

**A GLOBAL STRATEGY FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT:
THE WORK OF THE INSTITUTE OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS**

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May 8, 2007

Accepted for publication in *Systems Research and Behavioral Science*

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ABSTRACT

In the 1970s the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA), based in Chicago, Illinois, began to create community development projects around the world. Initially 24 were created, one in each time zone. These demonstration projects were followed by Human Development Training Schools in which the local people, working with the Institute's staff, explained to people in surrounding communities how progress had been made in the first community. The process of creating model villages continued in additional countries.

In 1983 a conference on Sharing Approaches that Work was organized by ICA, held in New Delhi, India, and funded by UNESCO. The conference was the culmination of several years of reviewing and selecting the best of a wide variety of community development projects implemented by many organizations around the world.

The methods developed by the ICA to conduct its planning and training programs are now called the Technology of Participation. These methods have been used by businesses, government agencies, schools, and private voluntary organizations to encourage reflection, conduct participatory planning and problem-solving and guide systematic implementation. They have been used to build leadership capacity and to institutionalize team work as organizational practice.

Keywords: agoras, community development, ICA, facilitation methods, participation

THE INSTITUTE OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

The current interest in new agoras is an exciting development in an academic society, the International Society for the Systems Sciences. It suggests a willingness to reach out beyond the classroom to people in their workplaces and communities. A somewhat similar effort in education, research, and service was undertaken in the latter half of the 20th century by the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA). We believe that much can be learned about promoting participation on the local level from the experiences of ICA. This article provides a history of this very unusual organization.

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THE FIFTIES

At the middle of the twentieth century several trends led to a new understanding of human society. Technological advances in communication and transportation and the global movements of people during World War II led to an awareness of global interrelatedness. The United Nations was established, and colonialism came to an end. In churches there was a wave of writings, study, and discussion. “The 1954 meeting of the World Council of Churches in Evanston, IL, made a resolution to begin a center for the training of lay people in North America, taking as an example the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey, Switzerland. In 1956 Christian businessmen in Chicago founded the Evanston Institute of Ecumenical Studies and invited Dr. Walter Leibrecht to come from Germany to be the director.” (Stanfield, 2000)

During this time a group of faculty and students at the University of Texas began research on the relationship between their faith and contemporary life. Dr. Jack Lewis founded a group called the Christian Faith and Life Community. Dr. Joseph Mathews and others created a curriculum for students and laity. The community began to work on the role of churches in society and congregations. In 1962 when Dr. Leibrecht returned to Europe, Joe Mathews was appointed dean of the Ecumenical Institute in Chicago, originally founded by the Chicago Federation of Churches. (Alton, 2003) He brought with him a group of people, seven families, who had been experimenting with a disciplined life of worship, study, and service. (Stanfield, 2000)

THE SIXTIES

When the seven families moved from Texas to Chicago, their focus was primarily on developing curricula for church renewal. However, in 1963 they relocated from Evanston, IL, to the west side of Chicago and gradually began an experiment in community development. “From the premise that local communities constitute the basic building blocks of society, the Institute began working in a ghetto neighborhood on Chicago’s west side, which became known as Fifth City. Door-to-door interviews and neighborhood meetings provided a way for the local residents to review their many problems and to begin to design practical solutions.” (Stanfield, 2000)

The work of the Institute was a combination of training in religious and cultural studies. There were twelve courses, half were theoretical and half practical. One course was, The 20th Century Cultural Revolution. In courses and communities, a frequently used and refined method was a Focused Conversation, a way of discussing a subject thoroughly so that factual, emotional, rational, and action-oriented considerations could all be covered and in a natural sequence (see Figure 1 for a diagram of the structure of the Focused Conversation method). The seven families, and others who joined the Ecumenical Institute residential staff, developed an educational program taught throughout the nation and around the world, beginning in 1965. They also built a community organization in

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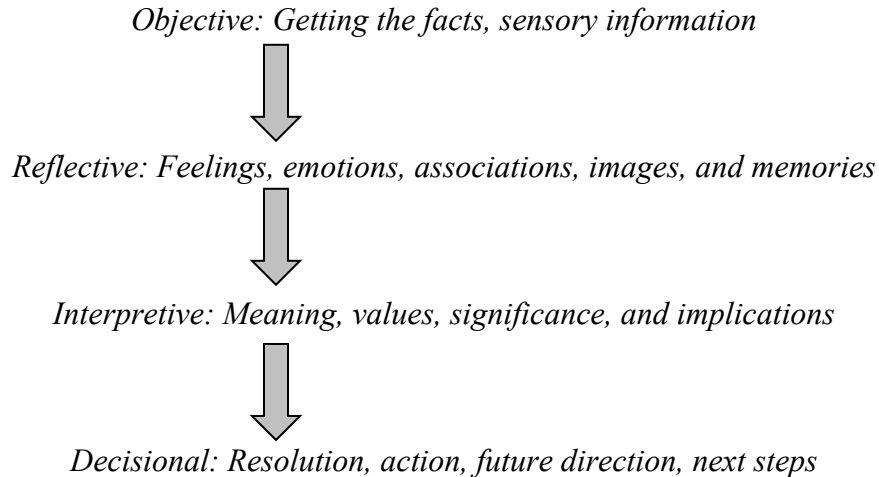


Figure 1. Steps in a Focused Conversation

Fifth City, where others had failed. This was done with extremely limited financial resources. In 1965 the first annual summer research assembly was organized. Some of the subsequent research assemblies drew 1000 people from around the world.

A Self-supporting Financial Structure

What provided significant momentum for the work of the Ecumenical Institute and later the Institute of Cultural Affairs was the full-time, volunteer, residential staff, who became known as the Order: Ecumenical. This was a self-supporting family order, committed to a mission of service in church renewal and later community and organization development. Members of the Order lived in shared housing and subsisted on a stipend equivalent to the poverty level of the country in which they were working. Certain members were assigned to take secular jobs. Others were assigned to further the research and program activities. Assignments rotated based on what was needed to advance the mission of service. All income was pooled. Individuals, churches, corporations, foundations and other grant-making organizations made charitable contributions to support the program activities. (Crocker, 2003)

The Importance of Images and Culture

President Derek Bok of Harvard University in a private meeting with Joe Mathews, ICA's founder, in Cambridge, MA, in the early 1970s said he believed that the gap between the 15% of the world's population who have access to knowledge, resources and decision-making power and the 85% who do not have access constituted "the moral issue of our times." Subsequently the staff adopted the 15% - 85% dichotomy as a powerful image of the deep societal contradiction ICA programs were intended to help resolve. (Crocker, 2003) The people in the Institute felt that the solution to the gap was not fully addressed by the community activism of Saul Alinsky, which was popular in Chicago at

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the time, or economic development as taught in universities. The people in the Institute were interested in “human development.”

The staff who decided on the name “Institute of Cultural Affairs” were familiar with the power of images to influence human behavior. (Boulding, 1956) “They understood that images are borne by various aspects of culture – language, symbols, rituals, norms, patterns, mindsets, etc. Beneath the economic, political and social issues that block full humanness are finally cultural contradictions.” (Crocker, 2003) At the time they were using the social process triangle – political system, economic system, cultural system. The ICA was concerned with the entire social process, but they felt that culture was key. “The Institute (both EI and ICA) was committed to helping individuals and groups build capacity to identify and address those deep cultural contradictions. The cultural emphasis was the sine qua non in the midst of all other planning, studying, implementing, and collaborating.” (Crocker, 2003)

THE SEVENTIES

During the 1970s the Ecumenical Institute continued to offer curricula through the World Council of Churches. Two training programs were developed. The Global Academy was an eight week course of religious and cultural seminars. The International Training Institute (ITI) was a six week course with greater emphasis on field work. The first ITI was held in 1969 in Singapore and was attended by 102 people from 23 nations. Since then ITIs have been held in locations around the world. For a short history of the EI and ICA see Van Ruller (2003). For a detailed history see Griffith (1994).

In 1973 the Ecumenical Institute spawned a new organization, the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA). The Ecumenical Institute had been working with churches in the US on community building. As they began to work increasingly with people from other religions and with secular people in corporations, the title “Ecumenical Institute” seemed to be an obstacle. They were perceived as a church organization attempting to spread a particular faith. But what they were trying to do was build communities. Hence, the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) was established as a sister organization to avoid the religious connotations of the title, Ecumenical Institute. The Institute of Cultural Affairs began to establish many community development projects and greatly expanded its staff. In 1968 there were 100 people on the staff, all living in Fifth City, Chicago. By 1974 the staff consisted of 1400 adults (and 600 children in their families) of 23 nationalities. (Stanfield, 2000)

In the mid 1970s the staff lived and worked in over 50 locations around the world. The staff became more global in composition and many non-Christians were not familiar with the Order: Ecumenical. Coordinating centers were established in Bombay, Caracas, Hong Kong, Chicago, Brussels, and Kuala Lumpur. Courses and programs continued to reach new audiences (teachers, social workers, business people and professionals).

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Initiating Community Development Projects Around the World

After careful study of the methods and programs that had been successful in Fifth City, the Institute accepted invitations to begin similar projects in Australia and the Marshall Islands. These efforts were intended to test the applicability of the methods developed in Chicago in very different settings. In addition to the Institute's staff many professional and business people took part in all three development projects as volunteer consultants. Their interest in the work of the Institute led to the development of LENS (Leadership Effectiveness and New Strategies), a participatory, facilitated, planning seminar which has been used by non-profit organizations, government agencies, and private businesses around the world. (Spencer, 1989)

On the basis of promising results from exploratory applications of local development methods in Australia and the Marshall Islands, the ICA committed to further test the model of local socio-economic renewal in diverse settings around the world. To ensure comprehensive application of the development model, the ICA obtained invitations from communities in 24 locations representing each of the 24 time zones. With the blessing of national and regional leaders, community residents joined with national and international consultants to conduct a community needs assessment and then created a plan that would address identified socio-economic issues and realize the community's vision for a new future. Both inside the community and outside perspectives were critical in developing a plan for a Human Development Project. Participants included a cross-section of village residents, resource persons in various disciplines from the host nation and resource persons from outside the nation. (Crocker, 2003)

Each project was intended to demonstrate comprehensive village development. There were economic, social and cultural programs dealing with all the problems in the village and involving all the people in the village. Each Human Development Project was started by a week long conference or "consult" where a broad cross-section of the community, volunteer consultants from both public and private sectors, and ICA staff worked together to design an integrated plan for comprehensive local development. ICA then left a group of staff members, usually about three couples, in the community for four years to do leadership training and to teach the methods of community development. Human Development Projects were initiated in Fifth City, Chicago, IL; Oombulguri, Australia; Majuro, Marshall Islands; Maliwada, India; Kelapa Dua, Indonesia; Ivy City, Washington, DC; Cano Negro, Venezuela; Kwangware, Kenya; Kapini, Zambia; Isle of Dogs, London, England; El Bayad, Egypt; Inyan Wa Ka Gapi, North Dakota; Delta Pace, Mississippi; Hai Ou, Taiwan; Ijede, Nigeria; Kreuzberg Ost, West Berlin; Kwangyung Il, South Korea; Lorne de L'Acadie, Canada; Nam Wai, Hong Kong; Oyubari, Japan; Sudtonggan, Philippines; Sungai Lui, Malaysia; Termine, Italy; and Vogar, Canada.

Converting Village Projects into Training Schools

Human Development Training Schools were intended to take what had been learned from the first 24 Human Development Projects and spread the experiences and methods to other communities. The first Human Development Training School was started in India

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due to an invitation, which was actually more of a challenge. Following the Maliwada consult, the head of the State of Maharashtra, Chief Minister Chavan, was presented with the consult document. He said, "One renewed village is but a curiosity. However, I have 60,000 villages." This statement prompted serious reflection. As a result a Human Development Training School (HDTs) was established in Maliwada to train community organizers from other villages. The first HDTs reached out to leaders in several other villages. Through the training school the village of Maliwada eventually sparked development in 232 villages in Maharashtra state.

An even more extensive village movement involved 1000 villages in Kenya, following the successful project in Kawangware, a 'slum' near Nairobi. At one time ICA had 350 staff people in Kenya, mostly young people from project villages assigned to other parts of the country. Less extensive replication programs were carried out in Indonesia, the Philippines and with 12 diverse communities in North America. Replicating a community development project is not easy. Many other supporting factors beyond the HDTs were critical to replication. In both India and Kenya (and other nations) replication was possible because it coincided with movements to renew villages that were already present on a national scale. In India and Kenya there was a vital national interest and investment in the restoration of rural communities as viable places to live and work. The exodus from the village to the cities had for many people intensified the cycle of deprivation. ICA village development work contributed methods and organization to movements that were already operating. (Crocker, 2003)

Using the Human Development Projects as the base, Human Development Training Schools were conducted by ICA staff, volunteer consultants, and local people to train community leaders, village volunteers, and government field workers in many countries. Since 1975 the methods have been used in over 1500 communities. (Stanfield, 2000)

Town Meetings

At the same time that the multi-year Human Development Projects were starting, ICA developed a way to take the message of local development to many more villages and towns, not just in developing countries but in the US and Europe as well. Town Meeting or Community Forum was a one-day program intended to recover the original idea of a town meeting. Town Meetings used the Consensus Workshop method (see Figure 2) to clarify community concerns and create practical plans to tackle local problems by using the community's available resources and cooperative efforts. From 1975 to 1977, in conjunction with the United States bi-centennial celebration, ICA organized one Town Meeting in every county in North America, resulting in 5400 events. (Stanfield, 2000) The goal of Town Meetings in the US was to use the excitement of the Bicentennial to encourage authentic visioning, social analysis, and action planning on the local level. What happened was unique to each community. ICA staff worked with organizations such as the Rotary Club, Lions, Elks, Bank of America, etc. Town Meetings were an early venture in partnering. This would become integral to the operating patterns of ICA later on. ICA obtained support from corporations such as A.B. Dick, McDonalds, and many others.

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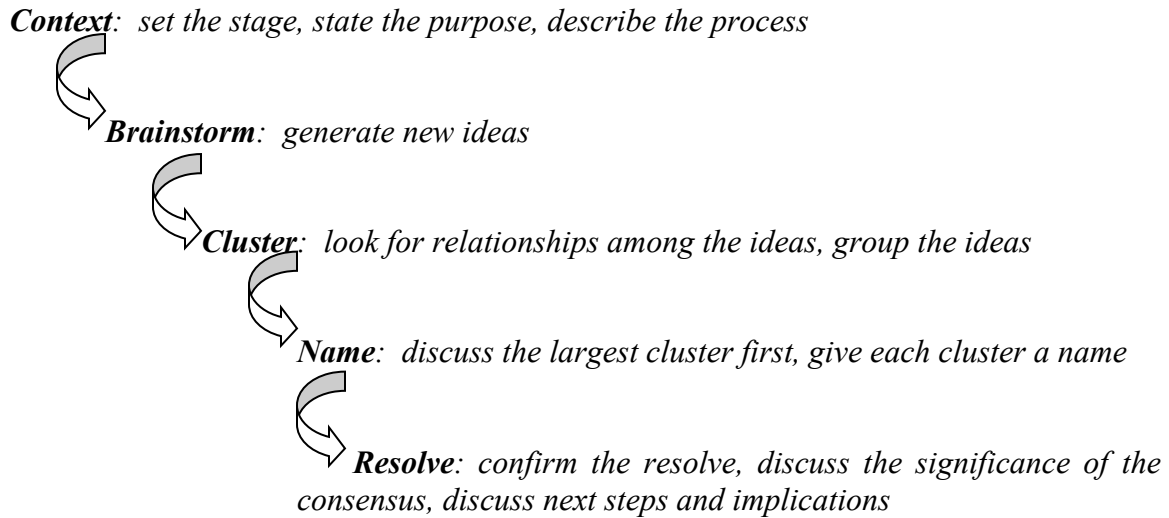


Figure 2. Elements of a Consensus Workshop

Town Meetings became global after the US Bicentennial celebration in 1976. Over 1000 were held in 13 countries in Europe. (Stanfield, 2000) A Town Meeting could be an opening event to select communities for participation in a Human Development Project. Town Meetings were also held to carry the experiences of Human Development Projects to many other communities. Their primary purpose was to awaken local residents to the possibility of effective and cooperative local action.

The same workshop methods were adapted for use by groups whose concerns often required a special approach. Other programs, such as the Global Women's Forum and Community Youth Forum were developed. For five to eight years ICA conducted Global Women's Fora in countries around the world.

THE EIGHTIES

In the early 1980s several programs were being conducted in parallel, reinforcing each other. The regional consultation was developed as a way to link the work being done in local communities. A series of 62 regional consultations were held. Town Meetings continued to create new activities in communities in many parts of the world. Human Development Training Schools continued to train more local leaders for community development work. The European volunteer movement sent many young people to work in villages in countries around the world. (Stanfield, 2000)

Training, Inc. was launched in Chicago as a 13 week program to ensure job training and placement. It was replicated for the first time in Chicago in 1979. Thereafter it was

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expanded to sites across the US. The training was designed for people who had their high school certificates but were not able to find a job. The program gave them training in computers, accounting, billing, sales, word processing and data entry. The program focused on changing self-image, behavior, work habits, and life skills. These programs gained a reputation for the depth of their training and their success in job placement. (Stanfield, 2000)

Documenting Innovations in Rural Development

In 1982 work began on the International Exposition of Rural Development (IERD). The program was co-sponsored by several UN agencies. Workshops were held to document hundreds of successful projects run by many organizations around the world. Five hundred representatives from these projects met in New Delhi, India, in February 1984 for the concluding IERD conference to share their projects. A series of books were published to document the lessons learned from these projects. (Institute of Cultural Affairs International, 1985, 1987, 1988) ICA began to publish books based on the years of social work in rural villages (West, 1986, Bergdall, 1993), on ICA's methods of participation (Spencer, 1989; Williams, 1993; Stanfield, 2001; Stanfield, 2003), in business (Troxel, 1993), in government (Troxel, 1995), in education (Nelson, 2001), on civil society (Burbidge, 1997), and on foundational understandings (Stanfield, 2000).

It was also in the '80s that the ICA first packaged its participatory methods for transfer to others. Trademarked as the Technology of Participation, or ToP®. The basic group facilitation methods include the Focused Conversation and Consensus Workshop methods mentioned above and a short-term Action Planning process (see Table 1). Over 30,000 facilitators and change agents have benefited from learning and applying these methods in the US alone. The ToP® series includes numerous advanced courses, the most popular of which is Participatory Strategic Planning.

Context	introduce the planning activity, review the background
Victory	envision the future, imagine the day after completion
Current reality	acknowledge strengths, weaknesses, benefits, dangers
Commitment	develop a clear, compelling statement of what the group is committed to accomplishing
Key actions	identify the tasks, cluster actions into task forces
Calendar	establish timeframes, each group places its actions on cards on the calendar
Coordination	finalize details, adjust the calendar to reflect coordination
Affirm and celebrate	conduct a celebrative Focused Conversation, create a catchy title or campaign slogan or visual image

Table 1. Steps in the process of Action Planning

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A New Financial Model for ICA

In 1984 there was an ICA conference for the entire global staff in Chicago. The expansion throughout the world was creating different localized patterns of success and crisis. The rush to do the Human Development Projects and the IERD was over. It was a time for reflection on what ICA had become. ICA staff began doing LENS for corporations. It became harder to hold one focus for the organization. Some people were interested in education. Some were interested in women's issues. Some were interested in youth. And there was the growing international component. Most of the leading edge work on community development by the ICA was being done outside of the US. The US and most of the "first world" people were college educated while many of the colleagues from the rest of the world were agricultural workers. The original ICA staff had started each day with a religious service. This was a symbol of the personal discipline of the staff, but the service had a Christian structure. Meanwhile people of many other faiths and persuasions had joined the ICA staff. The discipline had shifted and lost its meaning for many as staff around the world began to practice other forms of personal spiritual development.

At the same time individuals realized they had choices outside of the ICA, and the long-term financial questions about the organization's economic model had not been solved. The small personal stipends (roughly \$100 per month) were inadequate as children were going to college, parents were retiring and health costs soared. The economics did not work. ICA needed to devise a financial pattern for this new global organization.

In 1988 ICA changed its organizational structure from groups of families (the Order: Ecumenical) to a more conventional non-profit organization. Rather than being dependent on professional salaries to support spouses working as community volunteers, ICA now had to think about hiring staff and paying salaries and changing its mission and philosophy to fit a non-profit organization. As international decentralization happened, ICA in the USA also reoriented its services. After 1988 programs were staffed by paid employees, many of whom had once been full time volunteers. ICA did not radically change its mission or philosophy, but it did change its staff compensation model. This change had a great impact on what it was able to do.

THE NINETIES

In the 1990s ICA's work continued through ICA organizations in 34 countries. The work in the USA focused increasingly on facilitation, consultation, training, collaboration and partnering with other organizations. Each country organization operates autonomously, and under the guidance of a local Board of Directors. Some coordination of the national offices of ICA International (ICAI) is provided by a secretariat in Brussels. The national offices share courses and methods and new ideas. Some websites are www.icaworld.org, www.ica-usa.org, www.icacan.ca/institute, www.icajapan.org, and www.ica-uk.org.uk.

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In 1994 the International Association of Facilitators (IAF) was created by current and former ICA staff and volunteers and many practicing consultants. It has an independent voluntary steering committee. Currently IAF's membership in the US is much larger than ICA-USA. Consultants in the growing professional field of facilitation have taken planning, problem-solving and personal growth skills into many businesses, government agencies, and non-profit organizations.

Beginning with the IERD there was a shift from the summer Global Research Assemblies in Chicago to international conferences every four years. These conferences were titled: Our Common Future in an Environment of Change (Oaxtapec, 1988, and Taipei, 1990), Exploring the Great Transition to Our One World (Prague, 1992), The Rise of Civil Society in the 21st Century (Cairo, 1996), and the Millennium Connection (Denver, 2000) on creating profound social change. (Stanfield, 2000)

RESEARCH

ICA conducted research to develop programs that served individuals, organizations and communities worldwide. They were very aware of other approaches to religious studies, personal development, community organizing, and economic development. The religious courses of the Institute were based on the work of Bultmann, Tillich, Bonhoeffer, Neibuhr, Kirkegaard and many other authors. The secular courses used the work of Hermann Hesse, Jean Paul Sartre, Joseph Campbell, Kenneth Boulding, Carlos Castaneda, Paolo Friere, Lao Tzu, Sun Tzu, Margaret Mead, William Irwin Thompson and many others. The curriculum and subsequent programs were extensively researched and each had a long bibliography. There were summer research assemblies in Chicago from 1971 to the mid 1980s. At the summer meetings they invited speakers such as Jean Houston, Fritof Capra and Willis Harmon as well as leaders from the UN and other countries.

Documentation of ICA's methods in the form of books began in the early 1980s. Though not a declared intention, the Technology of Participation (ToP[®]) can be thought of as an extension of democratic methods. Experiments with alternative ways to deliver these methods were undertaken in the 1990s.

Many social experiments occurred in the 1960s and 1970s. Some parallel efforts during this time include Interaction Associates in San Francisco, which claims to have been facilitating longer than anyone, since the early 1970s. However, ICA was doing facilitation in the 1960s, though not calling it that. The National Training Labs (NTL) built on Kurt Lewin's work and emphasized individual psychology. ICA worked with communities to solve local problems. Although their programs aided the personal development of individuals, ICA did not do "sensitivity training." Werner Erhard, the founder of Erhard Sensitivity Training (EST), and his wife were shown around the Maliwada project in India in the 1970s. Hence, the staff of ICA was well aware of other movements and social experiments occurring in the 1960s and 1970s and many of the leaders of other movements had encountered the work of ICA.

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CONCLUSIONS

The Institute of Cultural Affairs is a very unusual organization. Over the years it has changed its name, its organizational structure, its methods, and its sources of funding. ICA's impact would best be traced through three sets of relationships to the organization and its work: 1) The full time staff who initially lived as families in group housing and were self-supporting and who now, in smaller numbers, operate as staff of many non-governmental organizations. 2) Past volunteers who used the methods to take on leadership roles in their organizations and communities and who perhaps participated in events and programs such as opening a Human Development Project. 3) People in thousands of communities and partner organizations who have experienced the methods and have taken part in the programs established in the planning exercises.

ICA has worked with many kinds of organizations – universities and churches, communities, corporations, other NGOs, and international and governmental agencies. Few organizations have touched so many people at all economic levels around the world. And few organizations have been so innovative in creating new means of promoting human development. Critical to its value has been the ongoing process of reflecting on, sometimes naming, and empowering critical social movements that take shape in the world. The work of ICA sets a high standard for other efforts, such as the New Agoras Project, that seek to increase conversation and participation concerning the future (Espinosa and Umpleby, 2007).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This article borrows heavily from the history of ICA included in Brian Stanfield's book, *The Courage to Lead*. We have also incorporated comments by Marilyn Crocker on an earlier draft. We are grateful to Gordon Harper and Marilyn Oyler for their reflections on the history of ICA and to Lawrence Philbrook for comments on an earlier draft. Any errors of fact or interpretation are the authors' contribution.

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