The work of the Institute of Cultural Affairs in grassroots development of
local communities has required the invention of unique planning, implementation
and documentation methods. Their uniqueness has to do with the context which
informs the Institute's methods, the master designs of its research and the
universal modes which characterize its use of these methods. This is an initial
survey of these research methods.

I. INFORMING CONTEXT

The invention and use of the Institute's research methods rests on a common
context which informs them in all of their forms and manifestations. This
involves the incluseive functions of the research methods, their underlying
presuppositions and their general characteristics. These three aspects of
the contezt comprise that which differentiates Institute methods from other
research methods.

A. Inclusive Functions

The Institute's methods are designed to serve specified functions of research
which both inform and limit their designs and modes. The first is disclosing
the profound dimensions of the situation under examination. There is more
attention focussed on the basic realities of a given situation, in all of their
complex interrelationships, than on theoretical presuppositions which are
brought to the situation by any and all observers, inlcuding Institute observers
themselves. The second is discerning the directions necessary to move a
given situation toward a creative future. These methods are aimed at what must
be done, not at what has geen going on, even when the research task is one of
documentation rather than one of planning. The third is fostering effective
implementation. The corporate motivation of the model-builders to actuate
their plans is considered to be of equal importance to the task involved or the
specific products generated. These three functions os research are foundational
to the context out of which research methods are designed and used.

B. Underlying Presuppositions

The Institute's methods share a set of underlying presuppositions fundamental
to their design and use. The first is that any given research group is
self-sufficient in terms of tis capacity to complete the given research project.
This means the Institute places a profound trust in the capacity of local
people to deal with their own research questions. When specialized expertise
is required, those with such skill are brought into the research process
with local people at the onset. The second is that every step of planning has
an objective contradictional focus. The Institute's research does not try to
solve "problems" and declines to do analysis out of the image that something
is at fault. The analysis is oriented toward articulating the objective
sociological contradiction which lies beneath a multitude of blocks and irritants
in the community or organization. The third is that practical follow through
is assumed in every research project. The results of research are not limited
by what is imagined to be feasible. Rather such results are not complete until
their feasibility has been demonstrated to the satisfaction of the research
group itself, which bears practical responsibility for the follow through

of the implications of their own work. These three presuppositions forms the
second pillar of the context which informs all of the Institute's research
methods.

C. General Characteristics

There are a set of general characteristics which inform the research methods of
the Institute. The first is inclusive grassroots participation in any research
project. Local people are competent to participate in authentic research.
Indeed, only through their participation is such research effective. Further,
it means that is is the responsibility of the research method to receive,
honor and incorporate the wisdom which emerges from anyone who chooses to
participate in the research project, no matter the degree of such participation.
The second is that all products of such research are corporately written.
There is neither individual credit nor blame to be attached to individual
authorship. The product of a body of people working as a team is the outcome
of their corporate creativity, rather than their individual prowess. The
third is all research programs are short-term. The duration of a particular
project, in its planning, implementation or documentation mode, is determined
in advance. Appropriate methods are invented to assure that the task will
be completed within the allocated time frame--maximum for planning: one month;
maximum for implementation: four years; and maximum for documentation: two to
four weeks.

II. MASTER DESIGNS

The research methods of the Institute share a set of master designs which mark
them as profoundly interrelated. These designs include the basic research
dynamics as the Institute has defined them, the foundational forms in which
these dynamics occur and the principal compoents which may be found in any and
all of the programs of the Institute. These master designs lie at the heart
of the inclusive view of these research methods and programs.

A. Basic Dynamics

All the Institute's research methods share a set of basic dynamics which are
the foundation of the "how" of research. The first is the practical context
which establishes the parameters of the research project and focusses the
mind of the research group upon the issues at hand. The "why" of the project
is more important that the "how". Providing the context is not a "one-time-
only" occurrence, but is woven throughout the duration of the project.
Indirect elements of the context, such as corporate singing and tangential
broodings, are critically important in forming an assortment of individuals
into an effective working group. The second is the exhaustive brainstorm.
This means all of the insights are objectively held before the entire group.
This assures a thorough debriefing, and is intended to enlarge the context
of all participants by revealing the inclusive wisdom of the whole group.
The third is the intuitive gestalt. This organizes the brainstorm data into
a relatively few holding categories which emerge from the group looking at the
whole picture. This allows all of the data to be put in relationship to itself.
It is intended to reveal hitherto unseen relationships in order to allow a
creative leap to be taken. These three basic dynamics, modified by the changing
practical context, are the most elemental pattern of the Institute's research
work.

B.   Foundational Forms

The second involves the foundational forms in which that work is carried out.
The first is the inclusive assembly. Relatively large numbers of people are
involved in discerning broad directions needed. Such assemblies are held
once a year and involve as many Institute staff and local community representatives
as possible. The second is the specific consult which is used to deal with the
limited research arena. The consult may last a single weekend in the form of a
Problem Solving Unit made up of three or more people. It may be a week-long
initiating consult for a local community development project involving an entire
village and 30 or 40 outside consultants. Its task is defined within regorous
limits at the outset. Its product represents a substantive step along a defined
path. The third is the documentation module. It is the most
recently developed, and the most citical. The documentation module involves
a meticulous analysis of the whole work of a defined project arena throughout
a given period of time. The aim   is discerning the objective aspects
of that program which will move it into the future. These three foundational
forms are the vehicles for the research work of the Institute.

C.   Principal Components

The third aspect involves the principal components of any research construct.
At the heart is the working team, the basic resarch unit. The team examines
the diverse areas appropriate to that phase. The team operates as a singular
unit with particular responsibility for the whole process. The second is the
reporting plenary. It is an assembly of the whole which receives and clarifies
the reports of the teams and discerns the new shape of the research data
appropriate to the next stage of team work. It is the plenary to which each
team is finally accountable, and from which it receives its new assignment.
The third is the methodological leadership. This assures that the research
body moves together and recommends appropriate procedures to both the team
and the plenary. Leadership requires skills in methods -- planning,
implementing and documenting -- and corporate effectivity more than knowledge
of the research arena or insight into appropriate product content. These
three principal components of the master designs of the Institute's research
comprise the practical "how" of the operations of any research project.

III. DISTINCTIVE MODES

In addition, the research methods of the Institute of Cultural Affairs display
distinctive modes which set them apart stylistically from other models. These
modes include the methodological means, the operating assumptions and the
profound intents of research. In each of these arenas, the distinctiveness of
the Institute's methods demonstrate a style of meticulous attentiveness to the
particularities of human experience which informs the research project.

A.   Methodological Means

The first of these distinctive modes is the sets of methods which have been
developed by the Institute. The first set of methods centers on contradictional
planning. It invloves (1) articulating the actual operating vision of those
who are invloved in an arena of research, (2) discerning the actual set of

contradictions which are blocking the realization of that vision, (3) creating broad practical proposals which will deal with those contradictions, (4) determining effective tactical actions which will implement those proposals and (5) organizing those tactics into actuating programs which serve as a basis for both budgeting and personnel allocation. The second focusses upon the means of catalyzing practical change from the grassroots upward. This includes (1) inclusive scheduling of implementation of tactics, (2) discerning and procuring the needed authorization, (3) obtaining necessary funding, (4) organizing operating teams and (5) generating momentum through regular reporting and celebrations. The third is human documentation. This is concerned with accurately demonstrating the effectivity of the work of local people in their communities. This set of methods includes (1) determining the objective changes over a period of time, (2) discerning the catalytic relationships among and between tactical implementation and social change, (3) objectifying the economic and human costs and benefits of particular programs, (4) creating artful products which tell an imaginally powerful story and (5) disclosing to local people the profound significance of what they have done. These threee sets of methods are the cornerstone of the stylistic modes of the Institute's research.

B.   Operating Assumptions

The second distinctive mode has to do with the operating assumptions related to effective engagement and lasting motivation. The first is imaginally intensifying space beyond the immediate confines of a village or a research center to the globe. This involves attention to the physical working space filling it full with imaginative decor and practical working wall charts. Attention is given to the global implications of the work at hand. The second involves imaginally expanding time beyond the duration of the particular research program. This involves rehearsing the events which have brought the research group to the present and pushing the vision of the participants far into the future. The long-range aspects of the significance of the work are held constantly in view. The third is deep affirmation of all of the relationships which are present in the research process. This invloves constant attention to such practical things as a gracious style in the proceedings, using every available moment to further the task at hand, encouraging individual and team creativity, designing intentional reflective conversations and providing an overall ambience which reflects both the significance of the work and the deep fellowhood of the working participants. These three operating assumptions about motivity toward effective engagement are that which make the research task profoundly human.

C.   Profound Intents

The third distinctive mode has to do with the profound itents of the research task itself. Every aspect of the Institute's research intends to further the common task. This means that research is never undertaken for its own sake or to answer some theoretical question; rather it is a master strategy in the Institute's work of practical service to local people around the world. The second is to create corporate consensus. This means that the posture of research is not that of an outside observer, but rather one of participation with a body of people who intend to move into the future and assisting them

with those moves in accordance with their own vision of that future. The third
is to demonstrate local effectivity. This means that the methods themselves
are designed to be do-able by anyone anywhere in the world without respect to
education or social circumstance, provided only that they care about the future
of their village and villages everywhere. These profound intents, finally,
are what the research methods of the Institute of Cultural Affairs are about.