

The story of the origin of the (German) Nonviolent-Communication Association (Fachverband)

or:

How the Fachverband came into being and where it is at now?

A report by Ingrid Holler and Irmgard Macke, prepared in mid-2016

1 What triggered the development of the Fachverband?

In the summer of 2006 the new certification process for CNVC trainers came to a halt – without warning or any given reasons. Up to then, Isolde Teschner was supervising the certification process for all registered candidates – which she did with great dedication on a voluntary basis. All of a sudden it was terminated. This stop shocked many people who were in the middle of the procedure.

The abrupt stop left a marked impact, stimulating lack of clarity as to the reasons it all happened as well as leaving people wanting to know when and how the quality assurance would and could continue. Some people felt insecure, others dissatisfied and again others started to offer even more NVC seminars without any quality assessment at all. The needs for clarity, connection and inclusion were left unmet.

In the summer of 2008 various CNVC trainers were asked to meet up with Marshall Rosenberg in Stuttgart to be trained as assessors for (the new) certification process. Marshall personally invited two of the founding members of the (present) Fachverband (Gabriele Lindemann and Ingrid Holler). At the end of the meeting it was agreed upon that within the year the assessors would be informed as to how CNVC chose to proceed. A year passed and because there was no reaction from CNVC despite several inquiries, the two founding members resigned. This left many needs such as reliability, clarity, development, community unfulfilled. On top of that, there was also dissatisfaction concerning CNVC's re-certification which changed every year without people having any say in the matter.

The fact that that three of us had been working for years as certified CNVC trainers led to immediate thoughts and meetings as to what and how we could contribute to the situation at hand. An 'Open Space' talk given at the annual trainer meeting in February 2010 in Munich served as the concrete catalyst to start up our own recognition process locally to continue to spread NVC. The theme "how to deal with the certification stop" was put forward using a consensus decision making method. The proposal which most people opposed to was voiced as "the worst scenario would be if everything stayed as it is" i.e. none of the participants wanted that it continued the way it was.

This motivated us to take the responsibility ourselves – four years after the stop – and create an NVC-organization which could end the situation and offer possibilities to meet many "open" needs e.g.:

Belonging, community

- In our organisation everyone who appreciates NVC is welcome whether they are a full member, sustaining member, certified, non-certified or sponsors.

Contribution: both actively and verbally

- In the legal structure of an organization, general meetings determine decision making so that everyone can actively participate. Whether in the managing board, executive committee or projects, everyone is welcome which we value as support and community.

Transparency, clarity

- In our recognition procedure visiting seminars is kept separate from the recognition process to maintain neutrality. The recognition process is assisted by two volunteers from the certification commission who preferably are not acquainted with their candidates. The recognition fee is €250 which is used for the benefit of the Fachverband. The renewal of the recognition follows every five years with a fee of €150.

Reliability

- The conditions for recognition and renewal are based on reliability - changes can only be decided upon at a general meeting.

Contact

- We have a branch office and any inquiries can be answered within 48 hours.

2 Who are the founding members?

When starting up the Fachverband we approached a number of colleagues of whom the following people were willing: Beate Brüggemeier (then CNVC cert. trainer for 8 years), Ingrid Holler (then CNVC cert. trainer for 10 years – while contributing ongoing voluntary activities for CNVC), Martin Irlinger, Gabriele Lindemann (then CNVC cert. trainer for 8 years), Irmgard Macke, Robert Macke (both involved for several years in a group to prepare for the certification), Andi Schmidbauer (experienced the "Stop" right in the middle of the certifying process).

3 Which challenges were to be overcome?

It's not just our desire but also out of appreciation for NVC that a professional approach is important to us. During the first year, 7 founding members invested around 1800 hours of their free time. This included:

- Creating organisational structures (articles of association, applications forwarded to registration offices etc.)
- Developing the recognition process – preparing guidelines and handbooks
- Developing corporate identity, logo etc.
- Designing website and flyer
- Preparing handouts
- Creating future vision – in expert conferences
- Approaching new target groups

Our work was and is based on trust: we actively use NVC to enable us to find mutual solutions. We regard NVC as the foundation of our work and we are ever grateful to experience the possibilities which emerge out of it.

4 How was the Fachverband publicised?

In February 2011, each founding member gave an introductory talk on the Fachverband at a local trainer meeting. All registered national and international colleagues were informed about the new foundation as well as by sending personal letters, emails and yahoo groups: ngfk and gfktrainer.

It was particularly important for us to inform Marshall Rosenberg and the CNVC at this crucial time. We even offered to travel over to the U.S. in order to have a personal meeting and to connect. Unfortunately, we never received any answer to this request.

Beyond that, we introduced the Fachverband at the trainer meeting in Munich in 2011 where a variety of feelings were triggered: Many people were enthusiastic because it met their need for transparency and progress and hence we won several new members. There were others who were sorely touched and saddened because they would have liked to have been included and to have had a say in the developing process of the Fachverband. Our strategy for setting up the Fachverband differed from that which some people would have preferred. We trust in the connection of needs and have communicated with colleagues from the very beginning.

Just before the Fachverband went public in 2011 the CNVC certification stop came to an end (after pausing for 4 years) which made CNVC certification possible once again.

The magazine "Managerseminare" printed an interview on the founding of the Fachverband. One person misunderstood this article as meaning that the Fachverband offered the one and only possibility of becoming a certified NVC trainer in Germany. Without contacting either us or the publishing company to check whether their assumptions were correct (which didn't correlate with reality) this person translated the article into English and sent it to CNVC. Till today this person has not revealed themselves.

Because of this article, CNVC instantly withdrew the certification contract from the following trainers: Ingrid Holler, Beate Brüggemeier and Gabriele Lindemann without any notification. They offered to reverse their decision if the Fachverband immediately terminated all activities.

None of us imagined that this could have happened. We were stunned because we had firmly trusted in NVC, dialogue and connection. The three above mentioned trainers were particularly upset given that they had invested years of professional and voluntary work in order to share NVC. We didn't agree to meet CNVC's obligation to terminate our activities. We saw no reason to do so. The capability of the Fachverband supported us during disputes, we trusted in the power of connection which opens space to a variety of strategies.

We have been in contact with representatives of CNVC since 2013, with Rita Herzog who developed and supervised the CNVC certification process. We experienced these talks as productive in terms of connection. Catherine Singer sent us greetings for our symposium and we still keep in contact.

5 What has succeeded up to now – what are the next goals?

The Fachverband is firmly integrated into the “NVC-landscape”. The work is organised by many members who keep the Fachverband alive.

Our managing committee is made up of eight elected members plus supporters in the extended committee. The association work is influenced by our expansion and its resulting complexity.

Encouraged by the development process of the organisation, we set up further divisions, each with their own organisation (members, external communications committee, certification, services). We are experiencing a mutual learning process which feels relieving and fun while also promoting the Fachverband.

In 2015 the administrative work expanded to such an extent that it exceeded the coverage of voluntary work. Angela Schnelle, who we consider very competent, became officially employed as our company manager in May 2016.

From the original 7 founding members, we have now grown to a total of 141 members (lay persons) and three paying organisations (legal persons). The website feedback indicates that our certification process is considered reliable and is valued by recognised trainers.

The recognition committee consist of 8 members from Germany and Austria. Our teleconferences, which take place every two months - show a growing interest for our recognition. Our intention to network people interested and active in NVC is put into effect through special conditions of re-certifying: which requires attending national network meetings.

We have conducted two international symposiums so far with around 140 participants from all areas. The third symposium with the theme “(R)Evolution through Empathy” will take place on the 24th June 2017 in Stuttgart. Professor Joachim Bauer is our Keynote speaker and to our delight the German UNESCO-commission will resume the patronage. This goes to show how the Fachverband and NVC are increasingly being socially accepted.

Our four most important goals can be reached by ensuring:

- The quality assurance in teaching NVC
- The spreading of NVC
- Opening new target groups
- Networking on regional and national levels

Further concrete goals are: increasing our organisation, linking up and exchanging with colleagues both on regional, national and international levels; cooperation with CNVC or its succeeding organisation; expanding our cooperation and implementing future symposiums.

We will continue to appoint well-known Keynote speakers as well as patronages for our symposiums as an expression of the increasing social popularity and recognition of NVC.

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