

Reviewer-1

The topic is interesting and a well-written paper on this topic would be useful in solving the problems of rural communities. Nevertheless, this paper still needs much work in order to be influential.

The authors should decide if they want to focus on presenting the usability of a particular method (appreciative enquiries – AI) or on the research results. In the former case it would be necessary to describe the most popular methods used in similar cases, their strengths and weaknesses, and compare with strengths and weaknesses of this particular method. In the latter case it would be more important to present clearly the research problem with its background, and change the main focus in the introduction accordingly.

Sometimes the text is somehow blurred and some of the sentences are not logical consequences of the preceding text. It would be worthwhile to add some short comments or words as „consequently”, „thus”, „nevertheless”, etc.

If the authors decide to use phrase „sustainable coalitions” in the title, this term should be well-defined and referred to in the text.

More detailed comments can be found below.

Introduction:

- Page 4 paragraph 1: please, indicate when you write about rural areas in general, rural areas in developed countries, and rural areas in the USA, because the experiences and problems may differ according to the specific country and its level of development.

Methods: Appreciative Inquiries in Communities:

- First paragraphs contain very similar information to the last paragraphs. Please, write remarks on one topic in one place and try not to repeat them later (conclusions are an exception) .
- Page 5: The method called appreciative inquiry should be introduced first (after not more than 1-3 introductory sentences), and only later its strengths and weaknesses should be discussed. Written as it is, the comments are given in the first paragraph of this section, before the reader has a chance to understand what the AI is and how it is carried out.
- Page 7: „sustainable ongoing impact” – please, define somewhere the term „sustainable impact”. Is it connected to the three pillars of sustainability, that is economic, social, and environmental one? How does this concept refer to the main topic of this paper? If it is important, please elaborate more deeply on it. If it is not so important to the topic, please, get rid of it. The term „sustainable development” is used again on page 8, but it is not defined anywhere.
- Can you give a hint on how to distinguish a coalition from a partnership and some other forms of collective action?

Results: Case Studies in Rural Communities

- Can you explain briefly the method or reason for choosing these particular case studies for the research? Whose initiative was that to use AI? Who organised the research, who financed the changes such as building sidewalks?
- Is each of these coalitions meant to last? If so, who is responsible for keeping it working?
- The term „social capital is not defined anywhere. There are differences between Putnam and Bourdieu approach, not mentioning Fukuyama; please write which approach is used here and why (if it is important) or do not introduce another term (if it is not important).

Case Study 1: Impact Lufkin

- Generally, the description is jumping from the present to the past and back again. In my opinion, the result of the project (here: success) and its determinants (here: devoted leaders) should be presented after carrying out the analysis, and not before it is done. Suggested order: initial state, the goal of the project, actions taken, observed change, conclusions. It would be even better to describe the project in the format of the AI method: results of discovery, dream, and the following phases.
- The second problem is that there are just topics mentioned, but they are not described or explained. Examples: If a major social service organization constructed a new building, was it done exclusively thanks to the project, or did the project just help to find for it an optimal localisation? How did collaboration of the residents with stakeholders look like? The same refers to many other short remarks in this text – a reader should be able to imagine the whole process.
- If your main focus is on describing the method, write how would you compare usefulness of the appreciative inquiry method and other methods. If you decide to concentrate on presenting the research results, give some advice for the practitioners.

Case Study 2: Panola, Harrison, and Gregg County Community Initiative

In this case study the layout of work is described more clearly than in the previous one, but the results are not understandable. If the reader is not familiar with the USA social system, the last paragraph of this section is totally not understandable. Instead of listing the names of local organisations, it would be better to explain their functions or the power to change they have – this would be of more use to the researchers and practitioners in other countries.

Case Study 3: Champions for Children: Early Childhood Brain Development

Please, write the information concerning the year in which the project was carried out at the beginning, and not at the end of the section.

Discussion

The text in this section fits well to the conclusions. If a paper contains discussion, this section should include comparison of this research results to the results of similar research found in the literature.

Conclusion

The text in this section fits well to the introduction. The conclusion should clearly result from the research, and only first few introductory sentences should be very general. If you decide to focus on presenting the method, here its usability should be emphasized. If you decide to focus on the research, here the results should be emphasized.