

Appreciative Intelligence for Transformative Conversations¹

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Abstract

This chapter demonstrates how organizations can engage in transformative conversations by making use of the Appreciative Intelligence of their key stake holders. Appreciative Intelligence is the ability to perceive the positive potential in a given situation and to act purposively to transform the potential to outcomes. Using appreciative methodology, the Institute of Cultural Affairs, an international nonprofit organization reframed what was happening and what could happen around them, decided to actively seek the positive and what was working for them, and engaged in strategic actions that would later allow a desired future to unfold for them. The chapter demonstrates that even in situations where resource limitations look highly definitive, new resources and opportunities can be found by reframing and acting on the new possibilities.

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Introduction

In the *Social Construction of Reality*, Berger and Luckman (1966) provided a unique logic for understanding the role of language in creating reality. In the *Presentation of Self in Everyday life* Erving Goffman (1959) made a related argument that in organizational and institutional contexts the expectation of those in power will have an overwhelming effect on the behavior of its members. A related stream of research on positive psychology (Seligman, 2011; 2003), positive design (Thatchenkery, Cooperrider, and Avital, 2010), *self-fulfilling prophecy* (Eden, 1997; Rosenthal, 1995) has shown that positive thoughts can lead to positive language and positive action (Cooperrider, 2010; 1990). Finally, Thatchenkery and Metzker (2006) have shown that in the micro, individual level, the capacity of people to reframe and see the positive can lead to productive entrepreneurship, innovation, and transformational leadership. The goal of the chapter in this context is to demonstrate the reality reframing nature of language at micro and macro level using a case study. The chapter narrates the story of an organization that reinterpreted what was normally understood as organizational decline to an experience of renewal and rejuvenation using a method known as appreciative inquiry (Jordan & Thatchenkery, 2011; Anderson, Gergen, & Cooperrider, 2008).

Appreciative Inquiry

In addition to what has been mentioned above, the role language plays in creating reality has been articulated under a number of related discourses such as social constructionism (Gergen, 2011; 2010; & 2009), symbolic-interpretive (Ricoeur, 1981, Geertz, 1973), and postmodern (Derrida, 1980; Lyotard, 1984; Rorty, 1989; Baudrillard, 1988). Within organization theory, the postmodern view (e.g., Boje, Gephart, &

Thatchenkery, 1996; Thatchenkery, 2007; Gergen & Thatchenkery, 2006; Westwood, R.I., & Linstead, 2002) has been profiled under areas such as narrative analysis (Czarniawska, 1997; Barry & Elmes, 1997), conversation analysis (Tulin, 1997; Ford & Ford, 2009a; 2009b; 2008a; 2008b; 1995), discourse analysis and storytelling (Boje, 2008, 1995; Beech, Kajzer-Mitchell, Oswick, & Saren, 2011; Oswick, Fleming, & Hanlon, 2011; Oswick, Keenoy, Beverungen, Ellis, et al., 2007; Grant, Hardy, & Oswick, 2004; Fox and Fox, 2004), textual analysis (Golden-Biddle & Locke, 1993; Locke, 2001; O'Connor, 1995; Thatchenkery, 1992; 2002), and language games (Mauws & Philips, 1995). Embedded and emerging from the learning of these streams of thoughts, a specific question is raised in this chapter: what happens when the language to address the organizational problem itself is changed? What happens if the new approach doesn't even look at problems as problems?

One such approach that has achieved a significant impact in organization development and change management literature is appreciative inquiry.

Most tools of organizational analysis are rooted in a logical positivist paradigm that treats organizational reality as something fundamentally pre-existing. According to Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987), appreciative inquiry, on the other hand, is based on a socio-rationalist paradigm, which treats organizational reality as a social construction and a product of human imagination. It is both a method of action research and a theory of how organizational realities evolve (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). While logical positivism assumes that social phenomena are stable and replicable to allow for lawful principles, socio-rationalism contends that social order is fundamentally unstable and organic (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987, p.139).

Appreciative inquiry "...refers to both a search for knowledge and a theory of intentional collective action which are designed to help evolve the normative vision and will of a group, organization, or society as a whole" (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987, p.159). In a later writing on the affirmative basis of organizing Cooperrider (1990) proposed the all groups have images of themselves that underlay self organizing processes and that social systems have a natural tendency to evolve toward the most positive images held by their members. According to Cooperrider (1990), the greatest obstacle to the well being of an ailing group is the dis-affirmative projection that currently guides it. As a result, often times, attempts to fix problems in an organization create more problems. In that context, appreciative inquiry is an attempt to co-create a shared consensus of a new future by exploring and building on the core competencies that are unique to an organization. In the end, we may have two contrasting images of organizations, organizations as problems to be solved or fixed, or as mysteries to be appreciated (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987).

According to Pfeffer (1982) organizations are "systems of shared meaning and beliefs where the critical activity is the continued construction and maintenance of the meaning and belief systems which assure compliance, commitment, and positive affect on the part of the participants." In that context, appreciative inquiry is a methodology that seeks to identify and enhance the core values of an organization (Cooperrider and Srivastva, 1987). An affirmation of the uniqueness of organizational values is most likely to help us realize what makes such organizing possible and understand the possibilities of newer and more effective forms of organizing. According to Weick (1982), intense affirmation might also show faults and inadequacies more readily than do

intense criticisms. He argues that if we have only weak images of organizations to work with we are likely to end up with weak theories of their organizing. Elbow (1973) reminds us that we could also make an intentional choice to play the "believing game" as opposed to the "doubting game." In the doubting game, the consultant or researcher has a suspicious eye whereas in the believing game the efforts are to understand the organizational dynamics from the participants' point of view. In such scenarios, our interpretations are affirmations that assert what organizations are more than what they are not. As Weick (1982: 445) says, "We first have to affirm that it is there, in order, second, to discover that it is there."

Appreciative inquiry, in essence, is an attempt to generate a collective image of a future by exploring the best of what is and has been. The basic rationale of appreciative inquiry is to begin with a grounded observation of the best of what is, articulate what might be, ensure the consent of those in the system to what should be, and collectively experiment with what can be (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). As articulated by them, appreciative inquiry should be appreciative, applicable, provocative, and collaborative. By appreciative it is meant that research process should not be based on a deficit mode but should build on the uniqueness of the organization. By becoming "applicable" the inquiry becomes useful and creates the potential for generating new knowledge. The "provocative" refers to a type of analysis that becomes challenging and generative (Gergen, 1994). A generative approach points toward realistic potentials that are latent in the system. To conclude, appreciative inquiry is a pragmatic approach if one is interested in reframing organizational realities.

This chapter also goes beyond appreciative inquiry and shows how the

participants of ICA leveraged their Appreciative Intelligence (Jordan & Thatchenkery, 2010; Thatchenkery, 2009; Thatchenkery & Firbida, 2008) in reframing their organizational reality. Appreciative Intelligence is the ability to perceive the positive potential in a given situation and to act purposively to transform the potential to outcomes. In other words, it is the ability to reframe a given situation to recognize the positive possibilities embedded in it but is not apparent to the untrained eye, and to engage in the necessary actions so that the desired outcomes may unfold from the generative aspects of the current situation (Thatchenkery & Metzker, 2006). By understanding and internalizing the various components and qualities of Appreciative Intelligence, members of ICA were able to positively contribute to the creation of a renewed new organizational form.

The Institute of Cultural Affairs case study

The Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) is an international nonprofit organization that has been engaged in community empowerment around the world for the last fifty years. At its peak they operated in 35 nations with over 100 field offices. A significant part of ICA's work is about securing local citizen participation in development activities. They constantly strive to engage in action research to create new methods for community and organization development.

The ICA began with religious roots. In 1952, a small organization called *Christian Faith and Life Community* (CFC) was formed in Austin, Texas. Two years later, in 1954, the Second General Assembly of the World Council of Churches called for the formation of the Institute of Ecumenical Studies, in Evanston, Illinois. Seven families from CFC joined the staff as teaching faculty. The Sixties was a time of expansion for

the Institute, initially in North America and later around the world. In 1963, the Institute moved to a sixteen-block area in Chicago's West Side (later named the "5th City") and began working with local residents to discern the community's problems and design practical, locally based solutions. The ICA has always been a reflective community. They explored what they do well and what could be done better. For example, in 1966 they created "Summer Research Assemblies" which were attempts to synthesize and consolidate their learning from various projects. In the following year, 14,000 people participated in Institute programs nationally. By 1971 the Institute had grown to over 1,000 members. There were 51 offices, 15 outside North America. The year 1973 was a turning point. As the work of the Ecumenical Institute expanded much beyond the confines of the church, there was a need to adapt the organization accordingly. This resulted in the formation of the *Institute of Cultural Affairs* (the ICA) as a secular version of the Ecumenical Institute. By the mid-70's, ICA had expanded from its Chicago base to 100 offices in 35 countries. A few years later in 1977 the ICA International (ICAI) was founded in Brussels, Belgium.

ICA's expansion into the global stage culminated in their sponsoring of the International Exposition of Rural Development (IERD) - a three-year program (1982-1984) for sharing successful rural development approaches. The IERD brought global attention to more than 300 successful, locally managed projects from 55 countries. However, gradually a process of decentralization began whereby each location was becoming more autonomous. There was also a need for self-sufficiency for each country unit of ICA. By the end of 1988, each region was becoming more autonomous. The ICA was undergoing a transition whose nature was understood differently by staff in various

locations. Some felt they were becoming a network rather than an organization. Others thought that the ICA had entered a stage of decline and gradual death. They felt that as a result of the decentralization the glue that held the global organization as a single entity was weakening leading to decline in membership. Further, the newly independent ICAs in most locations were losing members. In several locations, ICA members lived together as an intentional community, which required rigorous discipline and hard work. After several years of such living, many wanted to try more independent living though they were still committed to the organization. The overall sense of all these changes was a feeling of disintegration and fluidity. It was at this time that research team from Case Western Reserve University contracted to work with ICA using appreciative inquiry. This author was the lead researcher.

The appreciative inquiry approach made immediate sense to ICA. Considering this was an organization that studied paradigm shifts and the “Structure of Scientific Revolution” (Kuhn, 1962) long before they were popular, stepping outside the box was something very familiar to them.

The author of this chapter conducted appreciative inquiry interviews in ICA offices in Chicago, Cincinnati, Columbus, Kansas City, Minneapolis, Indianapolis, Detroit, Milwaukee, Cleveland and the Institute of Cultural Affairs International (ICAI) in Brussels. Some key aspects of the AI process are described below. The intent is to demonstrate how the inquiry process changed the language use of ICA members.

Step I: Interviews to create affirmative topics

One of the first steps in appreciative inquiry was figuring out the core values of the ICA. The author conducted interviews focusing on positive peak experiences with a

sample of 40 participants. Responses from these interviews were thematically analyzed to identify ICA's core values. An appreciative inquiry team (AIT) consisting of both the ICA and university members functioned as the inquiry team looking after all aspects related to the inquiry. After choosing five core values using the "card technique" outlined in ICA's ToP (Technology of Participation) method (Spencer, 1989), the AIT created an interview schedule to explore further the core values that were identified.

Step II: Comprehensive interviews for organizational analysis

During step II, over 100 affirmative interviews were conducted in various locations. The interviewees included ICA staff, members of the Board of Directors, and a representative sample of volunteers. The interview took on an average 90 minutes to complete and all interviews were taped and transcribed.

Step III: The Appreciative Research Carnival (ARC)

Step III of this project was aptly named as "appreciative research carnival" (ARC) by the ICA members. The carnival image was used to highlight the affirmative aspect of the inquiry, which was compatible with ICA's basic philosophy that life is a celebration. The ARC consisted of three major events.

1. Organizational analysis and formation of vision statements
2. Feedback and consensual validation
3. Action planning

The author of this chapter designed and facilitated an organizational analysis of the interview data during a three-day period in Chicago with the help of the AIT. Each member of the team read through interview transcripts and highlighted what they found significant. The AIT then talked about overall themes emerging out of the interview

transcripts. This was followed by an extensive organizational analysis of the interview data. The next step in ARC was to create what is called “provocative propositions” in appreciative inquiry. A provocative or possibility proposition is a statement that bridges the best of `what is' with one's own intuition of `what might be' (Cooperrider and Srivastva, 1987). A model and a checklist for creating possibility propositions were used to collectively engage in “corporate writing” for the future of the ICA. Considerable energy was spent by participants to write meaningful and realistic possibility propositions.

Writing the possibility propositions was one of the most exciting parts of the inquiry project for the ICA participants as it gave them an opportunity to be bold, creative and inspiring about their visions for the future of ICA. The propositions were written in several stages and refinements. Each group invited other groups to look at and comment on the propositions, resulting in several revisions. Seventy eight possibility propositions were finalized. Later they were prioritized (“valenced” was the term used in the ICA. Valencing is a metaphor borrowed from Chemistry where the valency of an element denotes its affinity or strength to react with other elements.) using categories such as “how much of it is an ideal,” “how much of it is already present,” and “how soon you would like this to happen?” . The act of “valancing” was an intense process involving everyone. In the end, each participant made over 240 decisions regarding future scenarios for the ICA.

Once the prioritizing was finished, participants could clearly see the direction the ICA was headed to. The ARC participants discussed action-planning strategies with respect to realizing the propositions. It was decided to take the learning to ICA’s future

global gathering. A few months later, this author went to Brussels to interview participants attending the General Assembly of ICA International. Thirty individuals from fifteen countries were interviewed, their responses were analyzed, and a feedback and reporting session was organized at the end of the General Assembly.

Overall, the appreciative inquiry process had a significant impact on ICA. It appeared to have reversed the process of decline many were feeling and put the organization back into a path of renewal and rejuvenation. Instead of death, the new image was one of rebirth and growth. The process allowed them to get in touch with their roots, the reason for being, and gave a big boost to their commitment to rededicate themselves to the cause of the ICA. The language of core values and appreciation was spreading gradually across the entire ICA global network.

Understanding the Language Shift in ICA

Conceiving of organizational change as shifting conversations, Ford (1999) and Ford & Ford (2009 a; 2009b, 2008a; & 2008b) call our attention to the need to distinguish between first and second order realities, as was originally conceived by Watzlawick (1990). First-order realities point to the physically demonstrable qualities of an object, event, or situation. Second-order realities are constructed when we attach meaning, significance, and value to the data of first-order realities. According to Watzlawick (1976), second-order realities are not inherent in the situation itself, but are attributed to it by us. Alterations in second-order realities can lead to changes in action regardless of what happens to first-order realities (Ford, 1998). For the same reason, unwanted and undesirable consequences of a second-order reality can be replaced by the effects of a different second-order reality which leads to more desired outcomes (Watzlawick, 1990).

The ICA case study is an example of alterations in second order realities that lead to organizational changes. I believe that the appreciative inquiry process effectively reframed the unwanted and undesirable consequences of a second-order reality with another one that was more affirmative, leading to highly desired outcomes. In the process, ICA members used their Appreciative Intelligence effectively to reframe the conversations.

Berquist (1993) has described organizations as a network of concurrent and sequential conversations that establish the interpretive frame in which people act. The change in ICA must have happened through such network of appreciative conversations. As Berger and Luckman (1966) pointed out, conversations maintain realities through relatedness to other conversations. In this case, conversations around core values of the ICA soon got connected to conversations about a desired future (possibility propositions).

According to Ford (1998), organizational change by shifting conversation is achieved by giving up the use of certain words or phrases and by intentionally introducing and repeating new words and phrases. In this case, the appreciative inquiry project introduced several key concepts and phrases centered on the core values of the organization. When the interview transcripts were analyzed further, four types of conversations were located. They were *initiative*, *understanding*, *performance*, and *closure conversations* (Ford and Ford, 2009). In the case of ICA, the *initiative conversation* was occurring before the author got there. The *understanding conversations* happened all through the interview and data analysis. *Performance conversations* came out of valencing of the possibility propositions. The *closure conversations* primarily happened after the feedback that was provided at the international gathering in Brussels.

Initiative conversations

These are typically the hardest form of conversation to begin and may be a reaction to manifested or anticipated environmental shifts or organizational performance downturns (Ford & Baucus, 1987). They may also be intended to move the organization toward some vision or possibility (Kouzes & Posner, 1987). Initiative conversation may arise in different places or situations: in informal meetings in which people are discussing existing conditions or out of the visions that individuals have for what could be (Kouzes & Posner, 1987).

The initiative conversation in the ICA began somewhere around 1986. After the 1984 IERD event, the organization became aware of and started reacting to the anticipated environmental shifts and organizational performance downturns. Being a highly reflective community, they were intensely aware of the changes that were happening to them. The focus on development had clearly turned towards the “local.” Most international nonprofit organizations were unprepared to deal with this significant change in the environment at that time (mid 1980s). However, the ICA recognized this as paradox and a stimulus for initiative conversations. They had a strong belief that paradoxes were opportunities for change.

For the ICA, the paradox was seen as the tension between Western perspectives versus indigenization. To quote an ICA member, "In the past one village had people from five countries doing a project. Now it is moving toward each location taking care of its own needs." This dynamic ended up as a tension between the Western perspectives and local understanding, or simply the paradox between *grand narratives* and *local narratives*

(Lyotard, 1984). Grand narratives or theories are models that are generalizable to all situations. In the case of the ICA, the models that were developed using their success stories in the *Fifth City*, *Town Meetings*, and *Human Development Projects* were thought to have direct transferability to other parts of the world. As a result, ICA members from North America traveled to other continents to set up "Human Development" and related projects. Though well intended, such efforts often attempted to replicate what worked well in one setting to new contexts. In the process, they might have failed to consider the local knowledge.

A second initiative conversation came out of the awareness of the paradox between global networking and local networking. As a global social change organization, the ICA had emphasized global networking. The focus was on creating structures that would connect the ICAs worldwide into a single corporate entity. However, as a result of the phenomenal growth during the 70s, many ICA branches had dispersed to distant locations from the United States and began networking locally. This local focus was very much encouraged by the ICA as they recognized this as a paradox. "You cannot be global unless you are local," said one ICA interviewee who witnessed this transition.

The ICA was able to recognize and value the interdependence that was required to keep in balance the global-local tension. To quote from *Panchayat*ⁱ (1988), one of their internal documents, "there is an increasing awareness of the interdependence and a deep desire to create patterns of relationship that express this consciousness. . . . Networking is the medium by which transformation is permeating every level of society." The readiness and anticipation for change that the ICA members had experienced before the appreciative inquiry project showed that the initiative conversations were gradually

building momentum. One member summarized this anticipation insightfully in an ICA document: “We have changed as a body of people and there is no going back. We carry gifts from the past with us but the new that is being created may bear no easy resemblance to the past we have known. It is in the midst of these irreversible changes that we find ourselves asking questions such as how do we move forward and how do we empower the foundations of our future?”

Ford and Ford (1995) observed that there was no singular beginning point for initiative conversations, and that bracketing events into a meaningful form was a function of who was doing the bracketing. In this case, the bracketing was done by the capturing of the reflections of ICA members in the *Punchayat* document. To create the *Punchayat* document, ICA leadership traveled to locations across the world, listened to the voices of members, and compiled the reflections in a narrative form. The consensus process acknowledged that something needed to change though it wasn't initially clear what that might be. The clarity would emerge through the next type of conversations identified by Ford and Ford (2009) as conversations for understanding.

Conversations for understanding

Synthesizing insights from several researchers, Ford and Ford (1995) concluded that those affected by the change would typically try to make sense of the situation by engaging in dialogue and double loop learning (Argyris & Schon, 1978). Doing so entails examining assumptions that underlie thinking and to reflect on the implications of that thinking, develop a common language, and to create a shared context in which people learn how to talk to each other.

Conversations for understanding typically produce three outcomes for the change

process (Ford & Ford, 1995). They are specification of the conditions of satisfaction for the change, some degree of involvement, participation, and support on the part of those engaged in change, and decision maker's interpretations.

As the appreciative inquiry process began, specifying the conditions for satisfaction became more apparent. True to their belief in Eastern philosophy, the overall sense was that they would trust the process and embrace the outcomes. By having everyone involved in the process, the conventional "resistance to change" issues did not surface at all. Since one of the core values of the organization was decision making by consensus, it was only natural for them to have everyone's input in making decisions. The appreciative inquiry process entailed a dialogue about the rationale, context, and meaning for the change and provided people an opportunity to voice their concerns and suggestions. The most visible result of this dialogue was an understanding of their core values.

The affirmative language used in the inquiry process helped the ICA see what they were doing right. From a social constructionist point of view (Gergen, 2009), the intentional choice of looking at the glass as half full turned out to be facilitative mechanism behind the conversation for understanding . In other words, the appreciative inquiry team was not facilitating some neutral processes but was actively reframing and seeing the positive by engaging their Appreciative Intelligence.

Conversations for performance

Conversations for performance include what Winograd and Flores (1986) called conversations for action, which are networks of speech acts with an interplay of directives (requests) and commissives (promises) spoken to produce a specific result (Ford

& Ford, 1995).

The appreciative inquiry process had a built-in step to create a conversation for performance which was provocative or possibility propositions. Based on the learning from the organizational analysis, participants wrote several possibility propositions. Each of the propositions was an affirmation of what ICA members were capable of creating to heighten their core values. They were written for each core value.

Possibility propositions were written in the present tense, as if the visions had already come true. This was meant to facilitate the thinking and imagining process of participants and also help test whether they would like to live those dreams and future visions. For example, to heighten their continuous learning focus, they decided “to do workshops and retreats that open up the major cultures of the world as treasure houses of human wisdom”. They decided to start training schools and to introduce an “Earthwise” curriculum on global management. Another decision was to release their methods and popularize the learning styles (“visual, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, kinesthetic, analytical and verbal) to whoever needed them. As a learning community they wanted to establish ‘edge’ education research programs in every state where they had primary units to demonstrate their methods and form partnership with local education units. Ultimately, they wanted to see their polity mode as a highly refined, exemplary model of the way an organization functions organically and effectively. They visualized that each ICA location worldwide would operate autonomously, but engaged with each other as a cohesive and integrated learning community.

Regarding the core value of decision-making, they decided that commitment was more important than length of experience. “The organization of ICA is a dynamic system

more than a structure. The system is fluid and flexible where each person, novice or experienced, impacts the entire system” (as stated in the provocative propositions statements). For the core value spirituality, they visualized organizational structures where "life sustaining and community bonding spirit generation practices are built into all gatherings of the ICA. They decided that personal spirit life is encouraged, nurtured, and challenged in a rich corporate dialogue that pushes the wonder, glory, and depth of what it means to be human" (as stated in the provocative propositions statements).

Prioritizing the possibility propositions was an effective way of creating conversations for performance. Since the process involved the key stakeholders it was most likely to lead to actions that would indeed be undertaken and not postponed. This was particularly important to appreciate given the knowing-doing gap that exists in many organizations coming out of the “smart-talk trap” (Pfeffer & Sutton, 1999). “Knowing-doing gap is a kind of inertia that plagues companies of every size and type” argue Pfeffer and Sutton. “. . . We observed it at global conglomerates and at 20-employee start-ups, at capital-intensive manufacturers, and at knowledge-driven service firms. It is not the inertia of indifference or ignorance but of knowing too much and doing too little” (p. 135).

Conversations for closure

Conversations for closure were characterized by assertions, expressives, and declarations to bring about an end to the change process (Ford & Ford, 2009). Closure was essential to change. It implied a sense of harmonious completion wherein tension with past events was reduced and an equilibrium restored. As Jick (1993:197) stated, “disengaging from the past is critical to awakening to a new reality.” Closure therefore

involved both a letting go what no longer worked and a continuation of what did, just as the ICA did subsequently. It released the ICA from their change effort to move forward. The acknowledgement that there were now new possibilities and new futures that did not exist prior to the change efforts also helped in closure.

In the appreciative inquiry project for the ICA, creating an implementation team and deciding to meet annually to assess progress also constituted the closure conversation. There was clearly a sense of letting go of structures that were not working and a desire to embrace new organizational forms and practices.

Implications and conclusions

ICA members internalized the appreciative inquiry values by proactively deploying their Appreciative Intelligence. They could constantly reframe and see the positive (two components of Appreciative Intelligence) because as an organization, the ICA has been doing significant work based on a basic affirmative philosophy for a long time. Such a familiarity with the appreciative focus elicited a strong involvement of ICA from the beginning. They perceived themselves as being part of the inquiry process and as equal partners. With years of practical training in the “technology of participation” (Spencer, 1989) and with a track record of being a pioneer in group empowerment, it was natural for them to readily see themselves as partners in this inquiry.

By staying with the community the author received insights into their mode of living and helped place the inquiry in the positive perspective. Participation came to them naturally since consensus building was a core value for ICA. Ideas were encouraged to be daring and challenging yet they were accepted for its worth after careful scrutiny. The

appreciative inquiry process with its emphasis on provocative propositions created an ideal climate of curiosity, seriousness and originality for them. Thus, the inquiry process evolved into a microcosm of the organizational experiences of ICA. Above all, the outcome of the project showed how appreciative inquiry and appreciative intelligence are intertwined at two levels- individual and organizational. Appreciative inquiry, the organizationally-focused methodology used in the project worked to a large extent thanks to the natural ability of the ICA participants to reframe, see the positive, and act on the new possibilities- the three components of appreciative intelligence.

The reframing of the apparently visible organizational decline into rejuvenation didn't happen automatically. Most people had a stake in the continued growth of the organization. The core values that were generated turned out to be the ones for which they had strong passion. In short, the reframing should not be imposed upon but will have to be authentic and genuine leading to a full expression of participants' Appreciative Intelligence. Only then an initiative conversation would lead to one for understanding, performance, and eventually, for closure.

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² Part of the text of this chapter has been previously published by the author in Thatchenkery, Tojo. (2003). La indagacion apreciativa como intervencion. El poder de la reformulacion para la refundacion organizacional en un estudio de caso. *Sistemas Familiares*, ANO 19- N 1-2- 2003 pp 101-118.

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ⁱ (The Panchayat is the highly participatory village governance form practiced in India)