, these interpretations are and were from my particular positions at that (or this) specific time.

As a chosen communicative act, transparency in its many forms does not require monetary support. It does, however, require a commitment to ongoing and open negotiation among individuals and organizations with access and control over resources, and individuals and communities who are

in dire need of those resources. Enacting transparency is a political choice that researchers can make, and as demonstrated in the case studies presented in this essay, transparent practices take many forms, have different impacts, and demand reflexivity.

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