

Multi-stakeholder engagement for Sustainable Development – Synergies between Appreciative inquiry and the Natural Step Framework, by Cuginotti, Augusto

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ABSTRACT

Multi-Stakeholder Engagement for Sustainable Development – Synergies Between Appreciative Inquiry and the Natural Step Framework

This study explores the complementarities of Appreciative Inquiry, a method to promote change in complex systems, and the Natural Step Framework, a robust and science-based support for decision-making towards sustainable development.

Appreciative Inquiry is a strength-focused approach that enables multistakeholder engagement through a process of continuous participation an collective inquiry and co-construction. Different than traditional problem-solving techniques, Appreciative Inquiry builds on community assets rather than liabilities and invites for the exploration of what is possible and what gives life to a system. The Natural Step Framework is a science-based, robust and systemic definition of sustainability that have been used by companies and communities alike to support systematic planning and decision-making. Based on a process of backcasting – working backwards from a defined vision of success – the Natural Step Framework guides decision-making by applying four scientific principles of sustainability derived from 20+ years of scientific work. The study starts by exploring the reasons behind the hypothesis that a multi-stakeholder engagement is vital for the development of sustainable practices in any system, giving examples of actions in communities and companies. It is developed a practitioner’s perspective in a merged methodology by applying the Appreciative Inquiry’s 5D model (Define, Discovery, Dream, Design, Delivery) in two phases: Phase 1 looks at the three first D’s by working on a definition of the system, inquiry into their assets, and a collective definition of success by stakeholders. Phase 2 relates Design and Delivery phases with using the Natural Step Framework to define the stepping stones that are both in the right direction according to design and complies with sustainability principles. The conclusion highlights the complementarities and advantages of using Appreciative Inquiry and the Natural Step Framework together for engaging stakeholders for sustainable development.