
Leveraging Appreciative Intelligence® for enhancing organisational change

Ida Parkkinen and Hanna Lehtimäki*

Business School,
University of Eastern Finland,
P.O. Box 1627, 70211 Kuopio, Finland
Email: idapu@student.uef.fi
Email: hanna.lehtimaki@uef.fi
Email: hanna.lehtimaki@uta.fi
*Corresponding author

Tojo Thatchenkery

School of Policy, Government and International Affairs,
George Mason University,
Arlington, VA 22201, USA
Email: thatchen@gmu.edu

Abstract: The purpose of the case is to illustrate how members of an organisation engage in shaping change in organisations. The case organisation faced a need to make changes in its organising and management practices to maintain cost efficiency and to improve leadership culture. The underlying dynamic of change was created in the intersection of maintaining the traditional values and transforming the organisational practices to meet the contemporary demands for administrative efficiency. Appreciative Intelligence® and appreciative inquiry methods were implemented to engage members of the organisation in the change process. The appreciative approach was useful in directing attention to the everyday practices of the organisation and showing how making small changes can steer the change process towards positive interaction, trust and strengths of the organisation. The study contributes to change management literature by viewing change as a process of becoming and showing how the appreciative approach contributes to shaping the change through positive collective engagement.

Keywords: Appreciative Intelligence®; appreciative inquiry; change management; leadership culture; organisational change; human resources development; organisational becoming.

Reference to this paper should be made as follows: Parkkinen, I., Lehtimäki, H. and Thatchenkery, T. (2015) 'Leveraging Appreciative Intelligence® for enhancing organisational change', *Int. J. Human Resources Development and Management*, Vol. 15, Nos. 2/3/4, pp.101–114.

Biographical notes: Ida Parkkinen is a Master of Science in Economics and Business Administration graduated in Innovation Management from the University of Eastern Finland, Kuopio Campus.

Hanna Lehtimäki is a Professor of Innovation Management at the University of Eastern Finland and a Professor of Business Management at the University of Tampere, Finland.

Tojo Thatchenkery is a Professor and Director of the Organisation Development and Knowledge Management Programme at the School of Policy, Government and International Affairs, George Mason University, Arlington, USA.

This paper is a revised and expanded version of a paper entitled 'Appreciative Intelligence® in change management' presented at the International Conference on Management Cases ICMC2014, Greater Noida, India, 4–5 December 2014.

1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine change as a process of organisational becoming and apply Appreciative Intelligence® as an approach to study how members of an organisation engage in shaping change. Considering the characteristics of modern business life with a fast pace of change, it is essential to understand how the continuous synchronisation of events and the related challenges affect the execution of organisational change (Helms Mills et al., 2009). In this paper, we will show how organisational strengths and positive outcomes of change form the basis for constructing change which is unfolded by the cooperation of organisational members (Barge and Oliver, 2003; Gergen and Thatchenkery, 2004).

Organisational becoming has been introduced as a novel and comprehensive approach to appreciate the continuous nature of change in modern organisations (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002; Carlsen, 2006; Sackmann et al., 2009; Thomas et al., 2011). It provides a multifaceted platform for examining organisational change as a continuous process. In recent years, the approach has gained considerable attention with both conceptual development and empirical studies (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002; Carlsen, 2006; Sackmann et al., 2009; Jian, 2011; Thomas et al., 2011). For example, Tsoukas and Chia (2002) provide a thorough investigation of literature to demonstrate the applicability of organisational becoming in the context of organisational change. On the other hand, Sackmann et al. (2009) conducted a long-term action research project including various research methods to connect the discussion on organisational becoming to the permanence of strategic revisions.

The empirical study presented in this paper will examine organisational change in a case organisation, the Finnish Orthodox Church, which has a long operating history and a strong value base, and which faces the increasing demands of operational efficiency. It is one of the two official churches in Finland along with the Evangelical-Lutheran Church. The Orthodox Church had recently implemented a change process to revise the organising and management practices with a view to developing cost efficiency and leadership culture. The change process had raised concerns among the employees of the church and criticism was voiced towards the changes. Appreciative inquiry intervention was used to engage organisational members in the change process and to build a shared understanding of common interests and positive characteristics of the organisation.

The empirical analysis identifies the key characteristics of change management needed in executing organisational change with a focus on the positive potential of the organisation. The results of the analysis show how the initial redesign of the organisational structure to improve financial efficiency also led to other organisational revisions in decision-making structure, organisational practices and culture. The members of the organisation considered paying attention to the ways by which they talk about change and to the day-to-day practices as important outcomes of the research intervention.

The case shows how appreciative inquiry and Appreciative Intelligence® approaches support treating organisational change as a process of organisational becoming. The particular strength of this approach is that it pays attention to the involvement of organisational members in the change process and allows for analysing change at all levels of the organisation. This approach opposes the change agent-centric view' [Ford et al., (2008), p.362], which places emphasis on change initiators and their actions (Thomas et al., 2011), and instead, entails a cooperative investigation among the organisational members as a critical dimension in studying change (Barge and Oliver, 2003; Gergen and Thatchenkery, 2004; Behara et al., 2008). Instead, the focus is on the ways by which organisational members engage in shaping the change through language and organisational practices.

In the following, we will, first, discuss the use of Appreciative Intelligence® in change management by employing the ideas of organisational becoming approach. We will present a brief overview of change management and organisational becoming literature as well as briefly discuss Appreciative Intelligence® and appreciative inquiry. We will then introduce the case organisation, the Finnish Orthodox Church, and discuss the research process. Finally, the main results of the study will be presented with key recommendations to organisations engaged in change management.

2 Organisational becoming perspective on change management

In general, current literature on organisational change can be divided into two main research streams: research that examines change management (Caldwell, 2005; Helms Mills et al., 2009; Sackmann et al., 2009) and research that examines resistance to change (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002; Ford et al., 2008; Thomas et al., 2011). The change management literature highlights the application of various leadership theories to organisational change (Caldwell, 2005; Helms Mills et al., 2009). While Caldwell (2005) emphasises collective theories of leadership, Helms Mills et al. (2009) identify the effects of situational factors affecting change management activities. There is also an interest in planned change processes (Helms Mills et al., 2009) and implementation of a strategic change process (Sackmann et al., 2009).

Change resistance, in turn, is seen to contribute to the execution of change. Discomfort and change are often seen as related (Ford et al., 2008), and opposition to change is widely discussed in the existing literature (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002; Ford et al., 2008; Thomas et al., 2011). A common conclusion indicates that opposition is not necessarily a negative factor (Ford et al., 2008; Thomas et al., 2011). Initiatives for the redefinition of change resistance have been issued to extend existing knowledge of the phenomenon (Ford et al., 2008; Thomas et al., 2011). Also others have noted the benefits

of opposition in activating employees and engaging them in the change process (Ford et al., 2008).

A third stream of research, organisational becoming, has emerged to complement the more established streams of focusing on change management and resistance to change. In many respects, organisational becoming opposes the conventional definition of change and extends our understanding of continuous organisational change. In organisational becoming research, the active nature and constant development of organisations is extensively recognised (Chia, 2002; Tsoukas and Chia, 2002; Clegg et al., 2005; Van de Ven and Poole, 2005; Carlsen, 2006; Sackmann et al., 2009; Jian, 2011; Thomas et al., 2011; Weik, 2011). Thomas et al. (2011) argue that the process of constructing collective intelligence constitutes organisational becoming. These studies emphasise the importance of organisational collectiveness which is closely related to organisational communication in the context of ongoing change.

Organisational communication and collective discourses are highlighted as essential components of organisational becoming. Thomas et al. (2011) connected organisational becoming with organisational change by conducting a case study of the interplay between the organisational discourse and resistant behaviour. They draw attention to the destructive discourses inhibiting the realisation of organisational becoming in the process of constructing collective meaning through interaction and discussion among the organisational members. They show how constructive discourses contribute to the reconstruction of organisational knowledge and creation of novel insights (ibid.). This and other studies show the essential role of linguistic expressions in the organisational becoming perspective (Carlsen, 2006; Thomas et al., 2011; Lehtimäki et al., 2013), and highlight the significance of organisational communication.

The advocates of organisational becoming avoid labelling opposition as a negative element of change (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002; Thomas et al., 2011). Instead, initiatives for the redefinition of change resistance have been issued to extend existing knowledge of the phenomenon (Ford et al., 2008; Thomas et al., 2011). For example, Tsoukas and Chia (2002) emphasise the existence of continuous adjustments which may never become widely established beyond the particular organisational levels. Accordingly, Ford et al. (2008) make a note that in other fields of business research opposition is not seen as destructive as in the change management literature. In addition to its contributory role in advancing conceptions of change (Thomas et al., 2011), change reluctance is seen to activate employees and engage them in the change process (Ford et al., 2008). Thomas et al. (2011) avoid the juxtaposition of change initiators and receiving parties and instead, promote the idea of interactive and balanced change execution.

In this study, we conceptualise change as an ongoing process following the perspective of organisational becoming and we utilise the appreciative approach in seeking to understand how members of the organisation join in shaping the change. The organisational becoming and the appreciative approach share similar qualities and principles (Watkins and Mohr, 2011). Barge and Oliver (2003) note that the essence of appreciation is constantly changing and evolving according to the situational and human factors which affect the realisation of appreciation. Watkins and Mohr (2011), the advocates of the appreciative approach, also acknowledge the persistent nature of change, the multiformity of modern world and changeable situations. Their view on change enables the understanding of change as a natural and permanent dimension of our world, which connects with the main ideology of organisational becoming (Chia, 2002; Tsoukas

and Chia, 2002; Clegg et al., 2005; Van de Ven and Poole, 2005; Carlsen, 2006; Sackmann et al., 2009; Jian, 2011; Thomas et al., 2011; Weik, 2011).

The appreciative line of research involves various definitions, views and ideas of how to apply and modify the appreciative constructs and phenomena. Watkins and Mohr (2011) advance the appreciative investigation as an attitudinal change to restructuring organisational processes, which enables the appreciative approach to be viewed as an inclusive philosophy instead of a mere research method. The connection between the theoretical discussion on organisational becoming and the appreciative philosophy is built on a comprehensive approach in both lines of research (Barge and Oliver, 2003; Hornstrup and Johansen, 2009; Fitzgerald et al., 2010). For example, Barge and Oliver (2003) recommend expressing an appreciative attitude in general instead of merely acting positively and employing certain frameworks. They note that challenges and difficulties may also need to be appreciated. (Barge and Oliver, 2003). Similarly, Hornstrup and Johansen (2009) advance an idea of the inquisitive and interested mindset which enables a comprehensive understanding of a situation or a phenomenon.

Thatchenkery and Metzker (2006) define Appreciative Intelligence[®] by describing it as a capability to distinguish the intrinsic opportunity for achievement in the current situation. Similarly, Thatchenkery (2013) explains that essential to Appreciative Intelligence[®] is to reappraise, acknowledge the favourable conditions and be future-oriented. By focusing on the favorable and fruitful opportunities, Appreciative Intelligence[®] enables awareness of the latent talent (Thatchenkery and Metzker, 2006). Certain personal characteristics, such as persistence and patience, have been connected to Appreciative Intelligence[®] (Thatchenkery and Metzker, 2006; Thatchenkery, 2013), which also contribute to managing innovative initiatives in organisations.

Appreciative Intelligence[®] has its origins in studying executives and other business innovators and it has been developed as an individual capability (Thatchenkery and Metzker, 2006). However, there is also evidence indicating that Appreciative Intelligence[®] can be enhanced in collective situations. Thatchenkery (2013) illustrates that organisational members have an opportunity to adopt active and initiative demeanour if managerial figures acquire Appreciative Intelligence[®] as part of their own role. This enables a constructive development of the organisational practices (ibid.). Therefore, Appreciative Intelligence[®] as an organisational becoming approach can be investigated both at the individual and collective levels of activity.

Appreciative inquiry is a tool for initiating constructive discussions especially in change processes (Barge and Oliver, 2003) and it encourages mutual conversations which enable encounters and cooperation among the organisational members (Fitzgerald et al., 2010). The cooperative investigation among the organisational members is widely recognised as a critical dimension of change and appreciation (Barge and Oliver, 2003; Gergen and Thatchenkery, 2004; Behara et al., 2008).

As Thatchenkery and Metzker (2006) emphasise, appreciative inquiry concentrates on discovering the positive and functional aspects of an organisation by means of an appreciative process, while Appreciative Intelligence[®] enables the recognition of existing favourable development opportunities. In order to successfully implement the necessary processes of change, it is crucial to appreciate the positive outlook, the importance of reorganisation and the act of visioning the future despite challenge (Thatchenkery, 2013).

The appreciative inquiry and Appreciative Intelligence[®] approaches used in this study contribute to the organisational becoming theorising by providing an analytical

framework for examining managerial activity connected to the special requirements of continuously changing organisations (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002; Carlsen, 2006; Sackmann et al., 2009; Thomas et al., 2011). Appreciative Intelligence[®] is interested in managerial activity that enables creativity and novel endeavours, and thereby focuses attention to the ways by which managers and all members in the organisation continuously vision, negotiate and contribute to making change (Thatchenkery, 2011, 2013). The three components of Appreciative Intelligence[®] are the ability to reframe a situation to recognise the positive possibilities embedded in it, the ability to perceive the positive potential in a situation and the ability to act now so the future can unfold transforming the potential recognised in the positive reframing to solid outcomes (Thatchenkery and Metzker, 2006). These three components highlight the dynamics of action that call for attention when organisational change is examined as organisational becoming. Consequently, it is possible to enter into constructive discourses which enable the adjustment of the organisational perspective (Thomas et al., 2011, van der Haar and Hosking, 2004). Existing literature demonstrates the effect of organisational communication on change execution (Sackmann et al., 2009; Thatchenkery, 2011; Thomas et al., 2011) and on the realisation of organisational becoming (Jian, 2011; Thomas et al., 2011). In conclusion, the applicability of appreciative inquiry and Appreciative Intelligence[®] in the context of organisational becoming is justified due to its multifaceted nature in terms of promoting a positive approach and having a collective emphasis.

3 The case organisation

The case organisation, the Finnish Orthodox Church, is a national church of Finland together with the Evangelical-Lutheran Church. The Orthodox Church obtained its position as a national church when Finland became independent in 1917. Since 1923, the Finnish Orthodox Church has belonged to the Patriarchate of Constantinople as a self-governing archbishopric (<http://www.ort.fi>). Nowadays, there are approximately 62,000 members in the Orthodox Church in Finland and the number of the members has been increasing since the 1990s (Aikonen and Okulov, 2013).

There are three dioceses of the Finnish Orthodox Church which include Karelia, Helsinki and Oulu dioceses. The archbishop is the head of the Karelia diocese, while the dioceses of Helsinki and Oulu are directed by metropolitans. In addition, the Orthodox Church has 24 parishes in Finland which are entitled to collect taxes (<http://www.ort.fi>). A convent and a monastery maintain the Orthodox traditions and treasure the Orthodox culture (Aikonen and Okulov, 2013).

In terms of administrative authority, the Synod has the responsibility for administration and execution activities in the Church. Furthermore, the Church Assembly and the Council of Bishops are the governing bodies with legislative power (<http://www.ort.fi>). The Archbishop is responsible for leading the Church together with the above-mentioned bodies in addition to representing the Church in different functions. In the Synod, lay representatives, bishops, priests and cantors are involved to discuss a variety of issues concerning, for example, legislation, finances and spirituality. In the parishes, the Council has the ultimate jurisdiction in terms of spiritual life, finances and administration (Aikonen and Okulov, 2013.)

4 Methodology

Appreciative Intelligence[®] and appreciative inquiry approaches were used in the design of the study and in the organisational intervention (Thatchenkery, 2005). These discourse-based approaches focus on the successful and satisfactory experiences of the organisational members, and thus, allow for highlighting the functional features of the organisation (Barge and Oliver, 2003; Gergen and Thatchenkery, 2004; van der Haar and Hosking, 2004). While other dialogic methods concentrate on the reasoning among a group of participants to recognise difficulties, the appreciative approach stimulates emotional involvement in organisations by enabling affirmative discussions on the vital characteristics (Barge and Oliver, 2003; Watkins and Mohr, 2011).

A key factor in the execution of the appreciative approach is appreciative facilitation. The facilitator plays an important role in redirecting organisational energy and enabling action based on strengths. The influence of facilitation in advancing appreciative interchange has been acknowledged in the existing literature (Barge and Oliver, 2003; Dewar and Sharp, 2013). Gergen and Thatchenkery (2004) report that their work with appreciative inquiry involved redevelopment of organisational discourse and reasoning in order to identify the favourable potential. Dewar and Sharp (2013) highlight the facilitator's role in enabling an appreciative atmosphere of collectivity and involving participants to join in reviewing practices in order to achieve cooperative results.

Furthermore, Hornstrup and Johansen (2009) highlight the facilitator's genuine interest in the research context and being inquiring when interacting with the participants. In terms of effective methods of facilitation, 'careful curious questioning' (Dewar and Sharp, 2013:3) is mentioned. Similarly, Hornstrup and Johansen (2009) identify that a facilitator can use 'reflexive and generative questions' as a means of stimulating innovativeness and development ideas (*ibid.*, p.10). The reproductive questions enable imaginative discussion among the participants and the emergence of undiscovered opportunities and capabilities (Dewar and Sharp, 2013). Thatchenkery and Metzker (2006) call this the increased awareness of the latent talent of the organisation. Barge and Oliver (2003) emphasise the use of situational judgments in facilitation because the evolution of every discussion depends on the situation and the participants.

The research data was collected in three phases within a year. First, researchers joined the organisation as facilitators. A two-month appreciative inquiry process was conducted by four students at a Master's level course at the University of Eastern Finland, Kuopio Campus led by two professors. The course provided the initiative and guidelines on how to conduct the appreciative inquiry project. The Finnish Orthodox Church was eager to participate in the research process due to their recent change efforts to develop management practices. The initial contact with the organisation was made by one of the professors. The process involved the identification of organisational core values and life-giving forces through sharing positive stories, formulation of possibility propositions and prioritisation of possibility propositions. The goal was to find ways to foster an approving attitude towards change among the members of the organisation.

The process was conducted in close collaboration with the members of the organisation. The contact person in the church was responsible for recruiting people to participate in the workshops. Two workshops were held in the organisation's premises, which allowed for casual interaction with the participants, increased the visibility of the

research project in the organisation and allowed for understanding the special characteristics of the Finnish Orthodox Church as an organisation.

Fifteen women and twenty men working in different regions and levels of organisation participated in the process. The data collected comprise post-it-notes including the main values of the organisation, 21 semi-structured interview records and transcripts, 30 possibility propositions formed on the basis of the first workshop and evaluated in the second workshop, and a transcribed follow-up interview five months after the intervention.

A second point of data collection was done half-a-year after the intervention, when a follow-up interview was conducted by one of the authors with a manager who was in charge of organisational development. The interview took one hour and five minutes and was conducted in the manager's office in the organisation's premises. The interview was recorded with the permission of the interviewee and transcribed.

The final phase of the data collection was done in a year after the initial appreciative inquiry process. One of the authors participated in two organisational events organised by the church to observe naturally occurring change-related situations within the organisation. One of the events was a meeting among business administration personnel and the other was a major convention for policymaking. The participant author took notes in both events and kept a research diary to record the main topics, ideas and experiences in the discussions. The observation material was used to substantiate and enrich other data. In addition, two discussions were conducted at the organisation's premises to discuss experiences and expectations on the change process. The first discussion was held with two people and the second with three people in management positions. The group discussions were recorded with permission from the participants and transcribed verbatim afterwards.

Qualitative content analysis was used to analyse the data throughout the research process. In the first workshop at the beginning of the process, content analysis was used to identify the core values, and the occurrence of the values was counted to determine the most often mentioned characteristics related to the practical work in the Church. The semi-structured interviews were thematically analysed and categorised. Each student transcribed the interviews that they had conducted. Through an interactive process, the students formed a transcription matrix including the core values and organisational factors to record direct quotes from the interviews. By reviewing the transcription matrix, the group created a summary matrix which included practical examples and illustrations of the positive characteristics and functional practices of the Finnish Orthodox Church as combinations of the core values and organisational factors. Attention was paid to the factors and characteristics which were mentioned or discussed in several interviews.

Based on the summary matrix, 28 active and concrete possibility propositions to strengthen the existing feature of the organisation were formulated by the students. In the second workshop, the propositions were presented to the participants. Two additional propositions were included based on the discussion in the workshop. After the second workshop, 30 possibility propositions were quantitatively analysed and prioritised to determine the most ideal propositions. Altogether six propositions had the highest average value of 5.0 out of 5.0 in importance, while the most urgent ones included five propositions which had an average value less than 1.5 out of 3.0. It was noted that four propositions were the same in the important and urgent categories. Three of these propositions had an average value less than 3.0 out of 5.0 in existence and therefore, these propositions were added to the final recommendations. The fourth proposition had

received an average value of 3.6 out of 5.0 in existence, which led to the examination of the other remaining propositions. Hence, the fourth final proposition was found as it had an average value of 5.0 in importance, 2.6 in existence and 1.6 in urgency.

The follow-up interview and group discussions were analysed with content analysis by extracting the main themes of the interview and using existing theoretical concepts to facilitate the categorisation. Also, further analysis of the case organisation and the change process were done, and the discussion on Appreciative Intelligence® in organisational change was deepened. Consequently, the central themes of the interview covered change management and organisational becoming with various subcategories. This resulted in interesting insights into the managerial perceptions of an ongoing organisational change in the context of Finnish Orthodox Church.

5 Results

With regard to the core values of the Finnish Orthodox Church, the religious value base was identified as the underlying value. Four core values were identified. First, a joy of work was identified. The participants referred to this value by discussing, for example, success at work, work community, appreciation, responsibility and public acknowledgement. Several interviewees emphasised their personal experiences of exploring others' work, clarity in decision-making, public acknowledgement and self-development.

Second, humanity was identified as a core value with references to collaboration, customer orientation, interaction, positivity and empathy. This value emphasise the importance of caring for others and communication. In the interviews, existing characteristics supporting humanity, such as low hierarchy, coffee breaks and common informal events within the work community, were mentioned.

Third, creativity was mentioned in some of the stories and the participants were eager to choose this value as a core value. The stories presented by the participants, depicted creativity, readiness for change, variety and security. Interviewees shared their experiences of creative organisational practices, such as, brainstorming meetings and online training.

Finally, faith was identified as a core value even though it arose only in a few stories. However, the participants were willing to include faith among the core values as it is a crucial part of the work at the church. The defining features of faith included creating meaning, communality, commitment and the interplay between the work and personal roles. Although faith was seen as self-evident in the church's work, it was considered a significant value base of the church, and the opportunity to participate in the service during working hours was considered important.

The four future-present propositions which depict the most ideal and urgent propositions for organisational change were defined as follows:

- 1 those who document the decisions ensure that the documentation of the decisions is comprehensible for all employees
- 2 persons in charge and schedules of decisions are explicitly expressed in memorandums and minutes

- 3 decision makers are aware of the decisions' effects at different levels of the organisation.
- 4 managers focus on being truly present and active listening to the employees every day.

After a year from the intervention, budget control, clarification of responsibilities and job descriptions, evaluation of the parishes and the design of a new collective agreement were accomplished as achievements in the change process. Direct feedback on the intervention had been received in different forms and the most positive feedback had been given on the progress of cultural change, preparation of decisions, organisational cooperation and efficiency in meetings.

The managers were more involved and shared more openly their views with other members of the organisation. Instead of focusing on the former 'sector thinking in terms of drawing clear lines between the units and valuing security and privacy', a discussion on the potential for collaborative action had been initiated. Similarly, it was noted that in the last diocesan synod, uniform language was used, which indicated that the messages conveyed by the administration had been accepted. One interviewee noted that

"At the moment, organizational communication has increased in relation to decision makers compared to before when there was an atmosphere of distrust between the preparing and deciding stages".

In addition, various organisational documents and practices had been clarified and thoroughly explained. Also, the crucial role of organisational communication in the change process was identified by referring to the need to develop the intrinsic and extrinsic communication of the change and the related activities, plans and responsibilities.

An interviewee noted that most employees are committed to the organisation due to their vocation. At first, employees were reserved and fearful about the change. However, various interventions and a long term training program have facilitated acceptance towards the change process and 'the discussion culture in the personnel meetings' became more open and efficient. With this process the church was able to endorse traditions and stability while enabling change. This supported cooperative action among the managers and employees.

In the future, the church will continue the change process as a process of creating a balance between the Orthodox tradition and administrative efficiency. The change is viewed as 'an ongoing change in the organisation' and as emerging, 'everything has newly begun'. The progress of change is perceived as gradual. One of the interviewees stated:

"In a year, probably something has been achieved, and in ten years, a new organization has been formed."

Also, positive outcomes of the need to change in the society which calls for efficiency were seen for the Orthodox tradition to flourish. For instance, an opportunity to support the social integration of immigrants into the Finnish culture was recognised as a major future prospect of the Finnish Orthodox Church due to its history as an immigrant church.

A year after the initial intervention particular attention was paid to decision-making and management presence. The decision-making process was positively mentioned as the preparation of proposals had developed and accelerated. Furthermore, the increased

significance of teamwork and sharing of responsibilities was considered as important. Various working groups had been appointed to make sure that no one needs to work and ponder issues alone. In this way, people were given an opportunity to share what they do with others. This practice had resulted in an improved team spirit, teamwork and collaborative community. Also, it was mentioned that employees were more interested in sharing tasks and working together in the day-to-day work. Similarly, the division of responsibilities had been clarified.

The group discussions also emphasised the relevance of collective discourse in organisational change. In addition, change resistance was positively discussed as a contributor to the change and an enabler of further development instead of a restraining force. The managers anticipated more changes to come in the coming years and they saw the change as an ongoing process to be adjusted to. In several occasions, it was noted that making a situational assessment was difficult because of the continuous process where many issues were in the making. According to the interviewees, several proposals were needed to be prepared for advancing significant decisions, reforms and changes in this year. However, based on the discussions, it was evident that being subject to public law engenders various responsibilities and poses challenges for the operations of the church. In particular, the time-consuming processes needed for decision-making and execution were recognised as inflexible.

The participants identified plenty of opportunities and potential achievements in the future when they were asked what they would tell about the Finnish Orthodox Church in 2025. They expected to see concrete results from the change process within ten years. There was a strong sense of pride of the history and traditions of the Orthodox Church and people appreciated the opportunity of being able to contribute to the development and future continuity of the operations of the church.

6 Conclusions

In the case of the church, the underlying dynamic of change is created by the demands set by the Orthodox tradition and administrative efficiency. The influence of the Orthodox tradition on the administrative tasks was identified as a part of organisational structure, decision-making hierarchy, doctrinal questions and values. The four core values identified in the process of this study, humanity, joy of work, creativity and faith, are also very closely linked with the Orthodox tradition. On the contrary, the drivers for change were closely tied with the demands of administrative efficiency. These issues include financial and functional efficiency and the need to evaluate and update the operations of the church to match the contemporary external environment.

The most important changes were linked to decision-making, including more systematic decision-making, openness in preparing the decisions and clarity in scheduling of decisions. Three of the four future-present propositions focus on decision-making. The Episcopal meeting as an executive body indicates the general directions for the organisation as issues need to proceed through the rather hierarchical decision-making structure in order to be implemented. From the administrative efficiency perspective this seems as an inflexible organisation. The synod is held yearly, and it is the only opportunity to discuss the issues to be decided. This has an impact on the activities of the organisation, and it creates a demand for the executive bodies to work well together. As

part of the organisational change, a pre-synod seminar was introduced to ensure that the discussion is initiated early enough and decision makers could make informed decisions.

The Appreciative Intelligence[®] approach was useful in directing attention to the everyday practices of the organisation and showing how making small changes can steer the change process towards positive interaction, trust and appreciating the strengths of the organisation. The Appreciative Intelligence[®] approach explicates how each member of an organisation joins in shaping the change. A further analysis on the use of words, expressions of emotions and framing of situations will provide even a more detailed picture of the ways by which individuals construct the change process in their day-to-day activity.

7 Discussion

The purpose of the study was to examine how members of an organisation engage in shaping organisational change. The case organisation (the Finnish Orthodox Church) faced a need to make changes in the organising and management practices to maintain cost efficiency and to improve leadership culture.

An Appreciative Intelligence[®] and appreciative inquiry methods were implemented to engage members of the organisation in the change process. During the intervention, members of the organisation in different levels of hierarchy and different parts of the organisation were engaged into a dialogue with each other to discuss what they value in the organisation and what they see as the positive potential in the future. This was done to support change by focusing on the positive potential of the change. At the end of the process, specific propositions were made to engage the members of the organisation to act towards the identified potential. The process resulted in highlighting leadership culture and decision-making practices as central factors in the change process.

This study makes two important contributions to the existing literature on change management. First, applying the appreciative approach with the organisational becoming approach to change allows for gaining a deep understanding of the underlying dynamics of the change. With the organisational becoming approach, attention is drawn to the ways by which organisational members join in shaping the change in the everyday speech and activity. The appreciative approach encourages searching for the change potential by identifying the strengths of the organisation and focusing on the opportunities. It also highlights the active nature of change and the responsibility of each individual in the continuous shaping of change.

Second, appreciative approach pays attention to the involvement of organisational members in the change process and allows for analysing how the change is being shaped and constructed at the individual level. The study shows that with the appreciative approach, it is easy to bring members of the organisation from the different parts of the organisation and different levels of hierarchy to discuss the ongoing change. Owing to the use of the appreciative facilitation and appreciative approach in the interview situations, it was easier for the members of the organisation to bring up even difficult and controversial views regarding the change. An appreciative dialogue strengthens organisational communication and constructs collective intelligence in the context of ongoing change.

References

- Aikonen, R. and Okulov, S. (2013) *Seisokaamme hyvin – ortodoksisen kirkon aikuiskasvatuksen oheismateriaali* (Let us stand well - supplementary material for the adult education of the Orthodox Church), Jelgava Printing House, Latvia.
- Barge, J.K. and Oliver, C. (2003) 'Working with appreciation in managerial practice', *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 28, No. 1, pp.124–142.
- Behara, R.S., Thatchenkery, T. and Kenney, C. (2008) 'Empathic knowledge management: reverse simulation experiments in a learning laboratory', *International Journal of Information Technology and Management*, Vol. 7, No. 3, pp.283–314.
- Caldwell, R. (2005) 'Things fall apart? Discourses on agency and change in organizations', *Human Relations*, Vol. 58, No. 1, pp.83–114.
- Carlsen, A. (2006) 'Organizational becoming as dialogic imagination of practice: the case of the indomitable Gauls', *Organization Science*, Vol. 17, No. 1, pp.132–149.
- Chia, R. (2002) 'Time, duration and simultaneity: rethinking process and change in organizational analysis', *Organization Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 6, pp.863–868.
- Clegg, S.R., Kornberger, M. and Rhodes, C. (2005) 'Learning / becoming / organizing', *Organization*, Vol. 12, No. 2, pp.147–167.
- Dewar, B. and Sharp, C. (2013) 'Appreciative dialogue for co-facilitation in action research and practice development', *International Practice Development Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp.1–10.
- Fitzgerald, S., Oliver, C. and Hoxsey, J. (2010) 'Appreciative inquiry as a shadow process', *Journal of Management Inquiry*, Vol. 19, No. 3, pp.220–233.
- Ford, J.D., Ford, L.W. and D'Amelio, A. (2008) 'Resistance to change: the rest of the story', *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 33, No. 2, pp.362–377.
- Gergen, K. and Thatchenkery, T. (2004) 'Organization science as social construction: postmodern potentials', *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, Vol. 40, No. 2, pp.228–249.
- Helms Mills, J., Dye, K. and Mills, A.J. (2009) *Understanding Organizational Change*, Routledge, London.
- Hornstrup, C. and Johansen, T. (2009) 'From appreciative inquiry to inquiring appreciatively', *AI Practitioner*, Vol. 11, No. 3, pp.7–15.
- Jian, G. (2011) 'Articulating circumstance, identity and practice: toward a discursive framework of organizational changing.' *Organization*, Vol. 18, No. 1, pp.45–64.
- Lehtimäki, H., Kujala, J. and Thatchenkery, T. (2013) 'Appreciative Intelligence® in leadership culture transformation: a case study', *International Journal of Human Resources Development and Management*, Vol. 13, No. 4, pp.244–258.
- Sackmann, S.A., Eggenhofer-Rehart, P.M. and Friesl, M. (2009) 'Sustainable change: long-term efforts towards developing a learning organization', *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, Vol. 45, No. 4, pp.521–549.
- Suomen ortodoksinen kirkko (Orthodox Church of Finland) (n.d.) [online] <http://www.ort.fi/en/kirkkotutuksi/orthodox-church-finland> (accessed 7 May 2014).
- Thatchenkery, T. (2013) 'Leveraging Appreciative Intelligence for innovation in Indian organizations', *International Journal of Appreciative Inquiry*, Vol. 15, No. 1, pp.29–33.
- Thatchenkery, T. (2011) 'Appreciative Intelligence for transformative conversations', in Sardana, G.D. and Thatchenkery, T. (Eds.): *Positive Initiatives for Organizational Change and Transformation*, pp.63–77, Macmillan, New Delhi.
- Thatchenkery, T. (2005) *Appreciative Sharing of Knowledge: Leveraging Knowledge Management for Strategic Change*, Taos Institute Publishing, Chagrin Falls, Ohio.
- Thatchenkery, T. and Metzker, C. (2006) *Appreciative Intelligence: Seeing the Mighty Oak in the Acorn*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, San Francisco.

- Thomas, R., Sargent, L.D. and Hardy, C. (2011) 'Managing organizational change: negotiating meaning and power-resistance relations', *Organization Science*, Vol. 22, No. 1, pp.22–41.
- Tsoukas, H. and Chia, R. (2002) 'On organizational becoming: rethinking organizational change', *Organization Science*, Vol. 13, No. 5, pp.567–582.
- van der Haar, D. and Hosking, D-M. (2004) 'Evaluating appreciative inquiry: a relational constructionist perspective', *Human Relations*, Vol. 57, No. 8, pp.1017–1036.
- van de Ven, A.H. and Poole, M.S. (2005) 'Alternative approaches for studying organizational change', *Organization Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 9, pp.1377–1404.
- Watkins, J.M. and Mohr, B.J. (2011) *Appreciative Inquiry: Change at the Speed of Imagination*, 2nd ed., John Wiley & Sons, USA.
- Weik, E. (2011) 'In deep waters: process theory between Scylla and Charybdis', *Organization*, Vol. 18, No. 5, pp.655–672.