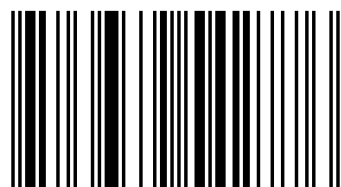


This book is about catalysing and supporting positive change. Its primary target audience is non-specialist individuals who engage with organisations as a whole, or significant parts thereof, as insider or (consultant) outsider, with a brief to improve things as they are. It will introduce you to different perspectives on 'organisations', and in particular the powerful 'Five capabilities' framework to explore key aspects of organisational effectiveness with. It also invites you to consider different reasons why there is resistance to change and offers a repertoire of change strategies to choose from. It unpacks 'power', and presents frameworks to analyse power with and promote more shared power. It highlights that change needs positive energy, and how 'appreciative inquiry', as a method but also a fundamental attitude and mindset, can be much more powerful than the tendency to fall into 'deficit thinking'. It draws your attention to the critical importance of developing your 'asking skills', that invite others to think more deeply, widely, and creatively, to rediscover the common purpose and the strengths that will drive the change to a more desirable future.

Koenraad Van Brabant has been working for 25 years in and on crisis situations, mostly violent conflicts, where humanitarian action, peace work and governance reforms are needed. Apart from his thematic expertise, he also brings competencies in collaborative ways of working, within and between organisations and in change processes.



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Koenraad Van Brabant

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The chapters in this publication were developed as resource materials for an innovative course on 'Effective Advising' in international cooperation contexts. The course was commissioned in 2013 by the Human Security Division of the Swiss Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who wanted to better prepare the members of its Swiss Expert Pool for their task, but also opened it to others working in advisory and capacity-supporting roles in other societies. The Human Security Division financially supported its development, and continues to support its annual delivery.

At the time, I was part of the International Peacebuilding Advisory Team of Interpeace, which acted as host organisation for the course. Key to the development and subsequent delivery of the course are however three independent consultants: Jan Ubels, who lives in the Netherlands and who is a leading expert on 'capacity-development'; Nora Refaeil, a member of the Swiss Expert Pool and expert on transitional justice and dealing with the past, and Louise Le Gat, who is now available as a trainer, coach and source of Positive Energy Living. Nora and Louise live in Switzerland. Each of them brought some of the elements of the next chapters to my attention, or made me realise their importance in a way that I had not understood before.

None of us were the great inventors here. As the 'sources and references' in the chapters indicate, the originality of their contents lies with many other people. Our contribution was to bring together many elements from somewhat different sources, into a context of organisational development and change support, across societies.

The perspectives, insights and tips of these chapters encouraged me to continue a personal and professional journey, to acquire those attitudes and skills that can make us a trustworthy and valuable resource person for others. I hope they can be inspiring also for you.

Introduction.

This publication is about catalysing and supporting positive change, particularly in organisations. Its primary target audience is *non-specialist* individuals who engage with organisations as a whole, or significant parts thereof, as insider our (consultant) outsider, with a brief to improve things as they are. Many of us are not part of the huge 'management consultancy' industry, which offers 'solutions' to particularly the private and public sector at a hefty price. Nor are we necessarily 'organisational development' specialists, joined up to networks such as the International Society for Organisation Development and Change or the Organisation Development Network.

The following chapters do not constitute a tightly integrated 'handbook'. While they all relate to understanding 'organisational life' and catalysing or supporting positive organisational change, they were written as separate resource notes for developing practitioners. They can be consulted independently from each other, though there are also clear resonances between them.

Chapter 1 'We Didn't Hire Your CV, We Hired You!' clarifies that 'organisations' are more than a collection of thematic-technical expertise areas, and sets out some of the different perspectives you can have on organisations. It also draws attention to the fact that 'hierarchy', with its 'command and control' style of operating, need not be the only way in which people work together effectively to a common (and commercial) purpose.

Chapter 2 'The Five Capabilities Framework' elaborates one, broad, organisational framework, that emerged out of comparative research on a wide variety different types of effective and sustained organisations (and associations or networks) around the world. It draws attention to critical organisational capacities, other than the ability to act and produce 'results'.

Chapter 3 'Change Resistance and Approaches to Deal with It' signals that 'resistance to change' is a perfectly normal phenomenon, and can be very valid. It invites us not to give in to a sense of frustration, but to actively seek to understand the reasons for 'resistance'. Only if we do so will we be able to find ways of dealing with resistance constructively. The chapter then summarises five possible tactics or strategies of change, which we now can use more consciously, rather than rely on the one that comes most natural to us and may not be the most appropriate for the situation.

Chapter 4 'Understanding and Working with Power' offers us some insights and frameworks to think and work more constructively with something as elusive and difficult as 'power'. Power dynamics can be the main obstacle to positive change, but power is also a strong and often necessary enabler.

Chapter 5 'Appreciative Inquiry' invites us to beware of the common pitfall of 'deficit thinking', focusing on the problems, the gap, what isn't working very well, the glass half empty. While critical and self-critical thinking are needed to break a status quo that is no longer serving our purpose, positive change requires positive emotions and energy. Appreciative inquiry is a 'method', but more fundamentally an 'attitude' that invites attention to and appreciation for the successes we have had and can build on, the strengths we can tap into, and the desirability of a what we can be after our change.

Chapter 6 'The Question Never Failed Us! The art of asking catalytic questions' focuses on one of the most powerful skills that we, as resource person and change catalyst, can develop: asking skills. While we can offer ideas and make suggestions, no positive change will take place and be sustained, if it doesn't come from within. By asking powerful, inspiring, questions, we can open minds and new perspectives among those we work with, and guide deeper, wider, more creative inquiry without jumping too quickly to solutions that may turn out to be only short-term. It means that we stop seeing

ourselves as the source of solutions, and also change the mindset of those who expect us to. This requires personal and professional development, to be practiced consciously ('with mindfulness') over many years.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1: *"We Didn't Hire Your CV, We Hired You!"* Approaches to organisational assessment and development. (5-11)

Chapter 2: The 5 Capabilities Framework. (12-25)

Chapter 3: Change Resistance and Approaches to Deal with It. (26-33)

Chapter 4: Understanding and Working with Power. (34-40)

Chapter 5: Appreciative Inquiry. (41-51)

Chapter 6: *"The Question Never Failed Us!"* The art of asking catalytic questions. (52-62)

CHAPTER 1: 'WE DIDN'T HIRE YOUR CV, WE HIRED YOU'.¹ Approaches to Organisational Assessment and Development.

I. ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY IS MORE THAN THE SUM OF THEMATIC-TECHNICAL EXPERTISE.

A few months ago, I was in conversation with a non-Western organisation, who had advertised for 'OD support'. In 15 days they wanted one consultant to do what sounded like 'everything', including reviewing the functioning of the governance organs, developing stronger external communications and fundraising strategies and drafting a finance manual. My suggestion that 'internal communications' might be important didn't seem to resonate. Apparently, we had different understandings of 'organisational development', how it differs or not from 'capacity-development' (CD) and what an appropriate role is for an OD adviser. This is generally the case, so let me offer here a glimpse of different lenses on and approaches to OD.

First a few clarifications:

By '*capacities*' I mean the ability of a formally or informally organised group of people to perform certain tasks with a decent level of thematic, technical and/or procedural skill. If we want to improve these '*capacities*', we can call on specific expertise such as a finance, communications, gender or public health specialist. Developing such capacities in-house certainly adds some 'organisational' strength. But it does not necessarily add up to better overall organisational performance. This can, and often is, affected by internal disconnects of a different nature.

Every 'organisation' is more than the sum of its parts, and has a certain existence and life of its own. '*Organisational development*' happens at that systemic level. An OD adviser looks at the dynamics of different interrelated elements within a holistic perspective.

The nuance can be observed, for example, with regard to 'mainstreaming'. Many 'mainstreaming' efforts struggle because they are pursued with a technical/thematic rather than an OD perspective.

II. CAPACITY AND ORGANISATIONAL ASSESSMENTS: WHY AND WHO?

Who initiates the 'capacity' or 'organisational' assessment and why, are two factors with significant influence.

In the international cooperation sector, such assessments often precede a decision whether to fund or to partner with another organisation. (Reciprocal 'assessments' are extremely rare.) We all tend to become defensive when something feels 'imposed' from outside: internally initiated and 'owned' CD or OD exercises are likely to have more traction. But internal 'assessments' are often initiated because

¹ The title quote is from Jeffrey Swartz as CEO of Timberland, adapted from "it wasn't your résumé we hired, it was you." Quoted by A. Bryant in *The Corner Office*, London, HarperPress 2011: 216

of a perception that things are 'not working so well'. If only the senior management's view of 'what is not going well' is heard, resistance from the other people is likely.

Both triggers share an underlying concern for a potential risk, or the perception there is a 'problem'. Why not undertake such assessment out of a more positive, developmental sense, to stimulate the potential to go to the next level?

There is a multitude of frameworks and approaches. Their *choice is not neutral* or simply a matter of 'technical superiority' of one over the other. Choices can be tactical, but also have a much deeper influence on where the exercise leads, as the following examples illustrate.

III. PYRAMIDAL ORGANISATIONS: ASSESSING FORM AND FUNCTION.

1. Are You Properly Dressed?

Here the assessment concentrates on whether the organisation under review has the markers that you would expect. We look at its structures, policies and procedures: Is it legally registered, does it have a governing entity that provides oversight, does it have a mission and vision statement, human resource and financial policies and detailed procedures that meet minimal standards? Do people have job descriptions, are there salary scales, independent audits of accounts, no conflicts of interest at management or Board level etc.

In essence, we examine whether the 'form' corresponds to what we expect from a 'modern' organisation, particularly if it handles public money. For those familiar with Matt Andrew's work on institutional reform in development: has the organisation successfully '*mimicked*' i.e. *imitated*, the external model? Relevant as it may be, this approach on its own largely misses the ball: organisations are like *ice-bergs*, most of it is hidden below the surface.

2. Within Those Clothes, How Healthy Are You?

Nice clothes may hide a diseased or feeble body. McKinsey research has established a strong correlation between *sustained* organisational health and superior performance. One excellent framework to assess what shape different parts of the body are in, is the BOND 'Health Check'.

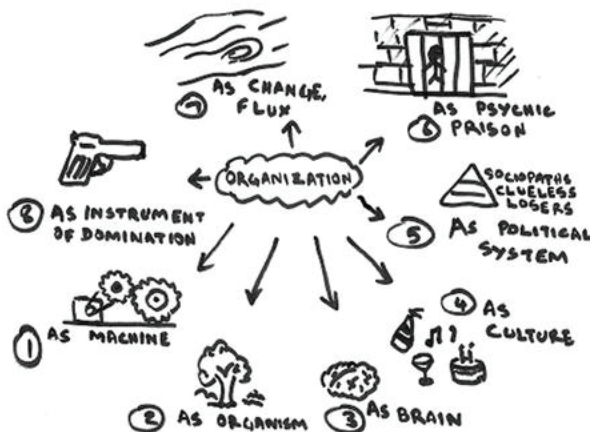
The 'Health Check' focuses on 11 'pillars' that relate to core functions: *Identity and integrity; Leadership and strategy; Partners; Beneficiaries; Programmes; People; Money; External Relations; Monitoring* (not a good head title); *Internal relations; and Influencing*. For each pillar there are several components or indicators. For each component, the participants in the exercise can choose between statements that indicate a progressive improvement, and explain their choice. For example: 'Communications' is part of the 'External Relations' function, and respondents can choose between statements that describe a spectrum, with as lowest score "*We use a few methods to communicate our work. Communications are ad hoc and there is no formal planning*" and as highest score "*We have a communications strategy that defines our target audience and key messages and channels. (...) We are coherent in how we communicate in our fundraising, public education, and advocacy work.*" Such self-assessment can be done by senior management alone. It can better include all staff, and even other stakeholders, such as volunteers, supporters, suppliers, partners, beneficiaries etc., along the lines of a 'social audit'.

This 'Health Check' is not overly focused on the 'form', but understandably contains references that suggest certain hierarchies (from CEO to intern), structures (departments, country offices), processes (strategy, planning) and policies and procedures (finance, HR).

When checking on the clothing, we are likely to look for what is wrong or missing, that would mean that the organisation cannot now be invited to the party. The health check is more balanced. But our tendency for 'deficit thinking' i.e. to focus on the gaps, the weaknesses, what is problematic, may still creep in.

IV. GOING DEEPER: IMAGES OF ORGANISATION.

In 1986 Morgan published his 'Images of Organisation'. He argues that organisations are built and experienced according to certain mental images. More often than not, these are unconscious. He identifies eight different, not necessarily exclusive, images, visualised here. Organisations can be imagined as 'machines' or as 'organisms', as something like the 'brain', or through the dominant lens of 'culture'. They can be looked at as 'political systems', as 'instruments of domination' and experienced as 'psychic prisons'. Or they can be understood as something in *constant change*.



Morgan's mental images seem to cover a spectrum. On one end, there is the organisation as an instrument of domination and therefore a political arena. This can easily result in employees being treated like cogs in a machine and 'psychic prisons': people at all levels become stuck in certain perspectives, mind-sets, patterns of interpretation, behaviours and processes, that make it near impossible to see other aspects of reality and to adapt or innovate. Towards the other end of the spectrum is the image of an organisation as an organism, a living entity, that understands its existence in a wider eco-system. This is much more self-organising, and more open to evolution and transformation.

The 'brain' image considers organisations as information processing and learning systems that, like the brain, can and have to be both 'specialised' and 'holistic'. This perspective is relevant on any point of the spectrum, just as that of organisational 'culture', the intangible ways of 'how we do things here'.

Morgan's 'images' bring to the fore important dimensions of organisational life and performance, that the previous approaches did not pick up very well. Certainly those of 'power' and 'culture' that can be

anywhere on a spectrum between 'stifling' and 'enabling'. At a deeper level perhaps the fundamental difference in an outlook (including of the OD adviser or management consultant) that sees organisations mostly in 'machine' terms, or more as a 'living organism'.

In the first view, which dates back to the industrial revolution and Taylor's 1912 '*Principles of Scientific Management*', employees, but also clients or patients, risks becoming functional cogs in a machine, largely interchangeable numbers. While an organisation that is a living organism is made up of a complex network of interacting living cells, that provide it with its life force. (A second image or mind set can come here into play: when some cells become dysfunctional and threaten the wellbeing of the organism, they can be destroyed by a more or less targeted intervention, Western-medicine style. Or we can change our life style and boost the immune system, in a more traditional Eastern medical approach.) Moreover, a machine is fairly self-contained, an organism exists in a wider eco-system.

Too abstract, less practical than the 'Health Check' for example? In a certain way yes. But it is also possible to explore where an organisation is at now, and where it wants to go, using these images. Example questions: 1. You observe that many decisions seem to be influenced by personal ambitions (Political System). How can you move to decision-making more based on information and reasoning (Brain)? What may enable that, what resistance is likely to arise from whom? 2. You feel that you are all too stuck with certain perspectives on the 'world out there' (Psychic Prison), and that your way of operating is losing effectiveness in a changing world. How can you create a culture that encourages adaptation and even innovation (Organism/Change Flux)?

V. WHEN A GLASS HALF EMPTY BECOMES A GLASS HALF FULL: APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY.

'Appreciative Inquiry' was developed as a lightly structured change strategy. As we will see in Chapter 5, it is also a mind-set. It is the opposite of deficit thinking. Rather than focusing on the gaps and what is not going well, it seeks to identify the strengths and to do *more of what works well*. Appreciative inquiry sees organisations as living organisms and believes in their adaptive and creative potential. To Morgan's attention points about organisational life, it adds another factor: energy levels and the nature of that energy.

AI invites people to focus on the positive experiences, and bring out the '*best of what is*'. It then encourages people to consider the next positive level and to envisage what that looks and feels like. Along the lines of a GROW coaching approach, it seeks to catalyse the collective energy to bring that positive future about.

There is nothing naïve about the approach. Anybody with some working experience appreciates the impact of the broader '*atmosphere*': Where there is constant focus on the negative, our energy, commitment, sense of responsibility and creativity goes down. When there is regular appreciation of the positive, our drive to do even better is stimulated.

Deficit thinking prevails in the international development sector and in many work environments. Here and there however, an 'appreciative inquiry' mind-set can be detected. For example, in the now fashionable celebration of '*resilience*' instead of '*fragility*', and in the advice to learn from '*positive deviance*' cases: in the real success stories, identify the key enabling factors that we need to take with us or create elsewhere.

VI. OUT-OF-THE-PYRAMID: PEOPLE WORKING TOGETHER FOR A PURPOSE.

Most of us have never experienced other than pyramid-shaped organisational structures. We understand their rationales that underpin a functional division of labour to maximise specialist expertise, command and control to ensure compliance and performance, and a strategically structured drive for greater efficiency and growth in a competitive market.

Most of us have also experienced the drawbacks: Silos and turf wars; internal politicking for personal advancement; a 'work space' where everybody plays a public persona and leaves most of who they are at the door; narrowly walled 'job descriptions' that you cannot grow into or grow beyond; employees that get dismissed when their unit or function is less needed rather than be enabled to change role to another part of the organisation, general frustration with the obligatory annual performance reviews, and top managers who – only in the private space with their coach- admit to their exhaustion from all the politicking and sense of emptiness because they live inauthentic lives.

Yet there is a surprising number of not-for-profit and for-profit organisations, across a range of sectors from manufacturing and services, that operate very differently. Some comprise thousands of people. Some are even publicly listed.

The foundation of this is the *collective responsibility and accountability* for the overall performance, survival and development of the organisation. These 'organisations' shape as networks of teams instead of a pyramid. Teams make commitments among each other and with other teams and hold each other accountable on an ongoing basis, not once-a-year. The fundamental functioning of individuals is framed in terms of '*roles*' rather than a '*job*'. People can shift roles, picking up something that needs to be done, or do so for a longer period if their colleagues believe they qualify for it. Leadership is distributed and not monopolised at the top. Decisions are not constantly pushed up and down through management systems that generate a lot of friction. No decision can be taken by anyone without a mandatory advisory process. Inevitable divergence of opinion is channeled into constructive rather than toxic 'conflict'. All are trained in constructive conflict resolution. If need be external coaches can be called upon.

Self-managing organisations also face internal and market place challenges: But they tap into the collective commitment, creativity and positive energy, to deal with them.

This is not some sort of hippie idealism or post-communist collectivism. Twelve fairly 'radical' such cases are well described and analysed by Laloux in his '*Reinventing Organisations*'. (You don't need to subscribe to his evolutionary perspective, to appreciate the case research). But there are many more trends and examples in the same direction. We've heard about Google company giving its employees 20% of their time to pursue their own projects (they didn't invent this). They have made the choice to create innovation space for all, rather than set up an 'innovation unit'. But Laszlo Bock's (Google's top HR person) '*Work Rules*' book (2015) reveals wider working practices that encourage collective responsibility and high degrees of self-management. Google still has 'managers', but their ability to abuse their power and make unilateral decisions is strongly controlled. Google has its own version of '*kaizen*': *continuous improvement*, for which everyone in the company can bring up ideas. And because it chooses *belief in people* rather than *distrust* as starting point, it also practices great internal transparency. Good only for geeks? Bridgewater Associates, one of the world's major hedge funds, records every meeting and makes it available to all employees.

Not convinced? Are 'hackathons' and 'crowd-thinking' not approaches to tap into the collective talent?

Not possible for really serious matters? Well, in 2012 Swiss voters in a national referendum *rejected* a proposal to increase the annual paid holiday from 4 to 6 weeks. Because they felt it might affect their economic competitiveness. In the political community of Swiss Inc., citizens have much more influence than in most other Western-style 'democracies'. Because they feel a strong sense of 'ownership' for their collective wellbeing, they handle their citizenship rights and duties generally with great responsibility. A nice example of people at all levels not choosing for their immediate self-interest (ego-system), but based on the wider consideration: how do we keep this habitat (eco-system) healthy and thriving?

Machines and organisms experience change very differently: Pyramids like to keep their shape. Change is very painful. The existing shape needs to be 'unfrozen', then a change process pushed through usually in the face of 'resistance', and the new shape then refrozen again. According to McKinsey research, less than a quarter of organisational redesign efforts succeed. By contrast, living organisms know that change is inevitable. There will be less intrinsic resistance to change.

Swift changes in the environment of course can be catastrophic for an organism. Just as machines go out-of-date or 'kaput'. But consider the potential of all members of the organisation, rather than just a few managers at the top, scanning the internal environment for ways to improve and the external environment for developments that may affect it, for opportunities for new work, new sources of income, new ways to provide value to people.

How do you work with this as an OD adviser? You go back to the source: *An organisation is a group of people that come together for a purpose*. Collectively they are more than the sum of the individual parts in terms of energy, competency, creativity etc. So what social contract can they establish with each other, that creates an enabling atmosphere for all to bring the best of themselves (not just the 'work persona') in the service of that purpose? What does that mean then in terms of how work is shared, how decisions are made, how salaries and benefits are determined and distributed, how responsibility and accountability for the quality of work is handled. And what relationship it seeks with external stakeholders?

Many of us engaged in international cooperation want to encourage healthy social and political contracts between citizens and the state authorities. We advocate for inclusion, dignity, all voices to be heard. The World Bank and others promote the learning about approaches for greater '*citizen engagement*'. Several of us have gone on leadership courses where we learned about the superior potential of '*transformational*' over '*transactional leadership*'.

Did Gandhi not advise: '*Be the change you want to see in the world!*' Surely we are able to consider 'social contract' forms for our collective work, other than largely transactional hierarchies?

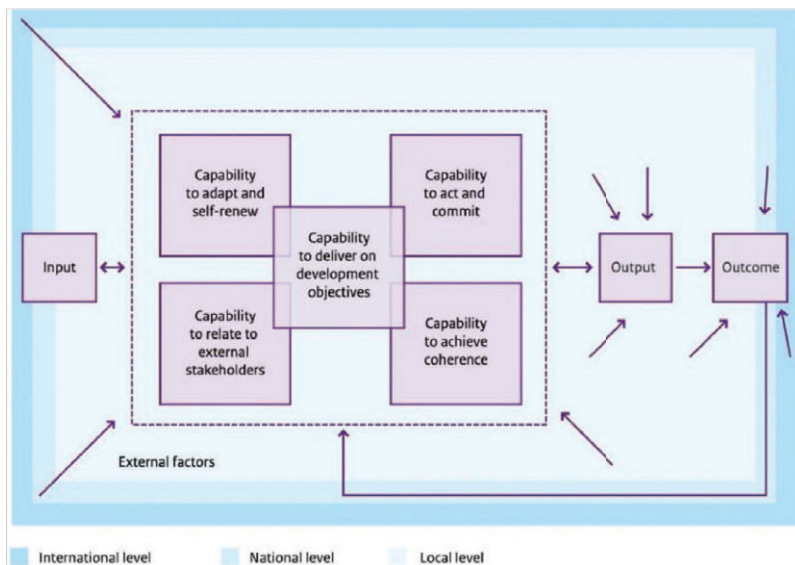
VII. A MIDDLE WAY: THE 5C FRAMEWORK.

If we recognise that purpose and people are central to organisational life and evolution, but don't want to do away too quickly with structure and procedures, the 5Cs framework can serve us well. It emerged out of a comparative study by the ECPDM of very diverse organisations in different countries (Baser & Morgan 2008) and we explore it in greater depth in the next chapter.

The research showed that sustainable organisations are fairly strong in 5 core capabilities. The capability to '*deliver on objectives*' (or to create value for others) we understand easily. The capability '*to commit and to act*' is not just a matter of material and financial resources. This also refers to the overall level of motivation, energy, confidence, will to move forward also in the face of constraints and setbacks. The '*capability to relate and attract*' considers the multitude of relations with external

stakeholders and those we seek to influence. But also to the ability to attract and retain financial support and good colleagues. The capability to *'adapt and renew'* covers re-positioning and responding to changes in the external environment, but also pro-active innovation and renewal from within. The organisational ability to learn fits here too. Finally, the capability to *'maintain internal coherence'* draws the attention to other challenges: does the organisation practice what it preaches, does geographical or functional dispersal lead to fragmentation or not, how can participation still lead to effective decision-making, what is a healthy balance between needed stability and equally needed change?

The 5Cs framework does not presume a certain form, pyramidal or other. As a flexible approach, it creates space for conversations that can focus on the weaknesses and failures as well as on the strengths and successes. It can be done with different circles of participation. It is possible to zoom in on one 'capability' as a priority area. Without losing sight of the broader system.



VIII. SO WHAT NOW?

Do you need to make a choice between these, or any of the other frameworks and approaches available? No, most OD advisers draw on several. More importantly, choose what best fits the situation and the entry point that is given: Often there will be openness to something like the BOND Health Check, or the 5Cs framework for broad, canvas-wide conversations. Deeper inquiry into the internal dynamics of power, relationship, responsibility and accountability can feel threatening. That requires trust in the OD adviser. And a strong organisational focus on 'purpose' rather than 'power' and 'position'. Use your relationship and asking skills to slowly move into these sensitive but vital aspects that really determine organisational strength.

CHAPTER 2: THE 5 CAPABILITIES FRAMEWORK.

I. UNDERSTANDING 'CAPACITY'.

1. Who's Capacities?

'Capacities' can exist at different levels: that of an individual (which we then will call '*competencies*'), a team, a unit within an organisation, an organisation as a whole. We are looking here at 'capacity' for an organisation as a whole. We will call this '*capacities within*'. But 'capacities' also exist in the collaborative interaction between different organisations or organized groups of actors. We can look for example at the 'collective capacities' in a value-chain or a sector. For example, when considering 'capacities in the agricultural sector', we may pay attention to the ability to collaborate of farmers' groups, the Ministry of Agriculture and its irrigation department and extension workers, the marketing board, the associations or networks of companies that provide agricultural inputs (seeds, tractors and spare parts...) and process and market agricultural produce, the colleges for farmer training etc. etc. This we will call '*capacities between*'. Strengthening the capacity to collaborate effectively with others, can sometimes be a stronger driver for improved performance of an organizational entity, than strengthening the capacities within.

"Capacity development comes from within: no one capacitates another without their permission, willingness or cooperation."

(Keijzer et alii 2011:21)

2. Capacities for What?

Capacity is not an end in itself – it is the ability to achieve something in a wider environment. So a second key question is 'capacities for what?' This has been defined or answered in many different ways, but we will take here two thoughtful definitions:

"Capacity is the overall ability of an organisation or system to create value for others." (Keijzer et alii 2011:13)

"Capacity is the ability of a human system to perform, sustain itself, and self-renew." (Ubels, Fowler & Acquaye-Baddoo 2010:4).

A 'system' here stands for any set of actors around which a boundaries has been drawn: that can be a unit, department or division, a Ministry, a local administration, the 'educational' or the 'security' sector (where it will have to be decided who is considered 'in' and 'out' of the system), a cooperative enterprise, a savings and credit group, a political party (or the 'youth wing' of a political party), a women's network etc.

The inclusion -or not- of 'value for others' is significant: Those who wish to include it do not consider 'capacity' as just the ability to produce or deliver or organize something, such as cheap housing or a next generation of mobile phones, blankets to displaced people or health care to a local population or training, or organize workshops etc. In this perspective, real 'capacity' is linked to whether others than yourself perceive and experience value for them, in what you do. Others point out that there are many organised entities that demonstrate significant 'capabilities', mostly to the benefit for narrow self-interest group and without concern of wider value. A criminal gang might be one such example.

In international cooperation, the dominant paradigm tends to understand 'capacity' (or lack thereof), as the ability to deliver 'results', which is seen as largely dependent on the availability of resources

and competencies and the functionality of structures and procedures. The logical response then is to provide additional financial resources, equipment and training. Yet experience shows that often this does not fundamentally increase organizational capacity.

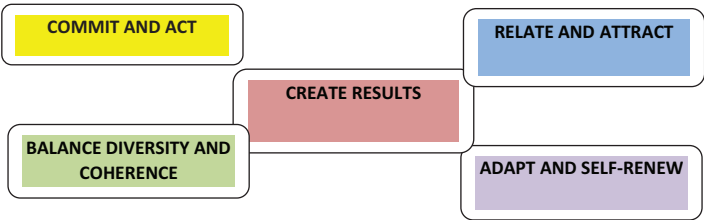
- ‘ *An exclusive performance perspective tends to shift attention away from addressing the deeper human systems dynamics that lie at the heart of capacity. By itself, the presence of resources, techniques, plans and structures are not sufficient to give the organisation or system the adaptability and resilience it needs to ensure real capacity.” (Morgan 2006:11-12).*
- ‘ *“The results perspective tends to emphasise the development of more functional, thematic or technical capabilities such as policy analysis, management information systems, research methodologies, financial management or service delivery. These represent a type of capability that is accorded particular importance by most stakeholders both in countries and in international development agencies. But less attention is given to other more generative, non-technical, less instrumental capabilities such as reflection and ‘double loop’ learning, self-organisation, bridging and linking. Without these latter capabilities, the technical core of the system cannot be sustained over the medium and longer term.” (Fowler & Ubels 2010:19)*

II. THE FIVE CAPABILITIES FRAMEWORK.

The 5C framework is one among other organizational assessment approaches.² It has been developed in the Netherlands, and has shown its usefulness in the public sector, the private sector and the not-for-profit one.

1. What is the 5C Framework?

The 5C Framework sees organizational capacity as a combination of capabilities in 5 functional areas: The capabilities to ‘commit and act’, to ‘relate and attract’, ‘balance diversity and coherence’, to ‘create results’ and ‘to adapt and self-renew’ are the five core capabilities that allow organisations to perform and sustain themselves in evolving environments. Each is necessary but none is sufficient by itself. It are strengths in each of the capabilities that add up to ‘organisational capacity’.³



² For a short overview of six such approaches see: ‘Approaches to Organisational Assessments’. No author or date.

³ We take over the word ‘capability’ here to indicate that we are talking about an important component of overall ‘organisational capacity’, but otherwise do not make much of the different terms.

Without strengths in all five capabilities, organisations risk getting stuck in a situation of “*low commitment, low capacity, low performance*” that technical approaches to CD cannot overcome. (Baser & Morgan 2008:28).⁴

2. Do Certain Capabilities Need to be Prioritised over Others?

From a real-world point of view, the ‘capability to deliver results’ is the central one. An organisation that has the capabilities to commit and engage, to relate, to achieve coherence and to adapt and self-renew, but doesn’t deliver ‘results’, has little justification for a continued existence. ‘Delivering results’ tends to be closely linked to and follow from the ‘capability to commit and act’, so in practice these are the two capabilities that usually get attended to – to the neglect of the others.

Research and evaluation however has shown that strong and sustainable organisations need strengths in all five capabilities. An organisation that is internally fragmented and not coherent will find its ability to commit and act, and hence to deliver results, weakened. Often, the ability to deliver results will critically depend on the organisation’s ability to have good relationships and collaborate with others: the ability to relate. And the ability to continue to deliver results in environments that seem to be evolving ever more rapidly, will depend heavily on the ability to adapt and renew.

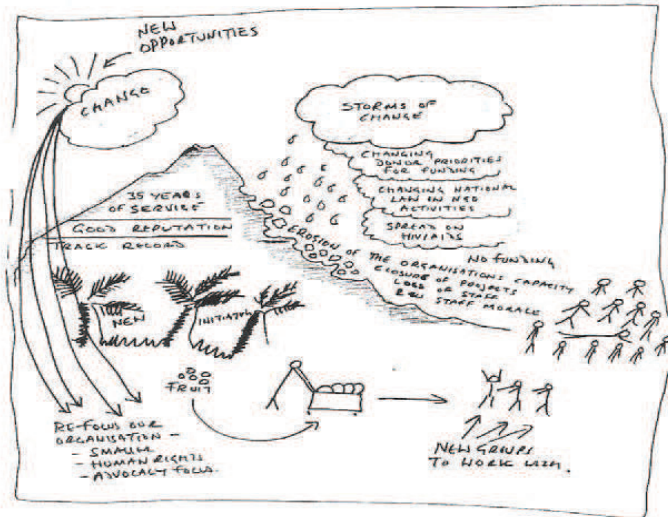
The first graph on the next page (IOB 2011:14) puts the ‘organisation’ within its wider contexts (local, national, international) and signals also clearly that we cannot simply consider ‘capacity’ in terms of what the organisation does (outputs) but need to look at the value it creates for others (outcomes). This visualisation also draws attention to the fact that the capacity of an organisation is shaped not only by internal factors but also by external influences.

Organisations exist in a context: “The lens employed to see and read and organisation in its history and context makes a big difference: in diagnosis, in negotiation and selection of remedies, in accountability for and commitment to change. Identifying adequate action requires a robust and inclusive understanding of a situation.” (Keijzer et alii 2011:7).

Today, tomorrow, yesterday: A systematic assessment of the capabilities of the organisation today can establish a ‘baseline’. This can later serve as the reference to see if something has changed, what and how? But it is often also very informative to also trace back the past ‘story’ and history of the organisation, what it has been and what has brought it to where it is today. This may reveal a gradual development of capacities that happened implicitly, intuitively rather than planned and without clear objectives. The story of the organisation should be complemented with the story of the evolving

⁴ The 5C framework emerged out of a five-year research study by the European Centre for Development Policy Management, commissioned by the Governance and Capacity Development Network of the OECD. It covered diverse entities such as churches in Papua New Guinea, a tax office in Rwanda and nation-wide networks in Brazil. The results were published in 2008 (Baser and Morgan). It has been extensively taken up particularly though not only in the Netherlands, for example by a network of Dutch NGOs who used it as the framework for a multi-year learning programme to assess and strengthen the capacity of their partners – and the partnership. (Hardin & Staal 2012; Christie et alii 2012; Brand et alii 2012). The Evaluation Unit of the Dutch MoFA also conducted a major evaluation with 26 case studies to validate the framework (IOB 2011). But it has been used more widely, more recently for example for a rapid assessment of Syrian NGOs based in southern Turkey.

context relevant to the organisation, as external factors can play a major role. The following graph shows the narrative picture of an imaginary organisation.



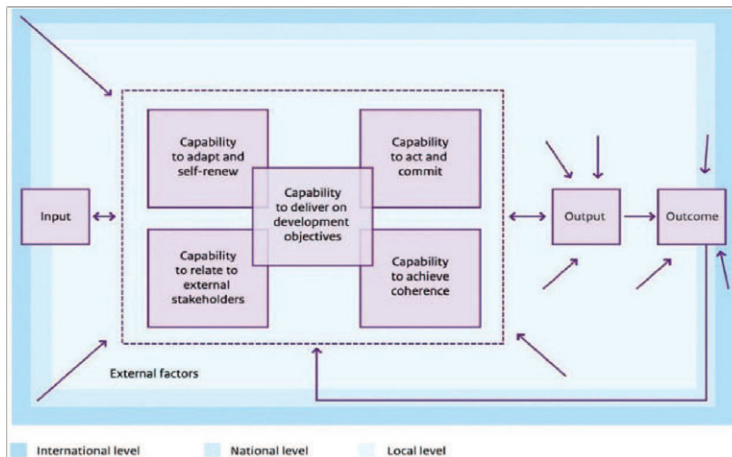
3. How do We Understand the Various Capabilities?

Even within the Dutch environment where the 5Cs framework has been extensively used, there is variation in how the respective capabilities are more concretely understood. Many of these variations relate to the relative emphasis given to the harder and more visible sides of organisations (procedures, decision-making processes etc.), and the softer and less visible but no less important aspects of it (motivation, positive energy and ambition, pride in quality and excellence of performance etc.) Others differ simply because they put certain concrete elements in a different functional capability e.g. 'financing' can be put under 'capability to create results', but also under 'capability to relate' (attract funding). And financing may reappear under 'capability to adapt and renew'. This is not really a problem – the framework doesn't intend to be rigid, there are not always sharp boundaries between different 'capabilities', and certain core elements can be considered through different capability lenses.

a. *Capability to commit and to act*

This refers to the orientation of the organisation towards 'action'. That is not just a function of availability of financial and human resources, infrastructure and other material assets (offices, computers, vehicles etc.) although these are certainly important pre-conditions. But the capability to commit and to act comes very much from the overall level of motivation, energy, confidence, volition to move forward, to achieve certain objectives in the face of internal and external constraints, and disinterest, inertia and even resistance in the surrounding environment. It is the collective will to 'achieve' something meaningful. It is the life-given dynamism within the organisation that comes from

the quality of leadership and from the overall ability of the organisation to generate and maintain motivation, and the collective will to work together towards a common purpose. That translates in the quality of decision-making and the degree to which decisions are implemented. It is manifested also in the internal accountability practices. The ability to 'commit and act' is a precondition for the 'capability to deliver results', and itself partially dependent on the capability to relate, to maintain coherence and to adapt and renew.



b. Capability to create results (of value to others)

There are highly performing organisations that create results only for its members (e.g. a crime syndicate). In our line of work, the justification for the continued social existence of an organisation can only come from its ability to deliver results that have social value. It is therefore not just about actions and outputs, but about the relevance and quality of the outcomes, such as improved products or service provision, improved protection, improvements in household incomes and economic security etc., and the sustainability of such outcomes. The quality of the outcomes (and the efficiency with which they are achieved) tends to poorly evaluated and documented – the tendency is to focus on the activities and outputs. But these are not the only type of outcomes that matter. An equally relevant and important outcome is 'improved capacity', or the organisation itself and of others whom it seeks to provide value for. Once again, improved capacity is not only a matter of tangible 'resources', but also of confidence, hope, mobilization, the ability to organize and pursue a collective interest together. This will require skills such as strategic but also operational management of people, goods, movements, communications but also listening to intended beneficiaries, clients etc. and the ability to deliver according to quality standards.

c. Capability to relate and attract

Effective organisations need to relate effectively to a large diversity of other actors and stakeholders, for different purposes, such as:

- Being able to continuously attract financial resources possibly from a variety of sources;

- Being able to attract and retain motivated and skilled staff;
- Being able to protect and enlarge its operating space i.e. influence its environment for it to be and remain 'enabling' and leave the organisation enough 'autonomy' to do what it feels it needs to do and how it feels it has to do it. This relates for example to avoiding strong financial dependency on one or a few sources of income, but also working to ensure a favourable legal and political space, maintain acceptance for its presence and actions from a variety of population groups and influential actors in its operating environments etc.
- Gain and maintain credibility and legitimacy in the eyes of a diverse set of actors and stakeholders;
- Increase its influence and effectiveness through collaborative action with others;
- Maintaining connectivity with the users of its services, the customers / clients of its products etc.

This requires a constant scanning of the environment, building a wide and diverse net of relationships, effective external communications to different target audiences, a willingness and ability to collaborate with others (and not just always compete) etc.

If this capability is singled out too much, to the relative neglect of the four others, the organisation risks becoming obsessed with its own institutional self-interest and survival and starts rewarding loyalty over integrity, innovation and ambitions for greater quality.

d. Capability to adapt and renew

In an evolving environment, organisations have to adapt and renew themselves to remain relevant and sustainable. This will require a practice of pro-actively scanning the environments (plural!) that the organisation operates in and can affect it, so as to quickly detect important changes and pro-actively adapt. Some changes may be big and come abruptly: the sudden decision of an important donor not to renew funding; a major disaster that demands a complete change of programming in the operating environment; a significant deterioration of the security situation that make access much more difficult etc. This will also require imagination, aspiration, willingness to innovate and test out new approaches, rapid learning feedback, adaptive management...

This capability refers therefore to various elements:

- Is the organisation responsive to trends, pressures, shocks, opportunities?
- Does the organisation strategically reposition itself in an evolving environment?
- Does and can it adapt its programming to evolving needs, priorities, capacities of those it works with and for?
- Can it adapt its role in evolving collaborative relationships with other organisations?
- Is there managerial support and appreciation for controlled experimentation and innovation, for active learning and adaptation? Does the organisation also absorb external learning?
- Is management willing and able to adapt to new requirements and to the learning from practical experience (revise plans and budgets, revise the roles and allocation of human resources etc.)

e. Capability to maintain internal coherence

- This can cover various aspects of the organizational life:
- Is there coherence between the mission, the strategies, resources and concrete actions of the organisation?

- Is the organisation (even if large and much decentralized) still a unified whole, or rather a fragmented collection of loose pieces? In other words, can it handle diversity, geographical spread, different perspectives within etc. while also maintaining a common identity and focus?
- Can the organisation balance participatory approaches with effective decision-making?
- Can the organisation balance stability with innovation and renewal? Not changing in an evolving environment may create a high degree of 'comfort' but risks reducing the organisation's relevance and ultimate sustainability. Constantly changing (e.g. restructuring) and chasing the new will on the other hand lead to a constant feeling of instability, and risks taking the organisation into actions for which it really does not have the knowledge and experience.

III. WHAT IS THE ADDED VALUE OF THE 5C FRAMEWORK – AND WHEN NOT TO USE IT?

1. Added Value over Other Frameworks?

- It takes a broader perspective on organizational capacity and capacity-development: it does not only look at its performance in terms of its capability to produce or provide in a fairly utilitarian way, but also at other capabilities that are crucial to its sustainability and renewal;
- It has shown to make sense to both organizational leaders/managers/staff and external advisers. People can identify well with these essential capabilities for a living and successful organisation;
- It doesn't only consider the more tangible aspects of organisations (resources, procedures...) but opens up the conversation about also the less tangible aspects (e.g. motivation of staff). It doesn't just look at the more visible aspects of capacity such as infrastructure, staffing, financing and financial management, project management skills etc., but pays equal if not more attention to the more invisible life and energy sources of organisations: perceived legitimacy, motivation and commitment, trust, confidence, the quality of leadership, learning culture – but also power dynamics, identity dynamics (age, gender, other social identity markers), the role of personalities, the ability to collaborate towards a common purpose, pride in quality and achievement etc.
- It takes a holistic perspective, requires efforts at different levels and in different aspects of the organisation: 'you cannot do parts only'.
- It creates a common language with which to talk about the organisation (or other 'system' unit);
- It encourages a learning and energy-generating process, unlike more 'accountability' and 'gap-finding' processes that tend to reduce energy;
- It cannot be used as a checklist;
- It is not normative;
- It also focuses on what is going well, on positive experiences and elements to build on. (Keijzer et alii 2011:15-16/31 and overall IOB evaluation pp. 122-124) ⁵

⁵ See chapter 5 on 'Appreciative Inquiry'.

2. When Not to Use the 5C Framework.

Experience has taught that certain conditions are not favourable to the use of the 5C framework (Keijzer 2011: 22-23) e.g.

- When you are not really familiar with it, and would work with it as just another 'technical framework' or 'checklist';
- The stakeholders are not really committed and/or do not really understand the framework. It is 'just another' framework for organizational assessment, which is seen as a 'must go through' exercise but without real energy to reflect critically and to drive positive change;
- There is little interest in taking a holistic perspective on the organisation: the interest of the leadership or key stakeholders is on a particular action or project;
- The 'cost' is perceived as too high: Working with the 5C framework in an interactive manner while including many key stakeholders is time consuming, and therefore also has a cost (and opportunity cost). An external consultant report may not generate the same sense of ownership and energy, but it is likely to come quicker and cheaper; (Though it has been proved useful also in one-to-one conversations with top leadership of an organisation, for example.)
- The relationships between key actors and stakeholders within and related to the organisation are not good. This will make it problematic to involve them in a process that works best when it is inclusive and collaborative.

IV. HOW TO USE THE 5Cs FRAMEWORK?

1. For an Organisational Assessment.

The framework is an excellent basis for conversations about the current state of the organisation. This is really done in an interactive manner, involving various actors and stakeholders that are really familiar with the organisation, at least if there is enough trust to speak openly and realistically about the capabilities of the organisation today. If need be, the range of actors and stakeholders that becomes included is expanded over time: perhaps the conversation starts with the senior management, to then involve mid-level managers, then the Governing Council of the organisation and later on a larger section of staff. There are other possible pathways to broaden participation, and it will be situational judgment to determine which one is most suitable.

There are different ways of getting to a 5Cs conversation e.g.

- The 5C framework can be introduced from the outset, with or without a series of exploratory questions under each of the capabilities.
- Participants are asked to list the characteristics of a competent, performing organisation. These are then visually structured on a wall according to the 5C framework; this then generates a conversation in which the facilitator can also add additional elements if the participants do not.
- A lightly directed conversation is first initiated about the organizational strengths and challenges e.g. through questions such as:
 - ✓ What do you see as the three biggest organizational challenges for the next 3-5 years?
 - ✓ What do you see as the three most important strengths of the organisation today that you absolutely want to protect, retain and build on over the next 3-5 years?

What comes out of such initial conversation can then be located within the 5C framework, which in turn then becomes the source for deeper and broader inquiry into the situation of the organisation today.

- Consider an action that is planned, and then inquire into the capabilities that will be required to see that action through efficiently and effectively. That will then again draw the attention to particular capabilities, and can broaden out into a wider conversation about the five capability areas.(SNV guide)
- Work through a step-wise process of self-assessment:
 - ✓ A timeline is established of major events and achievements in the organisation over an agreed timeframe, and internal and external factors that influenced those achievements;
 - ✓ Participants are then asked to identify the competencies that the organisation mobilised or demonstrated to reach those achievements;
 - ✓ These competencies are then organised according to the 5C framework; the facilitator can then ask whether there are important competencies not identified so far, and/or suggest those. (Some of these points are taken from Keijzer et alii 2011:44-45)

The above follows the philosophy of appreciative inquiry. It can be complemented by inquiry into areas where ambitions have not (yet) been realised.

- ✓ What, from the perspective of the mission of the organisation, are important achievements that have not yet been realized, and why is that?

Part of this can lead to a 'scoring', by different categories of staff and/or outsiders, of the different capabilities or components therein. Such organizational assessment constitutes a diagnosis at a certain point in time, but can serve as a baseline, a reference point for later to see if something has changed, and how.

2. For planning.

In the real world, many tactics and trajectories have been and continue to be pursued to develop capacity. Some are more directed and controlled, others more exploratory and evolutionary. Some focus on gaps and weaknesses while others concentrate on strengths by connecting and activating sources of underutilized capacity. Some focus directly on developing capacity while others take a more indirect approach and try to nurture the relationships and conditions within which capacity can develop. The art is to craft an approach to change that fits the shifting circumstances. (after Morgan 2006:15)

The 5Cs framework is an approach, not a detailed planning method. In principle it allows the members of the organisation (or partnership, coalition, network, sector...) to identify what they see as priority areas for capacity-development, how and by when. As we have seen, each of the five capabilities is a broad 'headline' for a set of more and less visible elements. The 5Cs framework has also drawn the attention to the interrelatedness of the respective capabilities. Strengthening one or two with no attention to the others may not yield the desired overall improvement. The prior assessment should also have drawn attention to what are constraining and possibly enabling factors to do so, so that the first efforts may be focused on the conditions rather than directly on the capabilities.

"By applying the 5Cs framework the strategy can focus on designing capacity development that drives local solutions for priority goals." (Keijzer et alii 2011:30)

The 5Cs framework provides a holistic perspective on an organisation (or set of organised entities) within a context. In that landscape, there are many factors or variables. Those using the 5Cs framework therefore tend to be skeptical about 'grand design planning': a 'masterplan' for the development of organizational capabilities, with detailed steps to reach precise objectives by a predetermined time. The reality, and therefore the advice, is to take smaller but realistic steps in various areas, a step-by-step, incremental way of developing, with rapid learning feedback loops to enable adaptation if needed, while keeping an eye on the bigger picture.

"...there are no blueprints for capacity development and that process tends to be more complex, nuanced and unpredictable than is often assumed." (Keijzer et alii 2011:9)

"The uncertain, 'emergent' nature of capacity also implies that its development is unlikely to be a linear, well-planned, predictable process." (idem p. 7)

"Detailed predetermined strategies (with associated indicators) for capacity-development – especially if they are rigidly based on 'gap' analysis – may be at best irrelevant and at worst counterproductive." (idem p. 28)

3. For monitoring/periodic review and evaluation.

If 'capacity' is 'emergent', and the result of a convergence of many different capabilities, then it is much more informative to periodically review where the organisation is advancing and where not and why, and what can and must be learned from the experiences so far, than to simply monitor 'indicators'. The 5Cs should not be used in a reductionist manner whereby progress is only assessed in relation to indicators for the respective Cs.

In principle three types of outcomes can result from using the 5Cs framework:

- One or more of the individual capabilities are improved, as is the ability to use the various capabilities in a self-reinforcing manner;
- The enabling environment for the organisation has improved;
- The overall organizational performance, in terms of 'results' (preferably considered as value delivered for others, has improved.

V. THE CAPABILITIES TO DEVELOP CAPACITY-DEVELOPMENT.

There is a risk that the 5Cs becomes used as just another technical 'tool', in which case it will not deliver its potential value. The 5Cs framework is not a 'tool', it is an approach with a strong dialogue and process orientation. (Harding & Staal 2012:33). Working with the 5Cs framework, how to introduce it to different groups of actors in different contexts, how to make most of it for planning, review and evaluation purposes etc. requires some guided learning.

It also requires a mindset, attitude and approach that should be at the heart of any 'developmental' approach, although the dominant interpretation of 'project' thinking, with logframes and the expectation to 'deliver results' (preferably quickly and visibly) is often a powerful disincentive for it.

This fits within the wider observation that 'capacity-development' cannot continue to be treated by international partners as something that anybody can do as long as they have some solid thematic experience or expertise. And that there are good arguments to develop the field of 'capacity-development' as a proper professional discipline (Acquaye-Baddoo, Ubels & Fowler 2010: chapter 24).

"Most funding agencies have assumed that supporting capacity development required no special individual or organizational skills or dedicated internal units, as has been the case with gender, the environment or performance management. The assumption was that capacity issues were already mainstreamed, albeit informally. Yet, perversely, capacity development turns out to require expertise in areas such as political analysis, management theory and practice, and change management, which has always been in short supply in such agencies." (Baser & Morgan 2008: 117).

The text box on following page identifies some core competencies of an effective CD practitioner.

QUALITIES OF AN EFFECTIVE CD PRACTITIONER.

1. You articulate your own framework and ways of looking at capacity. You know key theories that underpin your analysis and choices and are conscious about what you are inclined to focus on and what you are not.
2. You balance thematic understanding with change expertise. You consciously hold and develop expertise on 'both sides of the coin' in order to be effective in the assignments and for the clients that you serve.
3. You develop detailed insight into the country context and the more immediate environment of the entity/ies you will be working with.
4. You have the skill of 'reading situations', and to see the uniqueness of each client or assignment. You develop a sense for discovering the pattern of existing energy and bottlenecks for change.
5. You are skilled at fostering strong interpersonal relationships and trust.
6. You have developed your skills for interaction and listening, and a clear sense of your personal qualities and pitfalls in this respect. You have mastered your own selection of dialogue techniques and methods.
7. You select between or combine different roles as appropriate to the task and the client situation. You know what roles you are good at and which less so. You can help to clarify roles and expectations and select appropriate role choices. You manage your relation with them in an accountable, transparent and ethical manner.
8. You promote the reality rather than the image of national and local broad-based ownership and control, and accept the implications.
9. You are able to deal with multiple interests, politics, conflict, inequality and value differences and your own position in these. You know and deepen your personal style in this respect and are clear about your boundaries, also to clients.
10. You are able to help clients develop connections between actors and levels. You have a repertoire of specific approaches or methods for doing so. If necessary and appropriate you also actively facilitate, mediate, catalyse or broker new connections.
11. You accept long-term evolutionary processes.
12. You search for the best fits between the type of intervention, the nature of the capacity challenge and the environment in which it exists.
13. You fine tune your interventions towards the needs, situation and dynamics of the client and other stakeholders.
14. You adopt flexible approaches to planning and experimentation, and maintain adaptability.
15. You balance and link accountability and learning aims. You are able to 'learn in action' and adjust the course of action on the basis of experiences, and exercise self-reflection
16. You encourage downward and sideways accountabilities (i.e. towards a broad range of local stakeholders and not only to national 'top' authorities, or external actors and donors);
17. You have shaped your own concepts and methods about measuring capacity development and demonstrating its results. You create clarity on this with clients and are able to hold different time frames.

This merges Baser & Morgan 2008:118 and Ubels, Fowler & Acquaye-Baddoo 2010: p. 301

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For a snapshot look at the use of the 5Cs framework in the interaction between northern and southern civil society organisations: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EbE7HBhme1Q> 8 min. 30 sec.

CHAPTER 3: CHANGE RESISTANCE AND APPROACHES TO DEAL WITH IT.

If you run into resistance, you know you have hit on something important – this is a learning moment.” (Jan Ubels).

“Watson (1969) regards resistance as: all the forces that contribute to a stable personality or social system. This defined, it is a normal and valuable reaction that probably protects us from chaos. (...) In that sense, resistance is an integral part of change processes, neither entirely good nor entirely bad.” (de Caluwé & Vermaak 2003:125)

“Resistance can be the result of an accumulation of past events, in existence long before the new change came on the scene. Sometimes resistance can also be regarded as energy that goes in a different direction. (...) Conversely, some changes are met with a great deal of energy and enthusiasm rather than with resistance and opposition: these responses can be the seeds and experimental plots for renewal. Not recognizing this kind of energy is just as undesired as failing to understand resistance...” (idem: 126).

I. WHOSE RESISTANCE?

Understanding the nature of ‘resistance’ is critical if we want to find an appropriate way of overcoming it, or accepting its validity.

The prevailing practice in international cooperation, is to point at resistance to change among the ‘national actors’, often those in the public sector, and to ascribe it to self-interest.

More critical (self) reflection is needed here:

- Resistance can exist at the level of the individual, of groups (within and outside an organisation) and at the level of an organizational entity or even a network, coalition or partnership of collaborating organisations. Yet people’s inclinations are seldom homogenous: within governments and public administrations (whether working nationally or internationally), within civil society organisations, within private sector companies, within social groups, there is almost always a diversity of views, with some more negatively oriented towards change and others recognizing that change is inevitable and perhaps even much needed. Virtually all change processes will be multi-stakeholder processes;
- Resistance is also not against ‘change’ per se, but often more driven by concern about how the change process is envisaged or managed and by whom;
- Resistance can exist for very valid and even constructive reasons: Not all change processes are credible in their motivation, their design or implementation;
- Resistance to change exists among many different actors, including among the international development partners, and also within ourselves as ‘experts’ and ‘advisers’. Focusing on resistance may blind us to the positive energies that are present, and that can be mobilised and catalysed perhaps by a type of ‘appreciate inquiry’ approach.

II. WHY RESISTANCE?

There are many possible reasons for 'resistance'. Some of the frequently mentioned ones (Schuler 2003) are:

a. The risk of change is seen as greater than the risk of standing still, of the status quo.

Making a change requires a leap of faith: you decide to move in the direction of the unknown on the promise that something will be better for you. But you have no proof. It is tempting to stay within the comfort zone of the known. People will only take active steps toward the unknown if they believe and feel that the risks of staying with the situation as it is, are greater than moving into a new direction.

b. People feel connected to other people who are identified with the 'old way'.

We become and like to remain connected to those we know, those with whom we are familiar. Asking people in an organisation to do things in a new way may be asking them to set themselves up against that often implicit 'group loyalty'. No one wants to be the first to stick their neck out for the 'new'.

c. People have no role models for the new activity.

People do not automatically follow someone because the person offers them a vision of something different. They may just see that person as an idealist, a dreamer. Seeing is believing: most people may need to see how the new works –and works out– in practice: via some 'pilot' experience or precedent elsewhere. Less rhetoric and more demonstration can go a long way towards overcoming resistance.

d. People fear they lack the competence to change.

Change in organisations necessitates changes in skills and some will feel that, as individuals, they will not be able to make the transition well. Sometimes they may be right. The organisation outlining how it will help develop its staff acquire new competencies can reduce some of that fear.

e. People feel overloaded and overwhelmed.

People may resist change just because they are tired and overwhelmed, even if the change is meant to create conditions that reduce the chronic overload. A particular version of this is of course 'change fatigue', with too many successive re-structurings and changes following each other for people to be able to adapt and consolidate. Constant change also undermines confidence that managers actually know what they are doing.

f. People have a healthy scepticism and want to be sure new ideas are sound and will turn into practice.

A change initiative may not be the first: people may have already seen many being proposed and gone nowhere. Even if the scepticism is not that deep, few worthwhile changes are conceived in their best form already at the very outset. Healthy sceptics perform an important social function: to test the change idea or process so that it can be improved along the road to becoming reality.

g. People fear hidden agendas among would-be reformers.

People mistrust the motives of the reformers, suspecting the changes are fundamentally to serve their personal or factional interests. This distrust can be greatly aggravated by poor internal communications that allow misunderstandings and rumours and will increase the suspicion that it is driven by agendas that are kept hidden.

h. People feel the proposed change threatens their notion of themselves.

A change on the job may affect someone's sense of professional identity which can be a central basis for self-esteem. As a result, people may feel that the intrinsic rewards that brought them to a particular line of work will be lost with the change. Resistance springing from identity-related roots tends to be deep and powerful.

i. People anticipate a loss of status or quality of life.

Change can create perceived winners and losers: for some it results in increased status, income and job security, others will feel they have lost and yet others that it brought them no benefit whatsoever. Some therefore will oppose change because they see it as contrary to their perceived interests. While a change process can be designed to bring some benefits to most, it will seldom be possible to do so for all.

j. People genuinely believe that the proposed change is a bad idea.

Sometimes resistance comes from a conviction that the proposed change idea is simply a bad one. As with the sceptics, this is not to be dismissed out of hand. The opponents may actually be right.

Resistance and energy are present at three levels: that of the individual, the group and the organisation as a whole. de Caluwé and Vermaak (2003:124-129), reviewing the literature, find following commonly referred to sources of resistance:

INDIVIDUAL	GROUP	ORGANISATION
Fear of the unknown Lack of trust in others Need for security Desire to maintain the status quo Cynicism, negative attitude	Poor decision-making One part of a team not knowing what the other is doing No benchmarks for quality Accepting the obvious Lack of loyalty Striving to reduce uncertainty	Collective selection perceptions Conflicting values and norms Reminiscing about the 'good old days' Strong pressures to conform Defending balances of status & power Competition over limited resources Mutual overdependence

Four factors often come up regarding organizational resistance:

- ✓ *The distribution of power:* The more power (formal or informal) is shared, the stronger the resistance is likely to be.
- ✓ *Absence of a clear need or desire for change:* There has to be a compelling vision for change. If this is absent, resistance is likely to be high. In times of high pressure or crisis people may take a step forward, but motivation will quickly ebb away when the pressure and crisis sense get less.
- ✓ *Scope and complexity of the change:* The bigger the change, the higher resistance is likely to be.
- *How emotionally charged the change issue is:* The more questions of personal/professional identity are felt to be under threat, the higher the resistance is likely to be. Perceived threats to ideology/the organizational self-image and policies, come next.

III. STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME RESISTANCE.

Resistance to change therefore is typically a mix of emotional, social and rational considerations. That makes it difficult to overcome. The general advice is to pay significant attention to the emotional and social dimensions of the resistance as they can be most powerful. Continuing to make the 'rational' argument for why the proposed change needs to be embraced, may not be the best strategy.

When it comes to advice on how to overcome resistance, we find some that is more sophisticated than other.

1. **Simpler Approaches.** (Marker, no date)

- Address personal concerns early on; people will want to know: what does this mean for me, what's in it for me?
- Link the change to other issues people care about: those may be quite self-interested such as job security, but can also more broadly relate to aspects that bring 'pride in the work' such as client or citizen satisfaction and positive feedback;
- Tap into people's desire to avoid loss: make it clear what the costs and losses of the 'status quo' are;
- Tailor information to people's expectations: people hold different views about 'change', some see it as potentially positive, others as intrinsically bad, some as something that is imposed. Your arguments for the change need to match the basic assumptions and rules of the way people see the world;
- Group your audiences homogenously: Tailor your arguments for the change to different audiences based on their fundamental attitudes and views.
- Take advantage of people's inclination to focus on the short term: Generally, people's mindset is oriented towards short-term thinking. They are not inclined to give equal weight to longer term benefits. So focus your argument on the losses 'now' of maintaining the status quo, and the short term benefits from change.
- Make the change local and concrete: Change is often triggered by a perception of threat. Convey the threat in a way that it appears local and real now, and also convey the benefits from change in terms that make it local and concrete.
- Appeal to the whole person: People have a rational and an emotional side. Presenting the argument for change in only one of those ways, is unlikely to persuade convincingly. Mix analytical information in compelling ways with messages that will also elicit an emotional response.
- Beware of overloading people: People can only attend to a limited number of things at a time. That also means there is only a 'finite pool of worry' (a term coined by Linville and Fischer in 1991). Beyond a certain point, they cannot absorb anymore and will stop caring. So emotional appeals, especially those that seek to elicit deep concern, should be used with moderation.
- Know the pros and cons of your change. Some changes bring clear and relatively quick benefits, others will cause more inconvenience and pain. Some will be easier for certain people and more difficult for others.

So as a change agent, be very conscious of the characteristics of the change proposed:

- ✓ **Simplicity:** Is your change complex or is it relatively simple to understand and do?
- ✓ **Compatible:** Is your change fairly compatible with what people are used to?

- ✓ Better- Does your change offer clear advantages over other alternatives, including the status quo?
- ✓ Adaptable: Can people adapt your change to their own circumstances or must they do it exactly the way you prescribe?
- ✓ Painful: Does your change alter social relationships in any way by changing where, how and with whom people work?
- ✓ Divisible: Can you break the change you offer into smaller parts or phases, or must it be implemented all at once?

2. **Sophisticated approaches: Distinguishing 'colours of change'.**

de Caluwé and Vermaak, Dutch experts in change management, have identified five major approaches to pursuing change (and overcoming resistance). For the sake of clarity, they have given each a colour.

Each coloured approach is shaped by basic assumptions about why and how people change or can be made to change. All of us also have an intrinsic inclination to use perhaps two, maximum three types of approaches.

The essence of each approach is summarized in the table on the next page.

IV. **A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF THE COLOURS OF CHANGE PARADIGMS AND ITS APPLICATION.**

1. **Each Colour Paradigm has An Ideal and Pitfalls.** (de Caluwé & Vermaak 2003:56-59)

Yellow colour thinking:

- Ideal: People ultimately will focus on common interests and strive towards collective goals. They will seek to achieve common ground.
- Pitfalls: A false consensus; destructive power-struggles, the abuse of power by one or more actors to have their view and interests prevail

Blue colour thinking:

- Ideal: Everything is controllable and can be achieved by rational planning.
- Pitfall: Steamroller over people and their feelings, and stimulate resistance; impatience – not granting others sufficient time to come on board.

Red colour thinking:

- Ideal: Searching for the 'optimal fit' between people and the structures and rules; between the goals of the organisation and those of the individuals. Seeks to create an atmosphere of an organisation that cares for its people.
- Pitfall: Lack of concrete outcomes from avoiding conflicts, ignoring power and/or not being sufficiently demanding with regard to the required changes; talented but maverick staff are smothered because they do not correspond to the neat competency profiles and tend to think and act also outside the box of organizational structures and rules.

Yellow approach	Blue approach	Red approach	Green approach	White approach
Sees the key challenge as related to power, influence, interests	Sees the key challenge as one of rational analysis, design and implementation to achieve the desired result	Sees the key challenge as related to motivations and incentives	Sees the key challenge as effective collective learning (and unlearning)	Sees the key challenge as a systems change through self organisation, dependent on the inner desires and strengths of individual and group stakeholders
Change approach seeks to get all influential players on board, trying to create win-win situations or powerful coalitions, and resolving outstanding differences through negotiation – the change process will be difficult to structure and plan and the eventual outcome not guaranteed; it is steered but very adaptive to power and interest dynamics	Change approach is one of rational analysis, followed by design and systematic implementation, without letting different ideas and preferences of other stakeholders interfere – the change process is highly planned and structured; it is steered in a tightly controlled manner	Change approach puts the human factor central, and uses incentives, such as appraisal and praise, rewards, career prospects, training and learning opportunities, promotions etc. – the desired outcome is quite clear but how long it will take is very dependent on how stakeholders will react; it is steered and responsive and adaptive to evolving behaviours	Change approach puts emphasis on people's learning abilities, incentives for learning and an enabling learning environment- the change process cannot be tightly structured but will be iterative and adaptive; its outcome and time frame are fairly unpredictable; it is steered with a sense of strategic direction but otherwise little control	Change approach puts continuous change as essence of reality, the direction of which is shaped by historical, psychological and environmental factors that do not add up to 'rationality' and that no one can control; it cannot be steered but change agents can say, do, and propose things that call upon people's strengths and selfconfidence, help to create meaning, remove obstacles, support initiatives etc.

Green colour thinking:

- Ideal: The learning organisation where learning is consciously and continuously applied. By learning people will find their own solutions to their problems.
- Pitfall: Ignores that not everyone is always willing or capable of learning, or even to participate in situations that lack safety; lack of outcomes through an overabundance of reflection that leads to a lack of decisiveness and action.

White colour thinking:

- Ideal: Spontaneous evolution from people taking responsibility for their own lives and learning, helped along by some 'lucky' coincidences. Doesn't see resistance, conflict or crisis as an 'obstacle' but as an intrinsic part of an always evolving reality and potentially creating opportunities.
- Pitfall: Too much belief that everything will magically take care of itself, leading to unwise acceptance of real problems; can also lead to managers abdicating responsibility; overlooking the underlying patterns that shape organizational life and its possible ill health.⁶

2. Choosing a Change Strategy.

Five considerations can be brought to bear:

- *The Intended Outcomes*: The chosen change strategy should be compatible with the intended outcome. A blue approach is not conducive to an outcome that seeks to engage more stakeholders more actively (for that a green towards white approach are more appropriate). While a white approach is not conducive to an outcome that wants to see the current telecoms infrastructure replaced by a more modern one.
- *The Present State of Affairs in the Organisation*: Most organisations have a prevailing culture that corresponds to one of the colours. A change strategy that fits well with the prevailing culture is more likely to be effective as people are familiar with it and know how to deal with it. On the other hand, the prevailing culture may be suffocating and precisely part of the problem. Then clearly another colour strategy is called for, knowing that different strategies are not easily compatible and sometimes directly contradictory.
- *The Difference between the Present and Desired Future*: A change process of incremental improvement (doing more of the same and better) tends to be best served by a colour approach that matches the dominant culture. If the change process however requires significant renewal, a qualitative change, then another colour strategy will be called for.
- *Resistance and Energy*: Understanding the nature of the resistance (see above) will help choose the most appropriate colour strategy: Where the resistance is linked to power factions, a white approach will not be effective as it will increase the fragmentation. Where emotions run high, a blue approach is not appropriate, as it will only aggravate the situation. Resistance however can also be an indicator of strong positive energy, which can benefit from a yellow, green or whitish approach.
- *Personal Style*: Change agents tend to be most comfortable with one or two styles. It is possible to learn to use a broader repertoire of styles. But it may also be the case that the key change agents (the initiator, the orchestrator or process manager) have a personal style that is different from the most appropriate change approach. If they realise this themselves, they

⁶ The 10 strategies suggested by Marker (no date) in the 'simple approaches' section, are a clear example of a 'red colour' approach to change. A 'coaching role', which in essence offers questions that help generate awareness and insight in the person/team being coached, leans towards a 'white colour' approach. The obsessive 'rational planning' that prevails in international development cooperation, is of course a clear example of 'blue colour' thinking. ⁱⁱⁱ Schuler 2003 tends to look only at the level of the individual and perhaps the group

may ask to be replaced, or they may have to be replaced, or it must be anticipated that the change process is going to run into trouble.

The combined reflections on these five factors should give some indication whether the proposed change is realistically speaking feasible. (de Caluwé & Vermaak 2003: 130-134).

3. Combining Change Approaches?

Is it possible to combine different change approaches/ colours, either consecutively or successively? The key messages here are two:

- There has to be one dominant colour or style of approach, otherwise much confusion will arise that will undermine the whole approach.
- Different colours/approaches can –possibly- be used consecutively (itself already tinted with blue thinking of ‘steps’ or ‘phases’), but only if each phase is given enough time and space to do its work. A prevailing impatience means that this seldom is the case, again increasing the risk that the whole process will lose credibility. (de Caluwé & Vermaak 2003:134-135)

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CHAPTER 4: UNDERSTANDING AND WORKING WITH POWER.

I. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO ANALYSE AND UNDERSTAND 'POWER'?

Anyone interested in 'change' has an interest in understanding 'power', because 'power' is both one of the constraining factors to change and one of its enablers. Power analysis therefore is an integral aspect of any political economy analysis; strategies and tactics for change will be influenced by how the nature and distribution of power in a given environment is understood; and 'power' is a core aspect of the confidence and energy to make the change. Understanding and working with power is central to efforts to reduce inequality, poverty and authoritarian oppression, and to promote a more 'democratic culture' and more participatory, transparent, responsive and accountable governance. It is a central attention point also in multi-stakeholder processes, where there are almost always asymmetries between stakeholders: asymmetries based on formal authority/power, wealth, social status, gender, age, knowledge about the issue, self-confidence etc.

II. UNDERSTANDING POWER.

1. Manifestations or Faces of Power: visible, invisible and hidden power.

Often, the attention remains focused on the power that is most visible, on who has the formal authority i.e. power to make decisions. But equally important are 'hidden' and 'invisible' power.

➤ *Visible power : observable decision making*

This level includes the visible and definable aspects of political power – the formal rules, structures, authorities, institutions and procedures of decision making ... Strategies that target this level are usually trying to change the 'who, how and what' of policymaking so that the policy process is more democratic and accountable, and serves the needs and rights of people and the survival of the planet.

➤ *Hidden power: setting the political agenda*

Certain powerful people and institutions maintain their influence by controlling who gets to the decision-making table and what gets on the agenda. These dynamics operate on many levels to exclude and devalue the concerns and representation of other less powerful groups ... Empowering advocacy strategies that focus on strengthening organisations and movements of the poor can build the collective power of numbers and new leadership to influence the way the political agenda is shaped and increase the visibility and legitimacy of their issues, voice and demands.

➤ *Invisible power: shaping meaning and what is acceptable*

Probably the most insidious of the three dimensions of power, invisible power shapes the psychological and ideological boundaries of participation. Significant problems and issues are not only kept from the decision-making table, but also from the minds and consciousness of the different players involved, even those directly affected by the problem. By influencing how individuals think about their place in the world, this level of power shapes people's beliefs, sense of self and acceptance of the status quo – even their own superiority or inferiority. Processes of socialisation, culture and ideology perpetuate exclusion and inequality by defining what is normal, acceptable and safe. Change strategies in this area target social and political culture as well as individual consciousness to transform

the way people perceive themselves and those around them, and how they envisage future possibilities and alternatives.

Recognising these different ‘manifestations’ of power can shape what we start looking at in our analyses, as illustrated by the next table that looks at dynamics of power, inclusion and exclusion in the context of political participation.

	MICRO POWER (power dynamics within an individual, organisation, community)	MACRO POWER (power dynamics that shape broader public spaces, national and international arenas)
VISIBLE POWER Observable decision-making	<p>What does representation look like within our communities and organisations (who is speaking for whom, what are class, gender, race, and other differences?)</p> <p>Who are the leaders and what are the opportunities for new leadership?</p> <p>What are the coalition dynamics? How are decisions made? How is conflict managed?</p>	<p>What does representation look like in formal political spaces, international financial institutions etc.</p> <p>How are public policy decisions made? (Who is included in the process and who is not?)</p> <p>How do decision-makers interact or not, with citizens / stakeholders?</p>
HIDDEN POWER Setting the agenda	<p>Within family / community / organisations / local movements, what agendas dominate?</p> <p>Are gender, class, ethnicity and other dimensions integrated into justice strategies?</p> <p>How is information gathered and use? To what extent is practical knowledge valued alongside formal ‘technical/thematic’ expertise?</p>	<p>What institutions and/or individuals have access to the decision-making process and how is this access determined?</p> <p>How do civil society groups project their agenda and get their issues on the decision-makers’ agenda? How are spaces created to negotiate with decision-makers?</p> <p>How is information produced and used?</p>
INVISIBLE POWER Shaping meaning and sense of social self	<p>How do internalized social (gender, race, class, religion etc.) roles and stereotypes play out in family, work and community?</p> <p>Do people think they are too ‘stupid’ to understand the problems that affect them?</p> <p>Do they think they have no role and no right in changing their situation and they are to blame for being poor?</p>	<p>Is there systematic discrimination / exclusion whether on the basis of gender, class, race, age, religion etc.?</p> <p>How are problems ‘sold’ to the public – as natural, inevitable? Are people made to feel they have a role in the solution?</p> <p>What is the paradigm of development/stabilization/peacebuilding that underlies decision-making?</p>

(VeneKlasen & Miller 2006:41 – with very slight adaptations)

Manifestations of power and strategies for change: Achieving positive change may mean catalysing the positive power of those stakeholders that have been largely marginalized and excluded, and have been kept or even gone silent, to give them greater influence over the decisions that affect their lives. It is easy to understand however how ‘power over’ can generate resistance and acts as an obstacle to positive change. But we must recognise that the invisible, socialized and internalized ‘power within’ can be an equally strong obstacle to positive change. Where people do not believe they have certain rights, and/or have no confidence at all in their abilities to actively engage even on issues that matter very much to them, change will be difficult.

Power Spectrum	
From...	...To
Actors and processes	Norms and beliefs
<i>(visible, power over)</i>	<i>(invisible, socialised power)</i>
<i>Emphasis</i>	
Focus on “visible” and “hidden” forms of power as forms of wilful domination, observable control and “power over”	Focus on “invisible” power reproduced through social and cultural norms, and internalised by powerful and powerless people
<i>Strategies</i>	
Action to strengthen the “power to” and “power with” of poor and marginalised people, and to build influence and participation in decision-making processes	Action to strengthen awareness, dignity and “power within”, to redefine social consensus on norms and behaviour, and to reshape conditions behind decision-making
<i>Example: Gender</i>	
Finding ways to ensure women and their issues are represented and have influence in decision-making spaces	Strengthening dignity and self-esteem of women, and challenging socially constructed biases in men’s and women’s gendered behaviour

The analysis of the different manifestations of power in a given environment therefore will inform our strategies for change. The ‘Power Matrix’ (from www.powercube.net) on the next page shows an illustration of this.⁷

⁷ Much of the analytical and creative work on ‘power’ has been brought together and catalysed by the Institute for Development Studies in the UK, where the power cube and the insights of this chapter were developed.



THE POWER MATRIX

This matrix presents how different dimensions of power interact to shape the problem and the possibility of citizen participation and action. The distinctions among the different dimensions are not neat or clean. The arrows are intended to indicate the interactive nature of these various manifestations of power.⁷

POWER OVER

MECHANISMS <i>Through which dimensions of power over operate to exclude and privilege</i>	EXAMPLES <i>Power Over</i>	RESPONSES & STRATEGIES <i>Power With, Power Within, Power To</i>	
Visible: Making & Enforcing the Rules Presidents, Prime Ministers, legislatures, courts, ministries, police, military, etc. United Nations, IMF, World Bank; World Trade Organization, Multinational corporations (Halliburton, Nike, Coca-Cola), private sector actors, chamber of commerce, businesses, etc. Instruments: Policies, laws, constitutions, budgets, regulations, conventions, agreements, implementing mechanisms, etc.	Biased laws/policies (e.g. health care policies that do not address the poor or women's reproductive needs) Decision-making structures (parliaments, courts, IFI governance, etc.) favor the elite or powerful and are closed to certain people's voices and unrepresentative Principle of 'equality' may exist in law, but parliaments and courts are not fairly representative of women and minorities International financial/trade bodies dominated by G-8 despite rising economic power of others	Lobbying & monitoring Negotiation & litigation Public education & media Policy research, proposals Shadow reports Marches & demonstrations Voting & running for office Modeling innovations Collaboration Etc.	Building collective power
Hidden: Setting the Agenda Exclusion & delegitimation: Certain groups (and their issues) excluded from decision-making by society's unwritten rules and the political control of dominant and vested interests. They & their issues made invisible by intimidation, misinformation & co-optation Examples: The oil-gas industries control on energy/environmental policies & public debate about global warming and climate change; the Catholic Church's influence on global reproductive health policy in Latin America and elsewhere, etc. Often, formal institutions with visible power, also exercise hidden power	Leaders are labeled trouble-makers or unrepresentative Issues related to the environment are deemed elitist, impractical; feminism blamed for male violence/breaking families/sex industry. Domestic violence, childcare are seen as private, individual issues not worthy of public action; peasant land rights/labor rights are 'special' interests and not economically viable Media does not consider these groups' issues to be mainstream or newsworthy	Organizing communities and active constituencies around common concerns, and mobilizing to demonstrate clout through numbers and direct action Strengthening organizations, coalitions, movements, and accountable leaders Participatory research and dissemination of information/ ideas/images that validate and legitimize the issues of excluded groups Use alternative media outlets/internet/radio to name and shame - exposing the true agendas and actors dominating public debate, agendas and policy	Confronting, engaging, negotiating
Invisible: Shaping Meaning, Values & What's 'Normal' Socialization & control of information: Cultural norms, values, practices, ideologies and customs shape people's understanding of their needs, rights, roles, possibilities and actions in ways that prevent effective action for change, reinforces privilege-inferiority, blames the victim and "manufactures consent". Dominant ideologies include neoliberalism, consumerism and corporate capitalism, patriarchy-sexism, racism, etc. Key information is kept secret to prevent action and safeguard those in power and their interests	Socialization/oppression 1) Belief systems such as patriarchy and racism cause people to internalize feelings of powerlessness, shame, anger, hostility, apathy, distrust, lack of worthiness etc. especially for women, racial-ethnic minorities, immigrants, working class, poor, youth, gay-lesbian groups, etc. 2) Dominant ideologies, stereotypes in "popular" culture, education and media reinforce bias combined with lack of information/ knowledge that inhibits ability to question, resist and participate in change Examples: Women blame themselves for domestic abuse; Poor farmers for their poverty despite unequal access to global markets or decent prices or wages Crucial information is misrepresented, concealed or inaccessible (e.g. WMDs & Iraq).	Popular education, empowerment, new knowledge, values and critical thinking tied to organizing, leadership and consciousness for building confidence, collaboration, political awareness and a sense of rights/responsibilities/citizenship which includes such strategies as: sharing stories, speaking out and connecting with others, affirming resistance, analyzing power and values, linking concrete problems to rights, etc. Doing action research, investigations and dissemination of concealed information and also using alternative media, etc.	Building individual and collective power

TRANSFORMING POWER

2. The Natures of Power: power over – power to, power with and power within.

Just as there is a tendency to concentrate on the visible manifestations of power, there is also a prevailing tendency to see 'power' in negative terms i.e. the ability to control others (power over). In that perspective power has to be a zero-sum game: one actor gaining more power can only be at the expense of another actor losing some of it.

But 'power' also has to be understood in 'positive' terms: it is the ability of an actor to do something 'power to'. That ability can be enhanced through collaborative efforts which create a power or ability greater than the sum of its separate members: 'power with'. But acting rather than being passive, also requires a level of self-esteem, of internal confidence: 'power within'.

The 'Power Matrix' approach on the previous page remains essentially based on the 'power over' premise, and seeks to change the 'balance of power'.

But positive change may also be achieved by showing powerful actors that power does not have to be a 'zero-sum game', and that they can achieve more (and yes, also benefit personally) by pursuing 'power with'. This can apply to internal organizational development and change management, where a more inclusive approach (power with) can generate broader support for change which avoids the broad-based resistance that a top-down approach may trigger. This can also apply to policy making and policy implementation with regard to the many increasingly complex issues that governments face: collaborative approaches (power with) open up the space for many more sources of ideas and possible solutions, can generate greater drive and energy to implement, and invite a sense of co-ownership but also shared responsibility, that reduces the temptations to turn to the 'blame-game', when efforts to do advance as quickly as announced or do not deliver all of the expected benefits.

3. Power Resides at Multiple Levels.

Power in its different forms does not only reside at the level of 'national politics'. It plays out at the local and at the regional / global level (and given the increasing interconnectedness of the world, we need to acknowledge the growing reality of the 'glocal'). But it also plays out within the family and, as we have seen through our recognition of the importance of 'power within', within each individual.

4. Power is Contextual.

Bear in mind that an actor can be powerful in certain contexts (spheres of social interaction) yet fairly powerless in other contexts. The tribal elder can be very influential in her community, but fairly powerless in the face of the international agro-business that is exploiting some of the communities' natural resources. A political actor can be very influential within his ethnic or religious constituency, but powerless in other ethnic or religious groups. A youth activist can be very influential within his peer group, but lose all confidence when confronted with establishment lawyers etc. Therefore a power-analysis, and change strategies that are sensitive to and work with power, need to be attentive to the contextual aspects of power. This also implies that a power analysis in environment X is not simply transferable to environment Y. What is interesting to monitor and evaluate however is how power (in its manifestations and natures and in the spaces in which it is exercised...) changes over time within the same environment – and whether your advice or intervention has made a meaningful contribution to this?

III. ANALYSING AND WORKING WITH SPACES IN WHICH POWER IS EXERCISED.

Spaces for participation are not neutral, but are themselves shaped by power relations, which both surround and enter them. When examining the spaces for participation you can ask how they were created, and with whose interests and what terms of engagement. A useful distinction has been made in this regard between closed, invited and claimed/created spaces. These are not rigid categories – in the real world a constant dynamic interaction is taking place, that influences what spaces exist for which issue, who creates and controls them and who can enter them. A key issue is indeed who creates and controls them, as those who do have more power within a given space (but given that power is contextual, they may not have the same power in another space!).

➤ *Closed Spaces.*

Many decision-making spaces are closed. That is, decisions are made by a set of actors behind closed doors, without any pretence of broadening the boundaries for inclusion. Within the state, another way of conceiving these spaces is as ‘provided’ spaces in the sense that elites (be they bureaucrats, experts or elected representatives –with their ‘advisors’) make decisions and provide services to ‘the people’, without the need for broader consultation or involvement. Many civil society efforts focus on opening up such spaces through greater public involvement, transparency or accountability.

➤ *Invited spaces.*

As efforts are made to widen participation, to move from closed spaces to more ‘open’ ones, new spaces are created which may be referred to as ‘invited’ spaces, i.e. ‘those into which people (as users, citizens or beneficiaries) are invited to participate by various kinds of authorities, be they government, supranational agencies or non-governmental organisations’. Such participation may remain ‘by invitation’, or can become ‘by right’, where it is mandated or legislated. Invited spaces may be regularised, that is they are institutionalized and ongoing, or more transient, through one-off forms of consultation. Increasingly with the rise of approaches to participatory governance, these spaces are seen at every level, from local government, to national policy and even in global policy forums.

➤ *Claimed/created spaces.*

Finally, there are the spaces which are claimed by less powerful actors from or against the power holders, or created more autonomously by them. Some authors have referred to these spaces as ‘organic’ spaces which emerge ‘out of sets of common concerns or identifications’ and ‘may come into being as a result of popular mobilisation, such as around identity or issue based concerns, or may consist of spaces in which like-minded people join together in common pursuits’. Others talk of these spaces as ‘third spaces’ where social actors reject hegemonic space and create spaces for themselves. These spaces range from ones created by social movements and community associations, to those simply involving natural places where people gather to debate, discuss and resist, outside of the institutionalised policy arenas.

We must remember that these spaces exist in dynamic relationship to one another, and are constantly opening and closing through struggles for legitimacy and resistance, co-optation and transformation. Closed spaces may seek to restore legitimacy by creating invited spaces; similarly, invited spaces may be created from the other direction, as more autonomous people’s movements attempt to use their own fora for engagement with the state. Similarly, power gained in one space, through new skills, capacity and experiences, can be used to enter and affect other spaces. From this perspective, the

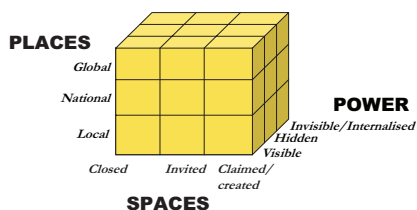
transformative potential of spaces for participatory governance must always be assessed in relationship to the other spaces which surround them. Creation of new institutional designs of participatory governance, in the absence of other participatory spaces which serve to provide and sustain countervailing power, might simply be captured by the already empowered elite.

The interrelationships of the spaces also create challenges for civil society strategies of engagement. To challenge 'closed' spaces, civil society organisations may serve the role of advocates, arguing for greater transparency, more democratic structures, or greater forms of public accountability. As new 'invited' spaces emerge, civil society organisations may need other strategies of how to negotiate and collaborate 'at the table', which may require shifting from more confrontational advocacy methods. At the same time, research shows that 'invited spaces' must be held open by ongoing demands of social movements, and that more autonomous spaces of participation are important for new demands to develop and to grow. Spanning these spaces – each of which involves different skills, strategies and resources – is a challenge. In reality, civil society organisations must have the 'staying power' (Pearce and Vela) to move in and out of them over time, or the capacity to build effective horizontal alliances that link strategies across the various spaces for change.

IV. IN SUMMARY: THE POWER CUBE.

The various dimensions of power – and their dynamic interactions- have been visually captured in the 'power cube'. The power cube is a framework for analysing the spaces, places and forms of power and their interrelationship. Though visually presented as a cube, it is important to think about each side of the cube as a dimension or set of relationships, not as a fixed or static set of categories. Like a Rubik's cube, the blocks within the cube can be rotated – any of the blocks or sides may be used as the first point of analysis, but each dimension is linked to the other.

The "Power Cube" framework



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This hand out draws extensively – and sometimes literally- on various resources, notably:

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CHAPTER 5: APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

“My personal consulting style has undergone a radical transformation in the past six years as I have struggled to adopt an appreciative stance in my work. Now I pay attention to what is working well, the qualities of leadership or group process that I want to see more of, and try to amplify them when I see them. This is in direct contrast to my training where I learned to see what was missing and point that out. In the past I focused on understanding the failures and pathologies of leadership and organization. I thought that awareness was the first step in development and so I felt it was my job as an organizational development consultant to make people aware of just how bad things really were. Now I am focusing on helping people become aware of how good things are, on the genius in themselves and others, on the knowledge and abilities they already have, on examples of the future in the present. From this stance, I am finding that chance happens more easily, people don’t get as bogged down in uncertainty or despair and energy runs more freely.” (Bushe 1995).

I. WHAT IS APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY ?⁸

1. Appreciative Inquiry Sees An ‘Organisation’ as ‘Organic’ rather than a ‘Machine’.

Through ‘Appreciative inquiry’ Cooperrider, with others like Peter Senge (‘the learning organisation’), rejects what has been the dominant image (Morgan 1985) of organisations in Western societies since Frederick Taylor’s 1912 “Principles of Scientific Management” i.e. the organization as ‘machine’.⁹ The ‘organisation-as-machine’ sees workers as functional pieces in the whole controlled by management. Scientific management methods then, by solving problems through rational logic, can increase efficiency and hence productivity of the machine. People in the organizational machine are not supposed to think but only to implement what they are being told and to adapt to new functions that management may decide to give them in a process of ‘re-engineering’ the organization.

Appreciative inquiry on the other hand sees organisations more as ‘organisms’ and focuses on its life-giving forces. It believes in the power of imagination to produce change, and the role of positive emotional energy and not just rational ‘logic’. All practitioners see organisations as ‘social constructs’

⁸ The first formal articulation of ‘appreciative inquiry’ (AI) can be found in the 1985 Ph.D. dissertation of David Cooperrider: “Appreciative Inquiry: Towards a methodology for understanding and enhancing organizational innovation.” Cooperrider subsequently published a seminal article with Srivastva in 1987. As a social approach, ‘appreciative inquiry’ connects to what Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann called “The Social Construction of Reality” (1966). This basically holds that human realities—such as organisations—are social constructs that are generated, reproduced and changed by the interactions between people. It also has roots in the work of Kurt Lewin, the father of social psychology and early developer, in the 1940s, of ‘action-research’. Action research challenges the notion that it is desirable and even possible to analyse human phenomena in an abstract, analytical, disconnected manner, to produce allegedly ‘objective’ ‘findings’. Action research deliberately presents itself as a form of interactive inquiry that induces change in what is being inquired into. Participatory action research (PAR) takes this a step further and encourages and enables those whose experience is under consideration, actively inquire into it themselves in a voyage of discovery. Appreciative Inquiry also connects directly with ‘positive psychology’, a term first coined by Martin Seligman in 1998 to stress that psychology should be concerned also with what is working well, what is right with people, and not just with what is not working well.

⁹ See Chapter 1

that are produced and reproduced not so much through rules and procedures but through conversations.

As one AI practitioner puts it: *"I want to suggest three things that can form the basis of using AI as a change strategy:*

- ❖ *Organizations have an inner dialogue made up of the things people say to each other in small confidential groups that are undiscussible in official forums of organizational business.*
- ❖ *This inner dialogue is a powerful stabilizing force in social systems that accounts for the failure to follow through on rationally arrived at decisions. It is here where people's real thoughts and feelings about what is discussed in official forums are revealed and communicated.*
- ❖ *This inner dialogue is mainly carried through the stories people tell themselves and each other to justify their interpretation of events and decisions.*

The change theory is: If you change the stories you change the inner dialogue. Nothing the "rational mind" decides it wants will actually happen if the "inner dialogue" is resistant to it.

When people talk in the hallways and over coffee it is often stories of past events that they use to justify the interpretations and judgements of current events. These stories get passed on and embellished with time and their historical veracity is irrelevant to the impact they have on how people make sense of organizational events. From this point of view AI can change an organization if it changes the stories that circulate in the organization's inner dialogue." (Bushe 2005)

2. Appreciative Inquiry is an Approach for Positive Change.¹⁰

Appreciative inquiry is an approach for longer term change, particularly in situations where the future state is unclear.

It is used to tap into the sources for positive change and development that are present in people, teams and collectives such as 'organisations'. It is therefore not the AI practitioner or inquirer who determines where the change should lead – change will come from within through a process of collective conversation and mobilization. This at the same time 'develops' a capacity for self-renewal.

"Appreciative process theorises that you can create change by paying attention to what you want more of rather than paying attention to problems." (Bushe 2005)

¹⁰ Appreciative inquiry is being used in a wide variety of contexts, ranging from major private sector corporations like Nokia or BP Castrol Marine, to marginalized communities, NGO partnerships, District East in Amsterdam. A few other examples of the diversity and complexity of institutions that have successfully engaged in Appreciative Inquiry include: the United Nations Global Compact Summit (2004), chaired by the UN Secretary-General Kofi Anan, which brought together almost 500 leaders of corporate and government sectors to draft a Global Compact to address development challenges to assist the developing countries and the poor in them; GTE (now Verison), which brought all levels of the organisation together to plot a major culture change as the way forward for the company, and adopted a storytelling narrative model of cultural change; the Women's Empowerment Project in Nepal, which confirmed a remarkable 4-fold increase in the number of women with micro enterprises and an 8-fold increase in their gross sales following an AI-based empowerment, literacy, savings, and village banking curriculum among 125,000 women in 6,500 economic groups.

Its essence is one of interactive inquiry, hence the need to develop the skill of asking powerful questions that resonate deeply, mobilise energy and catalyse fresh thinking of those engaged in the conversation.

“Appreciative inquiry recognizes that inquiry and change are not truly separate moments, but are simultaneous.” (Ludema et alii: 15)

Appreciative inquiry meets a need for connection among people in organisations, communities, groups, teams etc.

“...the most critical part of appreciative process required for it to work is a change in the consciousness of the change agent.” (Bushe 2005)

3. Appreciative Inquiry is an Alternative to Deficit Thinking.

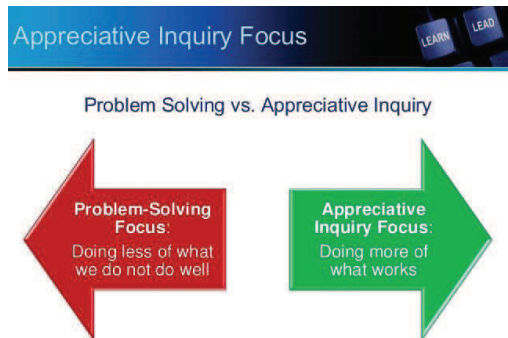
The predominant modes of viewing, thinking and acting when it comes to capacity-development and change, is to focus on ‘deficits’: needs, weaknesses, mistakes, errors, dysfunctionalities, poor performance, gaps etc.

AI deliberately positions itself as a radical alternative to this.

Appreciate Inquiry holds that:

By constantly paying attention to the ‘problems’, we may amplify them. If reliance on ‘needs’ or ‘problems’ is an entry to get resources, then this creates an incentive to make the problems bigger than they are and worse than in the past. It tends to ignore or even weaken the connections and relationships among those concerned, and looks to ‘outsiders’ to find solutions.

AI by contrast deliberately pays much attention to ‘strengths’, in order to amplify those. It encourages people to commit themselves and the resources to have available to bring about significant positive change. It is relationship driven, and focuses on the ‘insiders’ to find solutions



Does this mean that Appreciative Inquiry conflicts with a ‘change approach’ referred to as ‘problem-driven iterative adaptation’ (PDIA)?¹¹ Not necessarily.

Like ‘problem-driven iterative adaptation’, appreciative inquiry starts out with the identification on an area that is seen as very relevant by the key stakeholders and that can benefit from positive change. Like PDIA, Appreciative Inquiry stays away from the ‘grand design’ master plans, and consciously

¹¹ See M. Andrews 2013: The Limits of Institutional Reform in Development. Changing rules for realistic solutions. New York, Cambridge Univ. Press

allows a more organic evolution. While not so explicitly acknowledged in the AI handbooks and case studies, AI can also handle situations of setback and trial-and-error, if it sustains the positive energy and commitment of the key stakeholders and their believe in their own competencies. Appreciative Inquiry can add a very positive tone and flavour to a PDIA change process.

Its choice for a fundamental reorientation to the ‘strengths’ rather than the ‘weaknesses’ is also illustrated by the recent work on ‘resilience’ after a decade of emphasis on ‘fragility’.

Audit Approach	AI Approach
Problem Paradigm: fix flaws.	Strength Paradigm: amplify strengths.
Internal insights are discounted as “outside experts” fix the problems.	Tap into the accumulated wisdom of employees who are closest to the issues.
Input is contained to only top management. Majority support for change peters out.	All stakeholders co-create outcomes resulting in an engaged, purposeful work force.
Patch-work solutions based on the past lose sight of the larger system, missing potential future problems.	A systemic approach allows organizations to converge on optimal operating models.

II. APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY AS AN ATTITUDE.

Appreciative inquiry can be practiced already without mastery of its ‘methodology’. Its basic principle is simply to inquiry into and value the positive in the past and the present, and to encourage the key stakeholders that one is interacting with, to discover the energy and commitments in themselves to drive positive change. AI as an attitude starts with asking different questions.

Here two examples of basic appreciative question sets, one that has been used in interactions with ‘communities’, the other in interactions with members of an ‘organisation’.

Appreciative Questions: Example 1 – community conversations.

- ❖ As people of this region, what are we most proud of?
- ❖ What are our most valued traditions?
- ❖ What do I value most about my community?
- ❖ When in our community’s history did we experience a high point?
- ❖ What image of our community do we want to promote?
- ❖ What do I want my community to pass on to future generations?
- ❖ What practices serve me best in my farming?
- ❖ Why have we been so successful in formal education and schooling?
- ❖ Etc.

Appreciative Questions: Example 2 – conversations with members of an organization. ¹²

¹² No author, 2008: Exercise #1. Presented at the ALA Annual Conference. Draws on: The Promise of Appreciative Inquiry in Library Organizations by Maureen Sullivan in Library Trends 53 (1) Summer 2004, page 224.

- ❖ Identify a time in your experience with your organization when you felt most effective and engaged. Describe this. How did you feel? What made this situation possible?
- ❖ What is your value to the organization? In what ways do you contribute your best? What are your strengths?
- ❖ What do you appreciate most about your unit as an organization? In what ways does it excel?
- ❖ What are the three or four most important aspirations for the future of this department? What are the key components for its vision?
- ❖ What are some sources of pride for you in your work?
- ❖ Describe a leader who has influenced you. What did that person do? How did that person interact with you? Describe some specific instances in which you experienced this influence.
- ❖ Think of a time when you felt especially creative. Describe what you were doing, what you were thinking, and what you were feeling.
- ❖ Tell me about a peak experience in your professional work. What was it about your situation, organization, colleagues, or yourself that enabled this to occur?

Now, compose a few of your own questions!

BEYOND DEFICIT THINKING: AI WITH A NETWORK OF INTERNATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS.

“The Global Relief and Development Organization (GRDO) is a non-governmental organization (NGO) based in the United States and Canada that works with about 120 partner organizations around the world. When we first began to work with GRDO, they came to us with the following story. “We have,” they said, “a system of building and measuring organizational capacity that is the envy of virtually every Northern NGO that has seen it. The system allows us to evaluate the organizational capacity of our partner organizations every six months according to five key criteria: their governance, managerial, technical, financial, and networking capabilities. We then use this information to design interventions – like training, consulting, systems improvements, finding new sources of funding, etc. – to strengthen their capacity. We also use the data to rate them and make informed decisions about how much we want to invest in them, both in terms of human and financial capital. In many ways, it’s a perfect system....And yet, many of our partner organizations and even our own staff do not like it. They consider it to be an imposition, and they find it tedious, irrelevant, and in some cases, demeaning. We want to do a worldwide appreciative inquiry to find out what’s wrong with the system and fix it!”

It is important to point out that GRDO and its partners were entrapped in many embedded layers of deficit vocabularies (two of which we will mention here) that restricted their ability to accomplish their dreams. At the level of organizational architecture, GRDO’s system for measuring organizational capacity was designed from a deficit perspective. It established a uniform global standard for a “healthy” organization and then evaluated partner organizations to discover the areas in which they were weak. Thus, the system itself created a context in which deficit vocabularies and negative blaming attributions dominated.

GRDO and its partners were also entwined in a more complex and pervasive discourse of deficit that had to do with paternalism and dependency between the Northern and Southern worlds. GRDO harbored the implicit belief that its organizational knowledge was superior to that of its Southern partners because it was from the more advanced North. GRDO was also a source of funding for its partner organizations and therefore felt it had to be in a policing or monitoring role when it came to money. Thus, it was virtually impossible for GRDO to see itself in the role of an equal partner and learner in the capacity building process. It simply did not have the vocabulary to describe itself *in that way*.“ (Ludema et alii no date:4)

Through the appreciative inquiry process we have begun to realize that of all the crucial characteristics of organizational capacity building, none is more important than the need for mutual partnership between organizations. Organizational capacity is essentially an interorganizational activity, a condition that occurs when organizations enter into mutually edifying relationships with one another to carry out their respective missions in the world more effectively. This kind of transformative growth and development flourishes most fully in relationships between equals. (Ludema et alii no date:9)

III. APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY AS A METHOD.

Methodologically, appreciative inquiry starts with 'Defining'. Then it proceeds as a 4 step approach: Discovery, Dreaming, Designing and Destiny. These are referred to as the '4Ds' though of course if you include 'defining', you have '5Ds'.

- a. *Defining*: The focus of the inquiry is specified, but not too narrowly. A future outcome statement is formulated, but with sufficient broadness to allow many issues to emerge on the pathway to it. In other words, Appreciative Inquiry – contrary to so-called 'rational management' – deliberately does not seek to set SMART objectives. The outcome is positively phrased in a way that suggests positive benefits for all stakeholders. The outcome is also phrased in a way that gets people excited and talking.
- b. *Discovery*: Now we set about discovering 'the strengths', the 'best of what is' in the organization/team/community/sector etc. This will largely be done through quality interviews which are conducted individually. Key themes from the interviews can then be mapped, in a collective exercise, and from those can emerge key factors that have sustained the organization in the past. But AI 'interviewing' does not operate according to a (semi-structured) interview protocol. In essence it seeks to get people to tell stories – their stories. People often are at their best when they can tell stories. This then comes together as a 'rationalising' and 'anonymising' analytical report, but as a collection of richly woven short stories, written in the first person. (Bushe 2005) Interviewing to get the positives –AI style- is a skill to be developed and requires preparation.



- c. *Visioning/Dreaming*: Here the inquiry explores the positive future members wish for their team/community/organization etc., and the positive future for themselves therein. This is not dissimilar from 'visioning' exercises, but with the difference that the vision is closely connected to and grounded in the positive elements from the past. It creates optimism and energy. The dreaming or visioning can be done with different groups, after which the respective visions/dreams have to be brought together. It can be helpful to 'visualise' the vision or dream map(s). The vision or dream becomes the object of conversation, that turn towards specific details.
- d. *Designing*: Now stakeholders focus on what it will take to bring the vision/dream alive. The focus remains at the fairly high level, to produce a high level 'plan' or 'pathway'. But this is not for the 'top leadership': the diversity of stakeholders remains engaged and contributes to the broad design thinking. The various design steps can be clustered and mapped, and put next to the vision/dream map. The design phase concludes with the articulation of statements about what is going to happen. These are phrased as 'Provocative Propositions' i.e. in terms as if the situation is already obtained e.g. "we are registering (and thereby providing a legal

identity) all newborns within a week of birth”, and not “we aim to register all newborns with a week of birth”.

- e. *Destiny*: This is the start of the actual progress forward. More detailed actions are planned: “What specific actions or changes to processes will bring the ideas to life?”, and they are planned to create an organizational stretch though not an organizational stress or strain. Action groups are formed to take more detailed plans forward.

There is no fixed duration for the whole process, the context will determine the time it will take. (Chapter 4 in Lewis et alii 2008). As always, moments of periodic – collective- review are to be planned in, to take stock of how things are progressing. Again an appreciative inquiry tone will pay particular attention in the review to what is going well, and what strengths there are to overcome the inevitable challenges that will arise or to make the necessary adaptations. Once again, the art of asking powerful questions is being called upon in each of the steps or phases of AI.

The two following text boxes show examples of what sort of questions you might ask at each of the different steps. The first one again looks at a ‘community’ context, the second one at a public institution within a broader environment. The latter example concerns a university, but can you can replace this with the local ‘population register’, the local ‘tax office’, the local police or health or educational service, the local branch of the ‘Ministry of Natural Resources’.

AI Questions for Community Engagement and Leadership.

Discovery:

- A. What do you love most about this community? What first drew you here and what has most encouraged you to stay?
 - B. What do you consider some of the most significant trends, events, and developments shaping the future of this community?
 - C. What has inspired you to get engaged as a civic leader? What do you most hope you can contribute?
 - D. As an engaged citizen, there are inevitably high points and low points, successes and frustrations. What stands out for you as a high point when you were part of an outstanding community effort here?
- + Please describe what happened and who was involved.
 - + What difference were you able to make working together?
 - + Which of your strengths and talents were called upon?
 - + What contributed most to the success of the effort?
 - + What did you learn about community change?

Dream:

Imagine a time in the future when people look to our community as an exceptional example of a thriving, attractive community where citizens of all ages engage as leaders and see themselves as owners of the community's future.

- In this exciting future, how are citizens engaged in community life?
- What is true of community leaders? What is sustaining their dedication?
- What kinds of systems and structures are most encouraging citizen engagement?
- What are you most proud of having helped the community accomplish?

Design:

- A. What are the areas where you feel more citizen engagement could have the most impact on improving the quality of public life in our community?
- B. As you reflect on successful ways citizens are currently engaged in improving the community, what initiatives stand out as being exceptionally promising in expanding local citizen leadership and why?

Destiny:

- A. What small changes could we make right now that would really encourage more families to get engaged with improving our community?
- B. How would you personally like to be involved in expanding citizen leadership here?

(designed by Bliss Browne, Imagine Chicago)

AI QUESTIONS FOR BUILDING UNIVERSITY CAPACITY.

Discovery:

- What has been a high point of your involvement with North Park university?
- Why was it a high point?
- What do you especially value
 - a. About this university as a learning community?
 - b. About this university as a community capacity building institution?
 - c. About yourself as a contributor to this community?
 - d. About Chicago as a context for learning?
- What do you consider the core factor that makes for excellence in education here?

Dream:

Imagine that by 2020 North Park has established its reputation as a premier community development program in this region.

- What has contributed most to making that distinction possible?
- How is it making a difference to the future of this city to have a premier community development program at the university?
- What bold decisions were made and by whom that set this leadership direction?

Design:

- What do you feel are the most promising areas in which to expand the collaboration between the university and the community?
- Who might be interested partners in enhancing the university's community development excellence and why do you think they would be interested?
- What do you consider the best reason the university should invest in building community development capacity? To whom is this case most productively made?
- What communication structures would need to be put in place to draw attention to this investment?

Destiny:

- Who will provide leadership to this effort?
- What specific ways would you like to contribute to realizing this dream?
- What's the first thing that's needed to make it happen?

(designed by Bliss Browne, Imagine Chicago – Bliss Browne in 1991 was a corporate banker, Episcopal priest in an African-American parish, mother of three and active on many civic boards, when she started a more systematic approach to revitalising Chicago, drawing on AI)

IV. RESISTANCE TO APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY AND RESPONSIBLE USE.

AI practitioners have of course encountered resistance to AI, at least when used as a 'methodology' for change. Sources of resistance can be the requirement for members of the organization to be involved as whole persons, or the fear of managers of a process that they can't control.

"My own experience as an OD consultant is that it is very difficult to get a group of people who work together to talk about things they might hope for but have never seen. This is especially true in business organizations which tend to have a culture that values "hard headedness" and devalues "fanciful thinking". It is scary to verbalize those basic human desires for community, love, fealty, making a contribution in an organization where that is not the norm. To talk about "how things could be" when no one has ever actually seen them that way is to open oneself up to ridicule and embarrassment. Indeed, if there is a lot of repressed yearning in the system, anyone who names what is yearned for is sure to be ridiculed and shamed as a defence against

experiencing that yearning. About the best one can expect is that people will talk about things they have experienced elsewhere, or read about, since they can defend themselves against ridicule by pointing to places where those noble aspirations and intentions are being lived. "(Bushe 2005)

"Appreciative Inquiry is essentially a conversation-based change-strategy that involves all key stakeholders in an inclusive manner. As a method for organizational development, not all top managers are going to be open to it – nor for that matter all stakeholders. Opening up conversations without clear set controls over their boundaries can feel as a threat. AI conversations also engage the whole person – not always welcomed in environments with a culture that emphasis 'professional distance' and 'emotional detachment'. AI as a 'style' of change management also requires an 'appreciative leadership' style – again not something that all holders of senior positions feel comfortable with." (Lewis et alii 2008:75-78)

There is also a question of 'timing': The midst of a crisis might not be the best time to pursue an appreciative inquiry approach, at least not without recognizing the need of people to also express their grief, frustration, anger etc. at the crisis situation:

"Having people think on what they are already doing, what they already have, and can build on to address the problem is a new domain, and the pre-formulated answers are rare to come. It therefore takes a little more time to focus the discussion, and steer it away from the default tendency to make this about a description of the problems. In Liberia in particular, conducting these discussions against the backdrop of Ebola, the team found it difficult to steer the discussion towards assets and strengths, because people just wanted to talk out the pain, the anger, the confusion, and in fact, in many instances, more people attended the focus group discussions than was planned, because upon hearing that there was a discussion, they showed up, some for the refreshments, but others just because they felt they had something to say.

Therefore, whilst on the one hand, going in with the "strengths" approach can be strategic as a means of overcoming some of the traps in a country plagued by focus group discussions, it may also deter and even anger people by being insensitive to their need to air grievances, especially when the discussions are held in proximity to a crisis." (Anupah Makoond, manager of the Interpeace action-research project on 'resilience'.

Appreciative inquiry like so many other approaches, can and has been misused, leading to deep disappointments. It is inappropriate and misleading to call anything that looks at 'the positives' a form of 'appreciative inquiry'. There have been consultants and advisers who misrepresented as appreciative inquiry, for example, their request for members of an organization to rate on a on a given scale how good they think the organization is. Others have promoted enthusiasm and energy where there was no ground for it, and which turned into frustration at the next challenge. (Bushe 2005). 'Do no Harm' is a key responsibility of advisers.

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CHAPTER 6: "THE QUESTION NEVER FAILED US!" THE ART OF ASKING CATALYTIC QUESTIONS.

Asking powerful, compelling questions that matter is a central skill of an adviser, mentor or coach, or of a thought leader, seeking to catalyse in others the energies to develop competencies and capacities and to move towards a stronger future.

CATALYTIC QUESTIONS ENCOURAGE FURTHER
THOUGHT, DEEPER REFLECTION, SHARPER
INSIGHT, INNOVATION AND ACTION.

"Questions have impact even before they are answered. They can close a door or turn on a light. They can intensify conflict or deepen mutual understanding." (Laura Chasin 2011)

"Sometimes the most important thing to do is to help the people themselves shape the questions in the most powerful way, since they know their own situation the best of anyone." (Vogt et alii 2003:4)

"Sometimes as leaders it's important not to collectively work on what the answer is but to work on what the question is." (idem p. 8).

"Reflexive questions allow the system to talk to itself about itself in new ways and so become more aware of its capacity to behave differently and to be different, to co-evolve to new forms of organizing. Such questions, and the responses and sense-making they provoke, serve to open space for the system to see new possibilities and to evolve more freely of its own accord. In this way change is evolutionary, growing from inside the system, rather than imposed from outside the system." (Lewis et alii 2011:69)

I. WHY DO WE ASK QUESTIONS ?

We ask questions for different purposes: to express an interest in another person; to explore the personality of another person or the circumstances in which another person found or finds her/himself; to bring more people into a conversation; to obtain information; to test someone's knowledge; to obtain clarification; to learn about and orient ourselves into a new environment; to catalyse certain changes in the environment; to maintain control of a conversation – but also to encourage further thought, deeper reflection, insight, innovation and action. The latter type of questions are 'catalytic' questions.

ASKING BUILDS RESOURCEFULNESS Five reasons to ask instead of tell.

- *All the information is with your interlocutor(s).*

For many aspects of the situation you find yourself in, your interlocutor(s) is/are the resident experts. They may also know what has been tried in the past and what worked and didn't work.

- *Asking creates buy in.*

The key to change may not be 'knowing what to do' but 'being motivated to do it'. People are more motivated to carry out their own ideas and solutions. Even if their solution seems less optimal than ours, it often has a much higher chance of being implemented. "Asking creates buy-in, and buy-in gets results."

- *Asking empowers.*

People often ask for advice why they already know what to do. But they may not have the confidence to actually go and do it. "Self confidence is a huge factor in change." When you ask people for their views and ideas, you send an affirmative message of belief in their abilities to contribute and to effect change.

- *Asking develops leadership capacity.*

Leadership is the ability to take responsibility. Asking 'what could you do about this?' moves people away from relying on your answers to take leadership in the situation. "Asking builds the responsibility muscle, and that develops leaders."

- *Asking creates authenticity.*

Taking the time to ask significant questions (and listen to the answers) communicates that we really want to know and learn at a deep level. An asking approach is a good way to build rapport and trust. (Stoltzfus 2008:9)

- *Asking evolves thinking.*

Skillful questioning facilitates new awareness, insights and perspectives. Often we get stuck in our own 'construct' of reality. We are limited by our current way of thinking. Our past experiences and beliefs about life, ourselves, others and the world determine our level of creativity. A narrow self or world view limits our ability to envision new possibilities and generate new solutions. By asking questions we can free our perception and allow new dimensions of thinking. (Louise Le Gat)

II. TYPES OF QUESTIONS WE CAN ASK.

'Open' and 'closed' questions: We all know the difference between 'open' and 'closed' questions. Closed questions lead to a brief answer, either 'yes' or 'no' or a specific piece of information ("In what year was this unit created?") or a choice among options provided with the question (as in a multiple-choice question). Open questions (there are degrees of openness and closed-ness) leave room for longer answers that can go in unexpected directions.

A particular type of closed question is the "solution-oriented" question. SOQs are pieces of advice with a question mark attached. We want to give the answer but remember that we are actually advising or mentoring, and so offer our solution in the form of a question e.g. *'Shouldn't you postpone the hiring of new staff given that you don't have the budget?'*

There is a tendency to look negatively upon 'closed' questions. That is not necessary: they fulfil essential functions such as testing knowledge, preferences etc. They can also provide new information and confirm our existing information. They can therefore also contribute to 'shared understanding', also an important element that can allow us to move together.

Single and compounded questions: 'Compounded questions' are inquiring phrases that actually have multiple questions in them e.g. *"How satisfied are you with your pay and your job conditions?"*, or *"Suppose you would get a devolved budget every year and the possibility to directly keep 20% of your locally raised taxes, would you then feel that decentralization is feasible, or what other conditions would you see as necessary for it to be able to work?"* That makes them difficult to understand (even more so if people do not all communicate in their native language), and is very likely to reduce their catalytic potential. Stick to 'single' questions – they allow the respondent to focus, and move step by step.

'Leading' or 'loaded' questions: These are questions that appear 'open' but point towards a certain answer, often because they contain an assumption or a judgment on the part of the one asking the question. Often the asker is not aware of implicit assumptions or judgmental/evaluating undertones. *"How are you coping with the restructuring?"* is an open question but seems to suggest that the restructuring is problematic and that staff may be struggling with adapting to it. *"What are the top three problems here that need to be fixed?"* seems a more open question, but is still loaded with a focus on 'problems' that are presumed to stand in the way of more effective performance. *"What in the current situation do you feel needs to be preserved and what needs to be changed?"* is already a more 'balanced' way of inquiring.

Problem-focused and appreciative questions: Problem questions focus on what is not working, on the 'gaps'. They may be required but do not create energy for change. Appreciative questions focus the attention on positive experiences, on things that go (fairly) well, that can be built on or generate energy for improvement. You would, for example not ask:

'Can you think of a time when your unit was working well...?' as this is a fairly closed question: it leaves doubt whether such time ever existed, and can easily generate a 'no' answer.

But you might ask:

'Think of a time when your unit worked well. What did it feel like, what were the factors that made that possible?'

When a team is experiencing strong disagreement on the verge of conflict, you may invite them to consider the positive side of 'disagreement', perhaps by asking:

'Tell me about an experience of strong disagreement in the team, that resulted in a better outcome.'

Another type of positive, energising question might be:

"At this point, what do you feel most passionately about, have the most energy to do something about?"

Cause-effect and systems-perspective questions: We are very used to cause-effect thinking and this may be reflected in our questions: 'What is the problem here? What/who caused it? Why did they do that? This linear type of thinking has underpinned much 'planning' as the 'problem-tree' is turned around into the 'solutions tree'. A systems-perspective however sees the relationships between different contributing factors as more complex and, given the inclination of systems (physical but also human situations) to want to preserve the 'status quo' very resistant the change efforts that focus on one or two contributing factors alone. Systems-perspective questions therefore inquire more into broader patterns (of the past) and invite attention and imagination about new patterns (in the future). A similar inquiry from a systems-perspective generates a different type of question e.g.

"What was the last time this problem didn't exist for your department? What was different then to now?"

"What would people observe about your unit's way of working and performance if this problem were resolved? What would be different for you working in the unit?"

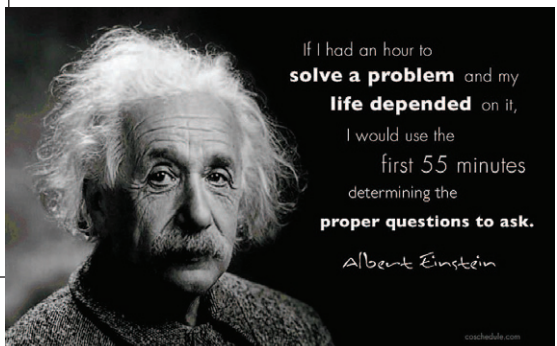
'Recall' and 'inquiry' questions: Recall questions invite attention to the past, and call upon the respondent's memory. 'Inquiry' questions invite the respondent/conversation partner to think deeper and more creatively while looking towards the future. "What were the criteria for recruitment into this department over the past five years and how were applicants assessed?" is a recall question. "What competencies will our department need in the next five years and how can we assess them in individual applicants?" is a forward-looking inquiry question.

III. WHAT IS A POWERFUL, CATALYTIC QUESTION?

A powerful question:

- generates curiosity in the listener
- stimulates reflective conversation
- is thought-provoking
- surfaces underlying assumptions
- invites creativity and new possibilities
- generates energy and forward movement
- channels attention and focuses inquiry
- stays with participants
- touches a deep meaning
- evokes more questions

Vogt et alii 2003:4



Here are some questions you might ask yourself as you begin to explore the art and architecture of powerful questions.

- *Is this question relevant to the real life and real work of the people who will be exploring it?*
- *Is this a genuine question—a question to which I/we really don't know the answer?*
- *What “work” do I want this question to do? That is, what kind of conversation, meanings, and feelings do I imagine this question will evoke in those who will be exploring it?*
- *Is this question likely to invite fresh thinking/ feeling? Is it familiar enough to be recognizable and relevant—and different enough to call forward a new response?*
- *What assumptions or beliefs are embedded in the way this question is constructed?*
- *Is this question likely to generate hope, imagination, engagement, creative action, and new possibilities or is it likely to increase a focus on past problems and obstacles?*
- *Does this question leave room for new and different questions to be raised as the initial question is explored?*

Adapted from Sally Ann Roth Public Conversations Project c.1998 in Vogt et alii 2003:7

IV. THE ARCHITECTURE OF POWERFUL QUESTIONS.

There are three dimensions to powerful questions: construction, scope and assumptions.

- ❖ **Construction** - The construction of a question can make a critical difference in either opening our minds or narrowing the possibilities we consider.

Review the following key question construction words on a continuum from less powerful questions to more powerful questions:



Now consider the construction of the following questions:

- *Are the poor in our community getting the services they need?*
- *What is it about our community that supports healthy relationships for all of its citizens?*
- *How can we prevent youth violence from occurring here in the first place?*
- *Why is it that so many families in that area of town experience violence?*
- *What if we got it right? (Creating a community that supports non-violence and healthy relationships.)*

As you move from simple yes/no questions to why to what if, the question stimulates more reflective thinking and more creative responses.

- ❖ **Scope** - The scope of a question must match the need we are addressing or the discovery that we're trying to make.

Note the impact of scope below:

- a. *How can we best share information as a team?*
- b. *How can we best share information as a coalition?*
- c. *How can we best share information with our community?*

The questions above progressively broaden in scope. Sometimes questions are interesting, but are outside the scope of our capacity (e.g., *How can we change the social norms in our society that support male superiority and gender violence?*).

- ❖ **Assumptions** - Almost all questions, explicit or implicit, have some degree of assumptions built into them.

Review and discuss the assumptions imbedded in the following pairs of questions:

- + *How can we create a bilingual education system in this mixed population region of our country?*
- + *What is best way to educate English and non-English speaking students alike?*
- + *What did we do wrong, and who is responsible?*
- + *What can we learn from what has happened, and what are the possibilities now?*
- + *How can we address the lack of cooperation between collaborative partners?*
- + *What are all the possibilities for collaboration between our agencies?*

Which questions assume a solution? Which assume error or blame, leading to narrow discussions or defensiveness? Which stimulate reflection, creativity, and/or collaboration among those involved?

Examine each question for any unconscious beliefs it may introduce:

- + What assumptions or beliefs are we introducing with this question?
- + How would we approach this issue if we had an entirely different belief system?

QUESTIONS TO DISCOVER DIFFERENT WAYS OF MAKING DECISIONS.

Most of us use at best a few styles of decision-making. Asking catalytic questions can help someone to discover other styles of decision-making. Running a major decision through different strategies can be very revealing.

1. Rational: *What are the pros and cons of pursuing each option? Which is most advantageous?*
2. Intuitive: *What is your gut saying? What feels right to you?*
3. Relational: *How will this course of action affect the people around you? Who will benefit, who will be hurt?*
4. Principled: *How do the key principles and values you live by apply here?*
5. Decisive: *What approach would lead you most quickly to a decision here?*
6. Adaptive: *What decisions could be left open to allow for new information or options? What things must be decided now that cannot be put off for later?*
7. Counsel: *What do your advisers, close friends or family...think?*
8. Team: *What do your team members think? What would happen if you decided as a team?*
9. Spiritual: *What decision would best align with your faith? What is God saying to you on this?*
10. Negative drives: *What fears or inner drives are influencing your response? How could you remove those things from the equation so you can make a better decision?*
11. Cost: *What would it cost in terms of time and resources to do this? What would it cost you if you don't do this? What's the cost if you don't decide and let circumstances overtake you?*
12. Risk/Reward: *What is the payoff for each option? The risk? Can you live with the worst-case outcome? What steps could minimize the risk if you took this path?*

From Stoltzfus 2008:70

V. LINES OF INQUIRY.

A series of successive questions can add up to a fairly conscious 'line of inquiry'. Be conscious about the direction of your line of inquiry, and the timing for it: Do you pursue the inquiry 'sideways', towards the solution and how to overcome the obstacles to it; do you pursue the inquiry 'downwards', exploring what lies deeper underneath the issues being discussed so far, and when feels the right moment to go in what direction? (In an ongoing conversation, there doesn't have to be a 'final choice'. You may first go sideways and then in a next conversation discover the need and opportunity to go 'downwards', to possibly repeat that in a third conversation before going 'sideways' again in the next one – but now with a much richer understanding of the various layers and dimensions to the issue at hand.)

Southern (2015:274) helpfully differentiates between five types of inquiry, each with their own primary purpose and type of questions:

<i>Type of Inquiry</i>	<i>Purpose</i>	<i>Sample Questions</i>
Informative	Surface information and generate common ground	What is the need for change? What do you hope to create? What images or metaphors describe the current state and the desired future state?
Affirmative	Identify the 'best of what is' and what is possible	What makes us distinctive? What image or metaphor describes us when we are working at our best? How do our individual differences support success in our collaborative efforts?
Critical	Support a systemic understanding of the current reality and the need for change	What is happening around us that indicates a need for change? What patterns of behaviour do we see that contribute to that need? What are some key aspects that you believe cannot be changed?
Generative	Support creative thinking and new approaches to how we organise	What are our greatest opportunities and how can we realise them? What new image or metaphor can we create that will help us realise our opportunities? What new conversations can we start today to generate excitement and engagement?
Strategic	Define a path forward and how to take action	How do we move toward our desired future? What scenarios do we need to consider? How do we create the conditions that will support the change?

While there seems to be a logical sequence from one to the next type of inquiry, like nothing else, it should not be followed mechanically: the skill is to sense what fits a situation best.

VI. TRUST THE PROCESS.

Do not always break your head trying to find the right question. *“Trust the process to help the person, not the greatness of your insight.”* (Stoltzfus 2008:13) When you are momentarily lost for what to ask next, you can simply ask your interlocutor to continue and expand: ‘You mentioned (repeat person’s key words)’ – can you elaborate on that / tell me more about that?’ It is important to literally repeat your interlocutor’s words and not to paraphrase or ‘improve’ their expression. Asking people to elaborate can shift the story from a ‘rehearsed’ account oriented towards people think you want to hear, to a more authentic and richer account.

VII. SOME IMPORTANT ATTENTION POINTS.

- The nature of an answer does *not* only depend on the type and shape of the question! It also depends on who is asking and in what context!
- People understand words in different ways, especially among non-native speakers or when working through translators. If you have to work with a translator, work extensively beforehand on the meaning – and appropriateness- of the questions you would like to ask.

- What are good questions to ask, are not necessarily the same at the beginning of a relationship, compared to when a certain trust has been established;
- What may be a powerful question to ask in private, is not necessarily so appreciated when asked in public;
- The willingness to receive 'more personal' questions, will vary according to overall culture, particular organizational cultures, the formal social relationship between the asker and the person being asked (age, gender, social prestige, wealth....), and the nature of the individual;
- While 'why' is a powerful question, it can also be a threatening question: it inquires into motivations, which can be sensitive. You might provoke a defensive reaction in which your interlocutor tries to justify something rather than join you into the inquiry. When the conversation gets personal, it might be better to replace 'why' with 'what': 'What led to that decision?' rather than 'Why did you make that decision?', 'What are the potential risks and potential benefits of broader consultation on this?' instead of 'Why do you hesitate to consult on this?' The focus remains the same but the phrasing is less personalised.

VIII. WHAT STANDS IN THE WAY OF ASKING CATALYTIC QUESTIONS?

- Our habit of being focused on problems and fixing problems (quickly) rather than fostering breakthrough thinking.
- Our belief that real work is primarily about detailed analysis, quick decisions and decisive actions, and our difficulty of acknowledging that real 'knowledge work' and 'strategic' and 'innovative' thinking and leadership consist of asking profound questions and hosting wide-ranging strategic conversations on issues of great significance.
- The belief that 'managers' or 'leaders' need to have or be seen to have the 'answers' so they are uncomfortable with 'not knowing' and can't see themselves as 'leaders of inquiry'.

"We tend to be focused on "the right answer" rather than discovering the right question." (Vogt et alii 2003:2)

"As the change process proceeds, the interviewer is likely to be concerned to move to a more influencing orientation; he or she wants to influence the system to change. (This intent can become expressed) as a desire to impose particular strategies or solutions upon the organisation, usually by asking leading, loaded or confrontational questions, e.g. 'Why don't you...?' or 'What would happen if you were to...?', as the consultant attempts to get their own sense-making and so their own solutions adopted by the organisation. This has a constraining effect on the system: its inventiveness is constrained to considering the options inherent in the question. At the same time this mode of intervention has an oppositional effect on the consultant as they try to oppose the logic of the organisation and impose an alternative. Frequently these attempts at influencing a system don't work, and sadly it is not uncommon to then hear the consultants, in their frustration, blaming their stubborn clients, who either reject outright or more often politely accept and then ignore, their considered advice." (Lewis et alii 2011:68-69)

ANNEX – SOME EXAMPLES OF POWERFUL QUESTIONS.

QUESTIONS FOR FOCUSING ATTENTION

- *What question, if answered, could make the most difference to the future of (your situation)?*
- *What's important to you about (your situation) and why do you care?*
- *What draws you/us to this inquiry?*
- *What's our intention here? What's the deeper purpose (the big "why") that is really worthy of our best effort?*
- *What opportunities can you see in (your situation)?*
- *What do we know so far/still need to learn about (your situation)?*
- *What are the dilemmas/opportunities in (your situation)?*
- *What assumptions do we need to test or challenge here in thinking about (your situation)?*
- *What would someone who had a very different set of beliefs than we do say about (your situation)?*

QUESTIONS FOR CONNECTING IDEAS AND FINDING DEEPER INSIGHT

- *What's taking shape? What are you hearing underneath the variety of opinions being expressed? What's in the center of the table?*
- *What's emerging here for you? What new connections are you making?*
- *What had real meaning for you from what you've heard? What surprised you? What challenged you?*
- *What's missing from this picture so far? What is it we're not seeing? What do we need more clarity about?*
- *What's been your/our major learning, insight, or discovery so far?*
- *What's the next level of thinking we need to do?*
- *If there was one thing that hasn't yet been said in order to reach a deeper level of understanding/clarity, what would that be?*

QUESTIONS THAT CREATE FORWARD MOVEMENT

- *What would it take to create change on this issue?*
- *What could happen that would enable you/us to feel fully engaged and energized about (your situation)?*
- *What's possible here and who cares? (rather than "What's wrong here and who's responsible?")*
- *What needs our immediate attention going forward?*
- *If our success was completely guaranteed, what bold steps might we choose?*
- *How can we support each other in taking the next steps? What unique contribution can we each make?*
- *What challenges might come our way and how might we meet them?*
- *What conversation, if begun today, could ripple out in a way that created new possibilities for the future of (your situation)?*
- *What seed might we plant together today that could make the most difference to the future of (your situation)?*

(Vogt et alii 2003:12)

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