

**An Introduction to the  
Organizational Wisdom of ICA**

**Principles, Values, and Perspectives**

**2015**

**an orientation handbook by**

**Terry Bergdall**

# An Introduction to the Organizational Wisdom of ICA

## Principles, Values, and Perspectives

by Terry Bergdall

My entire vocational life has been informed by the transformative work of the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA). For twenty years, 1969-1989, I served as an ICA program officer in Oklahoma, Nebraska, Japan, Chicago, and Kenya. In Nairobi, I initiated and led a restructuring process with ICA-Kenya in order for it to become an African governed and managed organization and thereby worked myself out of a job. For the next twenty years, 1989-2009, I worked as a consultant with international development agencies. I understood those two decades to be a valuable time for applying, adapting, and integrating "ICA-inspired" principles and practices into different working environments. Most recently, I completed six years, 2009-2015, as CEO of ICA-USA.

The purpose of this handbook, gleaned from 46 years of personal experience, is to serve as a reference for those who seek to know more about ICA, its special character, and practical ways that it might continue as a leading organization in fostering social change around the world.

The 4x4 chart on the following page serves as the handbook's outline and represents my attempt to answer three questions: What is ICA's "uniqueness?" What are the essential qualities that account for ICA being ICA rather than the "institute of something else?" How might the characteristics that distinguish ICA from other nonprofit organizations be most easily conveyed to new staff members, volunteers, potential board members, and other interested parties?

The handbook is organized in four broad categories. The first highlights "**what ICA is.**" It focuses on ICA's purpose and aims. The second is "**what ICA thinks.**" It describes core intellectual insights and convictions that have driven the organization since its inception. The third discusses "**what ICA does.**" It shares basic principles that guide the strategic intention and creation of ICA programs. The fourth looks at "**how ICA works**" and describes important dimensions of ICA's organizational culture. The 4x4 consists of 16 major points. While much could be written about each one, the handbook adheres to the following guidelines:

- Descriptions for each of the 16 points have been limited to a **1-page, 500-word summary**.
- My intention has been to write these **without jargon**. When words are used in an unfamiliar manner, they are defined, e.g., a "contradiction" refers to social dysfunctions that cause unjust harm among innocent people -- which, in a particular instance, can be illustrated in public policies that allow easy access to guns used in repeated instances of mass murder.
- In support of each of the 16 points, a list of selected **references** is offered so that interested readers, if they are so inclined, may pursue deeper investigation of the theme. The items listed include articles, speeches, books, and videos. Many are found in a companion annex.
- The basic "**handbook**" consists of these 16 summary pages.

This project began as a part of ICA's 50th Anniversary in 2012. It has now been completed during the early part of a sabbatical year following my departure as CEO at ICA-USA in April 2015. Within that time span, I have shared drafts with many ICA "veteran" colleagues. While I am grateful for their feedback, have adapted much of it, and truly believe this reflects collective wisdom, I am ultimately responsible for the views expressed. Similarly, this document does not formally represent, unless otherwise approved, any Statutory Member of ICA-International. All members of the ICA community, however, are cordially invited to use it as they see fit as long as attribution is given to the original work and any subsequent changes are shared. (CC BY-SA 4.0)

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## An Introduction to the Organizational Wisdom of ICA

### Principles, Values, and Perspectives

<b>What ICA Is</b> purpose & self-understanding -- being --	<b>What ICA Thinks</b> insights & convictions -- knowing --	<b>What ICA Does</b> program principles & action -- doing --	<b>How ICA Works</b> practices & culture -- walking the talk --
1a  <b>ICA's mission is to build a just and equitable society in harmony with Planet Earth</b>	2a  <b>Effective action begins with what people have, not what they don't have</b>	3a  <b>ICA frames and designs its programs in a comprehensive context</b>	4a  <b>ICA embodies an empathetic "presence" among those it serves</b>
1b  <b>ICA transcends polarities and social contradictions to create new alternatives</b>	2b  <b>The external situation is never the problem</b>	3b  <b>ICA focuses on local responsibility within a global perspective</b>	4b  <b>ICA's commitment to diversity addresses systemic contradictions</b>
1c  <b>ICA responds to critical social issues through viable programs</b>	2c  <b>Behavior changes when images change</b>	3c  <b>ICA facilitates group action and strengthens capacities</b>	4c  <b>ICA operates through consensus nurtured by facilitative leadership</b>
1d  <b>ICA inspires innovative action by others beyond itself</b>	2d  <b>Culture is key to addressing economic and political contradictions</b>	3d  <b>ICA connects people and organizations to spark collaboration</b>	4d  <b>ICA demonstrates its values and keeps them alive as a learning organization</b>



## **1a: ICA's mission is to build a just and equitable society in harmony with Planet Earth**

Effective mission statements describe the core purpose of an organization and say why it exists. While it is important for people within a work place to have a unifying story, a mission statement also explains its purpose to others. Two short videos, referenced below, stimulate thinking in regard to mission. The first urges the use of a "mantra" to clearly convey purpose. The second urges the importance of addressing questions about "why," rather than "what" or "how."

Social justice has been a constant in ICA's mission. Furthermore, ICA has always told its story within the context of the "moral issue of our times." When it first began in 1962, the major moral issue across the United States was civil rights. Today, awakened persons know that global climate change confronts sensitive and responsible people everywhere with a huge moral dilemma. ICA-USA's current mission statement, approved by its Board of Directors in 2013, combines the two: **"to build a just and equitable society in harmony with Planet Earth."** Two recent books, both of which are subjects of published book reviews by Ted Wysocki, the current CEO of ICA-USA, make a strong case about this combination (see Resources listed below).

This mission statement is clear, answers the question "why," and can be used in a mantra-like manner -- one of its major strengths is that it is memorable and easy to cite -- but it doesn't distinguish ICA from others that share a similar aim. Addendum secondary phrases can be helpful in accomplishing this. During recent years, two addenda have been occasionally used to provide a sharper focus. The first highlights community development and collaborative relationships as a strategic vehicle through which ICA fulfills its mission:

*"ICA programs strengthen the capacities of organizations, communities, and individuals to affirm the significance of their situation and to build responsible plans of action."*

The beginning and end of this phrase are easily understood. However, the middle section, "affirm the significance of their situation," isn't as obvious. It implies an ability to look starkly at realities in the world and to consider them without illusion or denial. ICA is not merely a neutral facilitator. Its agenda is to call attention to the major challenges of our times and the phrase is a reminder of this, especially to those working internally within ICA. A second addendum also provides greater focus about the mission: "building a just and equitable society ...

*"through empowering cultural dimensions of the social process."*

More on this can be found in section "2d" but the phrase highlights the importance ICA has given to the transformative role of culture within society. As is often said, this is the reason for our name, the "Institute of Cultural Affairs." Few statements about mission and purpose are as compelling as the one declared by Teilhard de Chardin: "The task before us now, if we would not perish, is to shake off our ancient prejudices, and to build the Earth." This is a foundational perspective upon which ICA's mission resides. While "ancient prejudices" certainly influence and drive economic and political relationships today, shedding them is a matter of culture.

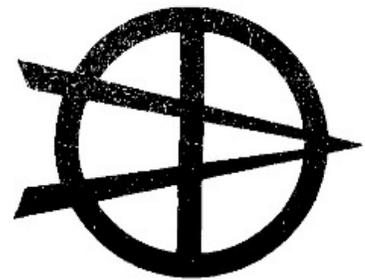
### **Resources for continuing the conversation:**

- Don't Write a Mission Statement, Write a Mantra -- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2A2-7\\_nujtA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2A2-7_nujtA)
- Inspired Leaders Focus on "Why" Rather than "What" -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qp0HIF3Sfl4>
- Ted Wysocki's book review of *The Price of Inequality: How Today's Divided Society Endangers Our Future*, by Joseph Stiglitz -- [http://www.shelterforce.org/article/3663/too\\_high\\_to\\_pay/](http://www.shelterforce.org/article/3663/too_high_to_pay/) (see annex).
- Ted Wysocki's book review of *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate* by Naomi Klein [http://www.shelterforce.org/article/4066/this\\_book\\_changes\\_everything/](http://www.shelterforce.org/article/4066/this_book_changes_everything/) (see annex).

## **1b: ICA transcends polarities and social contradictions to create new alternatives**

Social pioneers are agents of change. They forge new responses in thinking and acting when it becomes apparent that failures and breakdowns within society are harming innocent people. In the past, such "social contradictions," which once seemed insurmountable, have repeatedly been overcome. Fifty years ago it occurred in places like Selma, Alabama, as change was accomplished through the civil rights movement. It occurred in South Africa as apartheid was abolished after decades of struggle. It is occurring today in the decisions of ordinary people to alter their life style, lower their carbon footprint, and challenge "business as usual" in the face of the slow but overwhelming crisis of global climate change. Accumulative actions taken by committed people can and do alter history. They are like a wedge blade chiseling new pathways through hardened stone where no way forward existed before.

The wedge blade is a metaphor of transcending the impasse of divided societies. When the ICA symbol was created in the early 1970s, the major divide represented by a line down the middle of the circle was between the "pro-establishment" and "disestablishment." Today's political polarization is typically labeled conservative-liberal. Tags often change, but polarities persist with opposites seeing the other as the source of the problem. True leadership, however, transcends the divide. Nelson Mandela did this through the symbolic power of celebrating rugby victories, the white man's game, to forge a new sense of national unity across post-apartheid South Africa.



Few people have such a high profile platform, but we all encounter similar dilemmas of harmful dysfunctions perpetuated within divided societies. A perversion that frequently accompanies polarization is that people tend to demonize those with whom they disagree. ICA avoids the blame game by always starting with the assumption that everyone has contributions to make in creating new solutions and that diverse viewpoints provide a richer understanding of the whole. This is key to building collaborative relationships. It also is in contrast to those who intentionally polarize and personalize. In "Rule for Radicals," Saul Alinsky advises organizers to "personify problems" and "identify an enemy" against whom action can be mobilized. ICA's approach is to transcend polarization by finding a third way forward.

Some debilitating contradictions in society, of course, are very complex and cannot be directly addressed with the same facilitative methods employed in local communities. The expansion of industrial agriculture in developing countries is an example. By design, small farmers become indebted through mono-cropping, using artificial fertilizers and pesticides and depending on genetically engineered seeds designed to be sterile, thus making it necessary for farmers to buy more and more seeds. These are harmful and unsustainable practices that occasion suffering among the innocent. Though this is a large and important issue, not unlike the American civil rights movement of the 60s and the apartheid struggle in South Africa, there are many ways to transcend the situation and serve as a social pioneer. Rather than demonizing companies that perpetuate these practices, ICA strategically builds alternative demonstrations of possibility. ICA permaculture projects in Zambia, India, and the GreenRise Building in Chicago, along with similar initiatives around the world, keep ICA on the leading edge, implementing action to create new solutions.

### ***Resources for continuing the conversation:***

- [The Courage to Lead: Transform Self, Transform Society](http://bookstore.iuniverse.com/Products/SKU-000549320/The-Courage-to-Lead.aspx) by R. Brian Stanfield, ICA-Canada, 2012, <http://bookstore.iuniverse.com/Products/SKU-000549320/The-Courage-to-Lead.aspx>.
- "The Liberal Heresy" by Desmond Avery, ICA Global Research Assembly 1976 (see annex).
- Two films: "Selma" directed by Ava DuVernay, 2014; "Invictus" directed by Clint Eastwood, 2009.

## 1c: ICA responds to critical social issues through viable programs

ICA stands in a tension and maintains a balance between two operational dimensions. One involves success as a functioning "institution" with a clear mission, effective programs, and sound management principles to ensure a continuity of service. The other concerns ICA's intention to serve as a change agent and to inspire creativity and organized action by others. In its past, ICA has referred to the latter as "movement" building. These two aspects are inherently connected and cannot be separated if ICA is to remain true to its historical legacy. For the sake of clarifying roles and functions, this section, 1c, focuses on institutional matters while the next, 1d, focuses on ICA's relationship to the work of others beyond itself.

Institutions are important. As legal entities, they preserve and maintain a historical presence in a way that movements cannot. Institutions are built to survive while movements pass away once a major contradiction has been addressed. Programs are the staple of institutions and they are adjusted and reinvented to achieve particular objectives over time. In doing so, institutions transfer values and wisdom from one generation to the next. The insights and contents of this handbook, for example, will soon disappear without an institutional vehicle to keep them alive. By their very nature, institutions are driven by concerns about financial viability. Failure to give adequate attention to fiscal management will bring the institution to its demise, and an end to its programs, regardless of their underlying value, when bills cannot be paid and payrolls go unmet.

While sound financial management is important, institutional security and self-perpetuation are not ICA's driving purpose; social transformation and change are. Current assumptions about the structure and funding of nonprofit organizations, especially in the U.S., make achieving this purpose immensely difficult. Three principles have been helpful in maintaining managerial integrity in the context of ICA's mission. One is to create and maintain the minimal institutional infrastructure necessary to support innovative programs and collaborative partnerships. A second is to start small with incremental organic growth occurring as opportunity and funding allow. Both are based on a fundamental insight, that form follows function. Too often there is an over eagerness to establish programs, structures, and positions before they have been justified, financially or otherwise.

A third helpful management principle has been to distinguish between "ICA inspired" and "ICA branded" strategies and to honor them both, but to not confuse them.

These principles guided the creation of "Accelerate 77" (a77), a program to strengthen the interaction and influence of bottom-up sustainability initiatives with top-down planning. Undertaking this program was risky and required an immense upfront investment of time and money. It involved innovative voluntary efforts, much of it by university students from ICA's service-learning program. Had ICA waited for full funding before launching the program, a77 would never have happened.

Ensuring program quality is a high value for protecting a "brand" while widespread social impact is driven by an ability to "inspire" creativity and innovations among others. The "Technology of Participation (ToP) ®" is perhaps ICA's most well known brand around the world. Other programs represent ICA brands as well. Determining and acting upon an appropriate balance between controlling ownership of these brands with an interest in widespread social change is the subject of the next section.

### **Resources for continuing the conversation:**

- Forces for Good: Six Practices of High Impact Non-Profits, by Leslie Crutchfield and Heather Grant.
- "The Death of Hull House" by Daniel Flynn and Yunhe (Evelyn) Tian, *The Nonprofit Quarterly* (annex).
- The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex, edited by Incite! Women of Color Against Violence; <http://www.incite-national.org> (related article in annex).

## 1d: ICA inspires innovative action by others beyond itself

This section continues the discussion begun in the preceding section (1c) concerning the relationship between the "institutional" management of ICA and action it inspires beyond itself.

The Chicago Sustainability Leaders Network (CSLN) is an example of inspiration. It began with ICA-USA identifying local sustainability initiatives in the 77 community areas of the city, many of which were isolated from and unaware of others working nearby. A citywide share fair connected these efforts with each other leading to the growth of new ideas, practices, confidence and commitment. Formation of the CSLN has empowered the collective voice and strengthened the collective impact of those who before were under recognized, under appreciated, or under engaged. As is often said, synergy is far greater than the simple sum of the parts.

Collaborative partnerships and movement building can however be complicated matters. It is important for ICA to play a facilitative support role rather than an overly aggressive one with strong control over details. It means finding an effective middle ground between providing helpful guidance while allowing new leadership to emerge and step forward.

Beyond decision-making, perhaps the biggest challenge has to do with money. Great care is required to avoid the perception of taking credit for the work of others, especially if collective efforts are seen as helping to fund only one of the partners. As an intermediary organization, there is always the danger of assuming roles and responsibilities -- and thereby sucking-up funding -- that would be better left to others. Members of the CSLN have been burned in the past by sharing ideas with intermediaries, who packaged them, raised the necessary funds, and did the work themselves without involving or crediting those whose ideas they were in the first place. Brief case studies about problems between intermediary organizations and the groups they intend to help can be found in the annex. To avoid misunderstandings, a high level of transparency is important in the preparation of funding proposals that might potentially affect local partners.

Ultimately, ICA does its work in the hope of encouraging others to adapt and apply insights they learn from ICA. This may result in activities that are done without the direct involvement of ICA. This affirms ICA's mission to occasion change within the world. It is important, however, for ICA to know what it wants to "protect," what it wants to "give away," and how to differentiate the two.

"Brands" primarily refer to names, not processes. ToP courses are publically offered because ICA wants to inspire broad use of participatory methods. However, ICA also has an interest in protecting the quality of its ToP "brand" -- the name and logo associated with its facilitation training curriculum - - without staking claim to general participatory processes. While ToP graduates are welcome to use the methods and processes as they see fit, hopefully with attribution to ICA, they do not have permission to represent themselves as "ICA" or "ToP" facilitators and trainers. The difference between inspiring and branding primarily has to do with correct labeling. This is relevant for all ICA programs and the independent action they hope to inspire. ICA guards against those who might incorrectly represent themselves as ICA while avoiding preoccupation with controls, especially about "intellectual property." When tempted to protect or regulate aspects of its programs, ICA should always ask itself "why" and have a satisfactory answer to ensure that it is not undermining its own purpose and mission.

### ***Resources for continuing the conversation:***

- [Blessed Unrest: How the Largest Movement in the World Came into Being and No One Saw it Coming](#) by Paul Hawken, 2007. also see [http://www.blessedunrest.com/media/BLESSED\\_UNREST\\_300x400.mov](http://www.blessedunrest.com/media/BLESSED_UNREST_300x400.mov).
- [Connecting To Change The World: Harnessing The Power Of Networks For Social Impact](#) by Peter Plastrik, Madeleine Taylor, and John Cleveland, 2014 (see a chart of the book in the annex).

## **2a: Effective action begins with what people have, not what they don't have**

Though an obvious first step when one thinks about it, beginning with what one has is not the typical starting point for most of us when making plans. Many begin with a needs assessment that often leads to long familiar lists describing the "lack of" something as their problem. Eventually, however, reality is inescapable and dreaming about the absence of perceived fixes is not very helpful.

In their eagerness to seek something not currently available, many people overlook the gifts that are already theirs. This insight is held by the simple and widespread observation that there are those who look at life as a glass half empty, allowing themselves to become victimized or traumatized by its emptiness, while others see the glass as half full in order to build upon their strengths.

Everyone has gifts. People are born with a capacity for growth. That growth may be in skills, knowledge, or relationships. On this journey of growth, individuals search out basic questions like, "How do I fit in and be a part of a larger group? How may I be energized by the work I do? What is important about my thoughts? How am I cherished as an individual? How do I connect to something beyond the superficial?" Often the unique gift of the person is inhibited or stagnated by ignorance, neglect or misdirection. The challenge of change agents is to release the vision of those who do not fully recognize their gifts in order to make them available to the larger community. This requires an affirmation of the mystery, depth, and greatness of their lives, realized by embracing bumps and difficulties on the journey, not harboring illusions of escape.

ICA has long been a pioneer in facilitating participatory self-reliant development that builds upon the strengths and gifts already possessed by community residents and organizational members. This is one of its most distinguishing characteristics. ICA actively encourages development "by the people," striving to move beyond the popular perspective of merely working "with the people," while remembering that it is categorically different from development "for the people."

This "asset based" approach has always been at the heart of ICA's mission. ICA is not alone, however, in doing this. Many kindred spirits worldwide are driven by the same illuminating insight. The ABCD Institute ("Asset Based Community Development") has published many studies at Northwestern University that illustrate development from "within" by releasing the power of community strengths. This is in contrast to the dominant "needs based" approach that overwhelmingly typifies assistance initiated by, and driven by, "outsiders," be they government agencies, private foundations, or the vast majority of well-intentioned nonprofit organizations.

There is a popular story about an African villager who asks two ICA staff members, "Why have you been standing here so long in the hot sun?" to which the reply was, "We're waiting for a bus to take us home." The villager then told them a truth about which they had previously been unaware: "The bus don't stop here." Hearing this was GOOD NEWS! Only then were they finally able to decide upon realistic possibilities rather than false information and hopeful illusions for finding a way home. ICA is about enabling people everywhere to hear their "good news" and to embrace the reality of their situation and what they already have. This is always the starting point for effective action.

### ***Resources for continuing the conversation:***

- The Abundant Community: Awakening the Power of Families and Neighborhoods, by Peter Block and John McKnight, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, San Francisco, 2010.
- "Facilitating Asset Based Community Development" by Terry Bergdall, Chapter 9 in Changing Lives, Changing Society: ICA's Experience in Nepal and in the World, edited by Tatwa Timsina and Dasarath Neupane, ICA Nepal, Kathmandu, 2012. (see annex).
- Video of Jim Diers on "Seven Principles of ABCD" - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uwA02v9gfOc>

## 2b: The external situation is never the problem

Life is full of limits that are beyond human control. These limitations, which we cannot change, are simply the given reality in which we live our lives. This reality, the external situation, is not our problem. It just "is." Problems arise with the relationships we take to the external situation. Awareness of this fact, and acting upon it, is a guiding principle undergirding ICA's work, especially as it enables communities, organizations, and individuals to "affirm the significance of their situation and to build responsible plans of action." Here's an example.

In 2009, I was the team leader in an ICA contract to facilitate planning in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, to rebuild neighborhoods in the aftermath of a devastating flood. A year later the Director of Community Development contacted me about difficulties she was encountering in the implementation of the plan. Federal guidelines had changed and it was her responsibility to explain new procedures and benefits to the community. People, however, were extremely disruptive and angry during the large information meetings she was conducting. "They accuse me of being a liar and I can't advance the conversation; they won't listen to what I have to say. Meetings continually disintegrate into hostile accusations and chaotic confusion. What advice can you give me?"

To clarify new guidelines, I recommended that she use large visual diagrams showing procedures, benefits, and recent changes. However, I suggested that she was dealing with something much deeper than misinformation and changing policies. It was important for her to remember that people in Cedar Rapids went to bed one night in June of 2008 to find the next morning that rising waters had washed away the familiar life they had built for themselves. Underneath their anger about changing policies and misinformation was a deeper anger: "*Through no fault of our own,*" they tell themselves, "*our lives have been dumped on and destroyed. Life should not be this way!*" I suggested to the Director "it is your job to find ways of acknowledging people's pain while enabling them to take a new relationship to the harsh realities and raw emotions that they're experiencing."

I reminded her that at the very first planning assembly in January 2009 with 300+ people in attendance, every table discussion began with a brief conversation. "We obviously are not entering into this planning process as distant by-standers; the flood has had an impact on everyone in Cedar Rapids. It is important for all planning to be connected to reality, so let's spend a few minutes sharing something about our experiences. What have been some of the biggest challenges with which you have had to contend?" Everyone at the tables told their story about the impact of the flood upon their lives. They acknowledged their struggles and set a respectful tone for considering the future through discussion about their realistic hopes and desired outcomes for the planning process. On a human level, it enabled them to affirm "the significance of their situation" by a powerful reminder that there were all in this together.

This process moves human interactions from a superficial level to one that is much more profound. It's based on an understanding of 'human agency' whereby people can always devise ways of coping with life, even under the most extreme forms of coercion or desperation. However difficult various circumstances might be, human beings are free to make choices, even if only in regard to one's attitude. ICA understands this and facilitates community planning within this perspective.

Reinhold Niebuhr, in the form of a prayer, also understood that the external situation is never the problem when he wrote: "Grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, the courage to change the things we can, and the wisdom to know one from the other."

### **Resources for continuing the conversation:**

- Victor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* 1959, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LIC2OdnhliQ>.
- "Peanuts" Sept 26, 2010 (original Sept 22, 1963): <http://www.gocomics.com/peanuts/2010/09/26>.

## 2c: Behavior changes when images change

The concept of an “image” and its relationship to behavior has been foundational to all ICA programs since its very earliest days. It has provided the underlying theoretical framework for ICA’s educational and facilitation programs as well as its community development work. Though many have written about images, the key source for ICA has been the work of Kenneth Boulding.

Behavior is based on the way people see themselves in the world. It’s a matter of self-perception, self-story, self-image – all of which are phrases that point to the same thing. For example, it could be said that the unilateral tendencies and actions of the U.S. government are consistent with an image of rugged American individualism. Images are created through the reception of ‘messages.’ People continually incorporate, or discard, new messages into their accumulated understanding of themselves in the world. Messages come in many forms: verbal, visual, and experiential. Education is an elaborate process of conveying various ‘messages’ about particular subjects. Messages come in varying degrees of strength: one reads all the time about the negative health effects of fatty foods. Yet these often only mildly alter one’s prevailing self-understanding and behavioral choices about diet. A heart attack, however, is a much stronger message for influencing a shift in one’s diet or exercise routine.

Images change continuously. Most involve minor adjustments as new pieces of information (messages) are aligned with an existing image. Inconsistent messages that challenge a firmly held image are usually ignored. Sometimes, especially if received several times from differing sources, or if the message is strongly experiential, ‘doubt’ begins to emerge as the contradictory messages gain prominence. Radical change occurs when an established image is replaced by a totally new self-understanding. When images change, behavior changes. This understanding can be summarized in five points: 1) people live out of images, 2) images control behavior, 3) images are created by messages, 4) images can change, and 5) when images change, behavior changes.

An aim of ICA’s work with communities has long been to enable a shift in mindset from *passivity* (e.g., waiting as ‘clients’ to receive services; self-images of being ‘victims’) to becoming *active agents* of their own development. This most often has been by encouraging collaboration among groups and individuals through collective action planning and implementation. The ICA GreenRise Building sends practical messages about the possibility of living in greater harmony with the Earth with the installation of 483 solar panels on its roof. This solar project is one very large message that challenges widely held images that either cause people to ignore climate change or fall into a sense of overwhelming hopelessness.

Image change informs the design of ICA programs. The “symphony chart,” for example, is a valuable tool used at ICA for preparing lesson plans and facilitating events. Session objectives are set by analyzing participant images and considering anticipated accomplishments. The sharing of information and learning activities of the session -- which convey messages to reinforce, or challenge, an image -- are then formatted into three movements. The “symphony chart” illustrates one practical way that changing “images” is a priority within ICA’s work.

### **Resources for continuing the conversation:**

- Boulding, Kenneth (1956), Chapter 1 of *The Image: Knowledge in Life and Society*, The University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor. (related article in annex).
- Cooperrider, David (1990), “Positive Image, Positive Action: The Affirmative Basis of Organizing,” in Srivastva, S., and Cooperrider, D., *Appreciative Management and Leadership: The Power of Positive Thought and Action in Organizations*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco. (related article in annex).
- Packard, E., Patterson, M., and Stallman, J. (2010), “The Evolving Resource of Imaginal Education: Releasing Maximum Potential of Individuals, Organizations, Programs, and Communities.” (annex).

## 2d: Culture is key to addressing economic and political contradictions

Since its early days in the 1960s, a major feature of ICA's community work has been to address issues in a comprehensive manner. While particular actions might be focused on immediate objectives, they are understood in the context of their implications for all people, all problems and, given today's consciousness, the entire Earth. Furthermore, it is crucial to address the depth human issue that inhibits creative action within a comprehensive context. This led ICA to extensive research in 1971 on the dynamic relationships of the Economic, Political, and Cultural dimensions of the Social Process, which is depicted through the use of triangles. Further reflection and analysis showed major imbalances in these relationships.

Culture is the collective way in which communities formulate, rehearse, and pass-on shared values. It consists of a system of attitudes that have meaning, coherence, and efficacy. While Culture is often inherited and practiced on a superficial level, the prevailing nature of Culture fosters an inherent trait for returning to depth understanding. This is because the central question associated with Culture is, "What is profoundly true and significant in life?" Whether sought or not, narrow reductions that fail to take the totality of life experience into consideration are eventually exposed as inadequate.

Today in the United States, the entire Social Process is out of balance with the Economic playing a dominant role. Consider how the concept of a "return on investment" influences deliberations in different aspects of life where it has typically not been applied before. Particular courses of study in higher education, for example, have increasingly been judged to have value, or not, by the potential income that students can expect to earn upon graduation. Making money, rather than making a useful contribution to society, has become an end-all objective often with little purpose other than keeping score. This leads to short-term thinking, focused on quick profits, with actions typically based on illusory assumptions about unlimited growth. The "market," for many, becomes the final arbitrator of decisions and actions. This view of the Economic, which is a "reduced" view, is driven by a preoccupation with acquisition and consumption and is easily recognized as the dominant way of thinking in society. It is reinforced perpetually by Political dialogue, commercial advertising, and social media that strongly influence popular perceptions.

The authentic role of Economic processes is to provide the basics of life for the well-being of all members of society. This is a matter of justice. ICA programs enable people to become agents of their own development. While this involves inclusive work to address issues in a comprehensive manner, it also means stressing the crucial aspects of Cultural commonality. Why do we do what we do? What is most important? How do we reinforce these values, and maintain them, when they often run contrary to "conventional wisdom?" Rather than a direct assault with gestures that insist Economic and Political processes must change, an emphasis on Culture addresses underlying values that support, or alter, existing practices. Historically, ICA has given great attention to demonstrating new alternatives and using stories, symbols, and songs to reinforce them. These are practical messages that create new images from the bottom up. They draw deeply upon the culture of communities and groups while expanding the story to care for all people, consider all problems, and to live in harmony with Planet Earth.

### ***Resources for more information:***

- D. Paul, Schafer, Revolution or Renaissance: Making the Transition from an Economic to a Cultural Age, University of Ottawa Press, Ottawa, 2008. (related article in annex)
- Jon C. and Maureen R. Jenkins (1997), The Social Process Triangles, Imaginal Training, The Netherlands. (related article in annex)
- Joseph Campbell, with Bill Moyers; Betty Sue Flowers, ed (1988), The Power of Myth, Doubleday, New York. Also available in video with many segments on YouTube.
- Documentary video, "Pete Seeger: the Power of Song," PBS American Masters, 2007.

### **3a: ICA frames and designs its programs in a comprehensive context**

Joep Van Arendonk, Chief of Programs at the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), became acquainted with ICA in the 1980s. At an ICA global gathering in Bilbao, Spain, he spoke about his first hand experiences with ICA and his admiration for the creativity and commitment he saw in its work, especially in rural villages. In conclusion, he described ICA as being "People of the Question." He saw ICA as an organization that strove to address some of the most overwhelming social issues in the world for which there were "no answers." ICA's integrity came from acting within the framework, urgency, and uncertainty of the big picture.

This has always been a hallmark of ICA. The questions have to do with big moral issues and involve stepping into the unknown for the sake of creating something new. In local communities it requires identifying and dealing with all of the issues that people face, not just a few. This is paying attention to the totality of the situation. ICA has referred to this as a comprehensive context as programs are designed in the twilight of ambiguity where something radically different is required but the pathway forward is less than clear. This results in transformation and changes in the way people see the world and their role in it. Responses made in anything less than a comprehensive context are reduced and intentional or not often treat isolated symptoms. It is like using Band Aid plasters to care for severely injured survivors of a major train wreck.

Today this analogy is apt. There are those, for example, who focus great attention on the importance of economic justice within society but do so based on old assumptions about unlimited growth. They largely ignore realities of climate change and the necessity of finding sustainable ways of living in harmony with the Earth. Their strategy tries to make the systems of an old and collapsing paradigm "work better." Failure to place their concern within the framework of a more comprehensive context ultimately undermines their efforts. Rather than transformation, their work inadvertently contributes to the perpetuation of larger contradictions. The futility of this in the long term is like rearranging deckchairs on the Titanic.

ICA pushes itself to be aware of matters that inform a comprehensive perspective. This means being in regular dialogue with edge thinkers through an active study regimen, and making the results of its own work available for review by others. It means lively interaction with those who wrestle with the same issues. In other words, ICA self-consciously works at being a learning organization as it develops and implements new programs.

The short-term thinking of popular culture highlights the importance of revisiting and rehearsing the realities of the bigger picture on a regular basis. ICA tells its public story and frames its work as a response to the urgency of the times. While this is important for conveying ICA's purpose and work to others, it also fulfills an internal objective, to remind all stakeholders -- staff, board, volunteers, and partners -- about ICA's mission, its historical significance, and how the mission is being practically advanced. Complementing the importance of the story, ICA has a tradition of regularly rehearsing this through songs, decor, and the use of symbols. These are powerful practices for keeping a comprehensive context squarely before us.

Finally, by daring to operate within a comprehensive context, there are few clear answers, As proclaimed in an old Chinese proverb, "Action will remove the doubt that theory cannot solve." This is a helpful insight for those who wrestle mightily with today's dilemmas as "People of the Question."

#### ***Resources for continuing the conversation:***

- "Proposition 4: Deal with All Critical Problems," IMAGE, E.I. Summer 1967 (see annex).
- "People of the Question" by Joep Van Arendonk, 1986 (see annex).

### **3b: ICA focuses on local responsibility and action within a global perspective**

Community development, where local responsibility is undertaken and driven by those who live, work, and are otherwise engaged in communities, has been a central feature of ICA programs since the beginning. Other particular programs -- like the Technology of Participation (ToP) ® -- are direct descendants of this work.

ICA's focus on community development has been complemented by strategies to connect local action with the broader world. While a global story is important -- everyone knows the phrase "think globally, act locally" -- ICA has worked hard to make it a reality. Its history shows this. From its origins in Fifth City, ICA expanded its community work internationally by initiating 24 projects, one in every time zone around the world. ICA also developed a program of community forums, one-day events where residents of communities discussed their challenges and created plans of actions to resolve them. Known as "Town Meeting '76," ICA conducted one in every county of the U.S., 5,000 in total. National ICA offices carried out similar programs in other countries. The point is that ICA's attention on local action has always been undertaken within a global context. This perspective is best seen today in the peer-to-peer relationships of ICA-International (ICAI) and efforts of 39 national ICAs working across their respective geography.

The "global grid" is a symbol of this commitment and appears on the cover page of this document. While it is a stylized depiction of the world, it also represents an analysis of global relationships. There was a time when the "global grid" appeared in every ICA office around the world as a visual reminder of local responsibility within an international context. Today, global relationships may be symbolized differently, but the insight remains the same.

The foundation for this global perspective is creative local action. It is in towns, villages, and neighborhoods that opportunities abound for the building of healthy sustainable communities. This perspective undergirds ICA-USA's current work with Accelerate 77 as well as community-based programs of other ICAI members. It also drives efforts elsewhere by other global organizations. "Transition Towns" promotes permaculture principles within local communities around the world. Margaret Wheatley, who has written extensively about the major challenges confronting the world, refers to today's systemic resistance to change as a vast tyrannical "Sea of Insanity." While it is easy to fall into despair about this, she points out that awakened people are rising up in "Islands of Sanity" as they join together to create signs of hope. Communities are open spaces where change can always occur regardless of constraints that might restrict options elsewhere.

If dire predictions come true, and systemic resistance to change will dissipate only when the global crisis becomes so extreme that current systems collapse, then the necessity to build self-reliant communities will eventually become unavoidable. This underscores the importance for sensitive and responsive people to invest themselves now in the creation of "Islands of Sanity." From its earliest days, ICA has been about resurgence in local communities. To echo the words of Thomas Berry, there could not be a more urgent moment for ICA to continue its "Great Work."

These are the times. We are the people.

#### ***Resources for continuing the conversation:***

- George Randall West, *Creating Community: Finding Meaning in the Place We Live* (2012).
- Rob Hopkins and Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, *The Transition Companion: Making Your Community More Resilient in Uncertain Times*, Chelsea Green Publishing, White River Junction, Vermont (2012).
- Margaret Wheatley and Deborah Frieze, *Walk Out Walk On: A Learning Journey into Communities Daring to Live the Future Now*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, San Francisco (2011).
- Fred Lanphear, *Songaia, an Unfolding Dream*, Songaia Press, Bothall, WA (2014).

### **3c: ICA facilitates group action and strengthens organizational capacities**

ICA's work is built on participatory methods that have evolved from many sources. At its heart is a commitment to the indicatives of life rather than the imperatives -- beginning with what "is," rather than what "ought to be." It has been influenced by Paulo Freire who understood education to be a process that primarily draws upon the experiences of learners rather than regarding them as empty vessels to be filled with knowledge by authoritative teachers. It recognizes W. Edwards Deming and his emphasis on "quality" where front line workers resolve issues that managers often can't. These forebears share a bottom-up approach, rather than top-down, and an appreciation of function preceding form. ICA's programs are intent upon transforming people's relationship to life. This is accomplished by playing the roles of facilitator, educator and trainer, mentor and coach.

Facilitators in general, and ICA in particular, understand that every group is composed of knowledgeable agents who are more intimately familiar with their situation than any outsider. They solicit insights and intuitive wisdom, which at times are deeply buried, and often enable greater awareness by holding up a mirror for a group to reflect upon its self. Facilitation is an area where ICA has acquired a public reputation through its "Technology of Participation (ToP)" ® program and the inspirational support it has played with the founding of the "International Association of Facilitators" (IAF). In one form or another, facilitation will remain a centerpiece of ICA programming. A major challenge for ICA, however, is to keep pushing the edge of its facilitation work rather than resting on its laurels.

Organizational capacity building occurs particularly when ICA plays the role of teacher and trainer. The development of new skills and abilities for enhancing the effectiveness of a group in doing its work often occurs through programs and workshops specifically designed to address particular issues identified during facilitated events. ICA has also created programs to address major social contradictions, like job training for the unemployed through a multi-week curriculum, i.e., "Training, Inc." Capacity building activities of ICA address the development of practical skills WITH conscious attention paid to changing images. There is a wealth of resources in curriculum design to draw upon from past educational programs found in ICA's Global Archives. A taste of these resources can be found on the "Golden Pathways CD."

Finally, ICA builds capacities of others by serving as a mentor and coach. Authenticity, as well as the content of potential subject matter, comes from the integrity and first-hand experiences that one shares with others. This often means exposing one's own internal weakness and struggles and the ways they have been overcome. Being aware of these experiences and seeking encouragement from the examples of others is an important aspect of taking care of oneself on a journey of service. "Burn out" is all too common for those with whom ICA works. Dealing forthrightly with it is a key, but often underappreciated, aspect of capacity building. The book, The 9 Disciplines of a Facilitator, has taken ICA's past research on caring for oneself to support a life of service and presented it in a new accessible manner for a wider audience.

The roles of facilitator, educator and trainer, mentor and coach involve an empowering process and are catalytic in that they release the inherent power that people already possess.

#### ***Resources for continuing the conversation:***

- The IAF Handbook of Group Facilitation, Sandor Schuman (ed), Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 2005, published in cooperation of the International Association of Facilitators (IAF), <http://www.iaf-world.org>.
- The Facilitative Way: Leadership That Makes the Difference by Priscilla H. Wilson with Kathleen Harnish and Joel Wright, Books Works Publishing, 2003.
- Golden Pathways CD, [https://wedgeblade.net/gold\\_path/data/pathways.htm](https://wedgeblade.net/gold_path/data/pathways.htm)
- The 9 Disciplines of a Facilitator: Leading Groups by Transforming Yourself, by Jon C. Jenkins and Maureen R. Jenkins, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 2006.

### 3d: ICA connects people and organizations to spark collaboration

An often-repeated phrase is "It's not what you know, it's who you know." It points to a truth: social change occurs when creative people connect and act with each other in a concerted effort. While this is not a unique insight, the power of making connections is an important guiding principle behind ICA activities.

As an organization interested in catalyzing creative action beyond itself, ICA connects those who share values and interests. ICA transcends narrow perspectives of any particular group by focusing on universal concerns that are common to all. This was reflected by the word "ecumenical" in its original name and remains an important piece of ICA's work now. Respecting, honoring, and ensuring diversity, be it of an interfaith or cross-cultural nature, are underlying principles of ICA as it goes about connecting people. In the 1980s this was the driving strategy behind the International Exposition of Rural Development (IERD). Under the theme of "Sharing Approaches That Work," ICA documented successful examples of grassroots community development in over thirty nations and then convened a conference in New Delhi in 1984 in an international "plenary" attended by local representatives. Thirty years later, this same approach was used for launching the Accelerate 77 program in Chicago, by connecting people in Chicago's 77 communities. It is by identifying and connecting the creative community initiatives of ordinary people that new ideas, practices, confidence, and commitment are successfully nurtured and developed. This is the nuts and bolts of movement building.

Making good connections is also a key feature for strengthening institutional aspects of ICA operations. This is an indispensable first step in building collaborative partnerships of all types. Good connections depend upon potential partners being familiar with each other's vision and then interacting to shape new programs. This implies shared decision-making and ensures that all partners benefit from the contributions they make to a common task.

ICA's work is "authorized" through connections. ICA has established nurturing relationships among those who can offer support when threatened by outside forces. Due to its unorthodox manner, ICA has often faced challenges that, if left unaddressed, would have stopped or damaged its work. Finding and nurturing influential supporters who are recognized in the established world is a strategic necessity, since power can speak to power in ways that others, including ICA itself, cannot.

Fundraising in its many forms -- through grants, individual donations, or fee-for-service -- most successfully occurs through strong working relationships with others. Probably more than in any other area, raising money depends upon "who you know." While not everyone appreciates this, it is a fact of life within the working environment today of non-profit organizations.

Finally, nurturing personal connections is the primary means by which ICA "attracts" potential stakeholders and partners. This is particularly true for enlisting prospective board members and the hiring of new staff. Recent experience in the transition of executive leadership at ICA-USA underscores the importance of viewing the succession process as a matter of "attracting" rather than "recruiting." Connections that complement management skills with a deep familiarity, appreciation, and understanding of ICA values and principles are key.

#### ***Resources for continuing the conversation:***

- ICA GreenRise Solar Dedication (2014): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pzjunHWFq7s&feature=youtu.be>
- IERD, The Courage to Care (1984) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RQ5swKNePDs>
- The World of Human Development (1977 parts 1 and 2):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YbaDWIHLuY> -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SlN6sb1a-Qs>

#### **4a: ICA embodies an empathetic "presence" among those it serves**

When I first encountered ICA, known then as the Ecumenical Institute, it was a life-changing event. A major reason for this was the way staff interacted with those they served. They lived in Fifth City -- a "ghetto" area of Chicago where several blocks had been burned to the ground during the riots of 1968. Manifestations of poverty were everywhere: gangs, crime, drugs, and despair. Yet staff immersed themselves in the same severe environment as Fifth City residents. This was in sharp contrast to others, known as "limousine social workers," that made short forays to "help" people but then abandoned the scene at the end of each workday. Institute staff lived among Fifth City residents 24/7 and experienced the same trials and tribulations. ICA thereby rendered an entirely different kind of demonstrative empathy through its work.

These staff members, of course, remained outsiders. Everyone, Fifth Citizens and staff, were aware that they had the flexibility to leave whenever they might choose to do so, but their ongoing decision to stay, especially after the riots, conveyed deep commitment and integrity both of which are irreplaceable elements in building trust. This was the powerful "presence" I experienced when I first met the ICA. Living in Fifth City was a symbolic act but it was a genuine one. Today we would say they walked their talk.

This kind of "presence" occasions an aura that is at times difficult to rationally explain but is fully recognizable when experienced. "Presence" means that people intuitively grasp the vision of an organization simply by the way it goes about its business.

This is the power of the ICA GreenRise Building. All of the varied pieces -- homeless and marginalized people regularly passing through the doors of the largest nonprofit service center in the mid-west, the second largest installation of renewable solar power on a building in all of Chicago, a major hub of supporting activities for community-based sustainability initiatives, the home of an intentional community of people living a life style of voluntary simplicity -- add up to a true manifestation of "building a just and equitable society in harmony with Planet Earth." Chicagoans are aware of this as they enter 4750 N. Sheridan, look around, hear the story, and sense something totally different from anything else they have experienced in the city.

While the particulars may change in different circumstances, this type of "presence" is an indispensable characteristic of both ICA branded work and ICA inspired activities.

In the annex is a story about the 'Community Empowerment Program' in Ethiopia. Facilitators working with subsistence farmers forewent the four-wheel vehicles that were standard fare for other more conventional development programs. Instead, they traveled for hours in the rain and dust of open lorries, rode mules and walked for miles over tough terrain to reach designated villages, and slept in flea-infested homes of peasant farmers for weeks at a time. These actions of "shared austerity" by young government professionals gained the illusive respect of villagers. This is "presence" built on proactive and decisional empathy.

Such "presence" is also unassuming. Several years ago, ICA staff played a major role in producing a video, narrated by Oprah Winfrey, about the triumphs and struggles of Fifth City. It eloquently tells the story of Fifth Citizens becoming active agents of their own development. Some viewers have been surprised that ICA staff members are nowhere to be seen. In a very real sense, however, their absence illustrates their "presence."

#### ***Resources for continuing the conversation:***

- "Facilitation by Mule" in *Initiatives*, John Burbidge, ed., Summer 1995 Vol. 11 #3 (see annex).
- "Fifth City: A Decisional City" video (1983) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JJ9fFR9QK0E>

## **4b: ICA's commitment to diversity addresses systemic contradictions**

Biomimicry is an approach to innovation that seeks sustainable solutions to human challenges by emulating nature's time-tested patterns and strategies. In the natural world, the more genetic variety within a species, the higher the likelihood of resisting disease. The odds for survival are thereby increased. When organisms breed with close relatives, genetic makeup becomes more uniform and genetic flaws become increasingly more common. Everyone knows that inbreeding results in expanded vulnerability. In the natural world, monocultures do not do very well.

Social diversity focuses on healthy inclusion of race, gender, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national origin, physical and mental abilities, etc. The benefits of diversity are widely rehearsed. It enriches social experience as we learn from those whose beliefs and views are different from our own. It encourages critical thinking and helps citizens to learn to communicate effectively with people of varied backgrounds in an increasingly complex and pluralistic society. It helps build communities whose members are judged by the quality of their character and the value of their contributions. Businesses recognize that diversity can enhance economic competitiveness by making effective use of the talents and abilities of all workers.

ICA promotes diversity among its staff, board, and within its programs for many of these same reasons. The intent to have internal diversity within ICA represents the kind of society that ICA intends to participate in building wherever it works in the world. In many ways, however, ICA is not really much different from many other organizations that encourage diversity within their operations. Such rhetoric constitutes conventional wisdom.

Yet there is a dirty little secret about diversity that is rarely acknowledged but persistently true: many organizational diversity efforts are motivated by a desire to project a positive public persona while subtle strategies and actions are put in place to maintain the status quo. Their purpose is to manage potential complications and the eventual impact that successful integration of the disenfranchised into the main stream might mean. They're generally not seeking to promote or release the full power of a diverse population, due to the largely unspoken reality of privilege, typically white and male, which has been historically engrained deeply into the fabric of society. Indeed, it is so deeply engrained that it is almost invisible. Instead, it defines "normal." This is so powerful that most people who benefit from the system often do not have the slightest understanding of how it privileges them. When pointed out to them, many are very quick to deny it. This is the culmination of a systemic monoculture that has grown over many generations.

It is within this state of affairs that ICA's approach to diversity is primarily a confessional one. It strives to ensure that its staff, board, and programs fully reflect the diversity of the world at large but it does so as an organization that is self-consciously wrestling with underlying contradictions of systemic privilege and is aware (or tries to be!) of its own shortcomings.

In doing so, it calls the organizations with which it interacts to confront and address their own internal challenges when it comes to engaging the multifaceted gifts of all people and releasing the creative latent power of diverse communities. The difficulty and importance of such steps should not be underestimated in the task of building a just and equitable society.

### ***Resources for continuing the conversation:***

- "How Diversity Makes Us Smarter" by Katherine Phillips in *'Scientific American,'* September 16, 2014 (included in the annex).
- "Why It's So Hard to Talk to White People About Racism" by Robin DiAngelo in *'Huffinton Post,'* April 30, 2015 (included in the annex).

#### **4c: ICA operates through consensus nurtured by facilitative leadership**

ICA's biggest program around the world, the "Technology of Participation (ToP)" ®, offers practical methods for consensus building. Yet, despite this background, ICA's history also includes many painful experiences of dysfunction when the consensus process went off the tracks when coping with internal discord and conflict. Because consensus building is an art, not a science, those difficult times have provided opportunities for garnering valuable lessons. Emphasizing the importance of consensus, and embodying it through daily practice, are defining characteristics of ICA. Three important insights about consensus building have emerged from our recent history that move us well beyond the "101" basics taught in most ToP courses.

First, consensus has more to do with the process in which issues are considered than with the content of a final decision. An effective consensus process involves stakeholders in a timely fashion so they can make deliberative contributions about proposals as they evolve rather than giving feedback after they're essentially developed. It also expands chances for originating ideas. While leadership from the center is comfortable with introducing new ideas, facilitative leadership knows that creativity often comes from the organization's periphery as well, especially when connected with others. For example, Accelerate 77 grew out of an unanticipated proposal about marking ICA's 50th anniversary through a citywide share-fair that came from a part-time volunteer.

Second, it is crucial to have objective means for articulating clear decisions. For most groups this is not an issue; bylaws spell out governance procedures and traditional pyramid structures suffer no doubts about power. However, for organizations that strive to be more horizontal, it can become confusing. Even worse, if no objective mechanism is in place, it can be paralyzing, for the curse of working by consensus is flippantly handing an inadvertent veto to dissident voices. *Consensus allows all voices to be heard and strives to incorporate views, but is not unanimity*. Some prefer the word "alignment" rather than "consensus" due to misunderstanding about this.

In some ICA circles, there is baggage to be jettisoned. One historical adage says consensus is never reached by taking a vote. Instead, I'd suggest that "premature" votes are a contradiction if they block adequate input from stakeholders. ICA-International (ICAI), for example, has no way to symbolize a consensus other than by a vote of the General Assembly. Similarly, a major role and responsibility of designated executive leadership within national ICA organizations includes declaring, and symbolizing, decisions. At ICA this requires facilitating deliberative processes that allow for widespread input and investment, but it also presumes a readiness to announce the consensus once it has been realized. The true art of facilitative leadership includes weighing-up intangibles and intuiting when to play the symbolic role by declaring a decision. For groups like ICAI who have no executive, it requires great sensitivity in discerning the right time to call for a vote.

Third, some decisions involve very large and complicated matters. In such circumstances, as illustrated by the restructuring of ICAI in 2010, it is crucially important to disentangle complex issues into smaller incremental parts so that they can then be sequentially ordered, and discussed, in a thoughtful and careful manner. Many start with the most controversial issues first because they are thought to be so important. Effective facilitators avoid pressures to deal with them prematurely. Careful sequencing of disentangled issues is much more effective.

#### ***Resources for continuing the conversation:***

- Clues to Achieving Consensus: A Leader's Guide to Navigating Collaborative Problem Solving by Mirja P. Hanson, Roman and Littlefield (2005).
- "Sequencing Discussions," a talking paper from October 2010 by Terry Bergdall in preparation for the ICAI General Assembly in Talegaon, India. (see annex).

#### **4d: ICA demonstrates its values and keeps them alive as a learning organization**

During the past 50+ years, ICA has undergone many transitions. While some have involved subtle changes, others have been much more obvious. ICA has changed its name and strategic endeavors. Particular programs have come and gone. It has moved from poverty level stipends to competitive salaries with all the implications that accompany professional staffing. It has moved from one location to branch offices connected to a central headquarters and then again to autonomous organizations in different nations working together as partners within a global federation. Throughout this incredible journey, a number of essential core values and practices have been maintained to render a distinctive ICA character that still endures. This is a story of continuity and change.

Though the specifics are unpredictable, unforeseen changes are most assuredly in store. Entrusted to new generations of ICA leadership is a cyclical process, a rich history, and legacy. It is the charge to each generation, as it was for their predecessors, to maintain the "essence" of the organization while giving new shape and form to the particulars. Some key disciplines have enabled this to happen in the past and should continue to serve ICA well as it moves into the future.

Central to these disciplines is ICA's commitment to be a learning organization. A learning organization is the term given to any enterprise, be it commercial or non-profit, which facilitates reflections and new insights among its members and continuously transforms itself. Learning organizations develop as a result of the pressures facing modern organizations while finding ways to remain effective, competitive, and true to itself. Below are particular and important practices that have kept ICA on a vibrant journey as a learning organization.

First, ICA is clear about its mission and keeps it before itself in all that it does. Practically, this means rehearsing its purpose and values perpetually. Most importantly, this activity involves all ICA stakeholders, not just senior leadership. This is accomplished not only during meetings but in the decor, stories, rituals, etc., that surround its entire operation.

Second, ICA builds upon this rehearsal by regularly reflecting upon its work. In the context of the mission, this involves lively discussions that examine and evaluate the purpose of programs -- what's working or not and ways to improve. It also pushes edge thinking on the next big thing.

Third, ICA holds itself accountable. Are we living our values, are we walking our talk? It encourages self-examination and provides an environment for frank appraisal. For an alignment of values with ongoing practices is the primary means for realizing genuine organizational integrity.

Fourth, ICA is always ready to transform itself. It is courageous and unafraid to grow and change. These, however, are never undertaken casually or in response to the trendy and fashionable. Change at ICA is governed by an unwavering commitment to its values and mission and a careful consideration of lessons learned from serious reflection upon its work.

##### ***Resources for continuing the conversation:***

- "Peter Senge and the learning organization" by Mark K. Smith, 2001; retrieved on May 5, 2015 from <http://infed.org/mobi/peter-senge-and-the-learning-organization/> (see annex).
- "Wonder And Affirmation In Discovery And Transformation: A Case Study Of The Institute Of Cultural Affairs" by Suresh Srivastva, David Cooperrider, Tojo Thachankery, and Xiaoping Tian, Case Western Reserve University Department of Organizational Behavior, November 1989 (see annex).
- "A Global Strategy for Human Development: the Work of the Institute Of Cultural Affairs" by Stuart Umpleby and Alisa Oyler in *Systems Research and Behavioral Science, Vol. 24, No. 6, 2007* (annex).
- "From Mission to Profession: A Narrative of the Institute of Cultural Affairs" by Hans Hedlund in *Ethnographic Practice And Public Aid: Methods and Meanings in Development Cooperation*, Hagberg, S., and Widmark, C. (eds), Uppsala University, 2009 (see annex).

# An Introduction to the Organizational Wisdom of ICA

## Principles, Values, and Perspectives

an orientation HANDBOOK by Terry Bergdall

### POSTSCRIPT

The preceding pages constitute an orientation HANDBOOK for potential use with new staff members, board members, volunteers, and other interested parties associated with the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) in its many manifestations around the world. It has been licensed with Creative Commons as Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 (CC BY-SA 4.0). This means everyone is free to use this document as they wish, including the making of revisions, as long as attribution is given to the original work and modifications are shared. For more information about this license, see <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>.

References were made in each of the sixteen preceding sections to various materials where interested readers may learn more about the subjects described. These consist of books, articles, unpublished papers, videos, etc. Many have been collected from online sources and made available for easy viewing, and downloading, in the "**Handbook-Annex**" folder found on the following website:

<https://www.dropbox.com/l/h88roGAcBcxlv36UE2q8gs>

The materials included in the "Handbook Annex" are not an integral part of this HANDBOOK, but are a complement to it. All materials appearing in the "Handbook Annex" are subject to the copyright conditions, if any, made with the original works.

The "Handbook Annex" is envisioned as a collection for deeper reflection. While many articles referenced directly in the HANDBOOK are included, books are not. Interested readers will find them either at libraries or through online merchants. The annex also includes other materials with the possibility of more being added later as relevant new works are discovered. Annex files are organized according to the 4x4 with an overview page for each of the four matrix columns. A file named "0a-annex-list" shows all materials in one place and serves as a table of contents for the annex. They are labeled in conjunction with the identification numbers associated with the sections of the HANDBOOK, e.g., 1a, 3c, 4b, 2d, etc.

Finally, some comments about using the HANDBOOK. Its purpose is to introduce ICA and to stimulate thought about its distinctive nature. To do this, it is designed in the manner of a spiral curriculum. At its most basic level, personal reflections and group conversations can be simply generated by a limited focus on the 4x4 chart -- what catches your attention? what strikes you as odd? where would you like an explanation or an example? what are similar features you've seen in other non-profits? what's different? what does it convey about ICA's essential characteristics? if you were to read more that follows in the HANDBOOK, where would you begin? At a second level, questions like these might be used for reflections on each of the 16 sections. The same is then true for any of the items included in the annex. Whatever the approach and however it is used, the HANDBOOK will be a success when it sparks deeper consideration about ICA's work and its future. Best wishes to all who engage themselves in the conversation.