APPRECIATIVE ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE INSTITUTE OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Executive Summary: The Institute of Cultural Affairs case study.

The Institute of Cultural affairs (ICA) is a research, training and demonstration group concerned with the human factors in world development. With over 100 offices in 30 nations, the ICA is actively engaged in stimulating local citizen participation based on an integrated and holistic approach to human development. As a private, nonprofit voluntary organization, the Institute consults with communities, small businesses, voluntary organizations, corporations, government agencies, educational institutions and professional associations. ICA emphasizes action oriented approaches based on creative participatory and collaborative methodologies. Since the early 70s, the ICA has been quietly in the forefront of social inventions demonstrating its innovative approaches to thinking, organizing and action. There is a growing interest of both profit and nonprofit organizations in the methods of ICA resulting in the publication of the book "Winning through Participation".

For the purpose of data collection and analysis of this Ethnographic Case Study, an Appreciative Inquiry Team (AIT) was formed consisting of members from the organization and researchers from the University. Starting in April 1989, the AIT created a research agenda, designed an Appreciative Instrumentation format, did over 100 two hour interviews in 10 midwest ICA locations, transcribed them, and later analysed and interpreted the data in a week long `Research Carnival'. At the end of the week over 80 `Provocative Propositions' relating

to the vision of the future were created. Later the study was extended to the international level, where the researchers collected data from ICA staff from 21 nations attending the ICA International General Assembly in Brussels in September 1989.

The research identified the following life giving forces of ICA. Service Mission, Learning and Teaching Orientation, Consensus Building, Corporateness and Spirituality. ICA defines its service as facilitating organizational and community development by empowering people to take responsibility and act in improving the quality of life. Their strategies pick up on the energy of the society, the people, and the resources and bind them together in socially productive forms.

As a Learning and Teaching community, ICA is constantly in a reflective and thinking mode, continuously creating different forms of organizing for effective social action. Such 'double loop learning' is made possible by its unique organizational process of Consensus Building where each person has a voice in the organizational decision making. A total commitment to implement the decisions, and an affirmation of the fundamental goodness of everyone are the most typical outcome of this consensus mechanism.

Corporateness refers to a consensually validated sense of togetherness and oneness where each member experience ICA as many caring, creative minds focusing toward the common goals. It is as

if "their mind is wired into a group mind". Spirituality is supported by "spirit practices" and `intellectual' life. The common spirit stance is that members stand before the mystery of life, care about the world and believe in the potential of every human being. "Spirit life is that which touches you in deep places and bring forth your care. it is a journey to different levels of consciousness"

In addition to the above LGFs, some important non-negotiable basic values of ICA (valid for locations all around the world) are: a basic sense of globality/planetary view, a development orientation and a commitment to empowering people to help themselves. The case study reveals the adaptability and resilience of ICA in creating social change while being influenced by the changing times. The research affirmed the notion that due to the non-negotiability of the basic values and life giving forces of the ICA, the organization has been able to diversify into very different social action strategies and yet remain as a single corporate body of globally interconnected and cohesive planetary people.