

# AIMAGAZINE

*June 2012*

*Towards an  
'Economy of  
connecting strengths.  
Scaling-up the  
generative  
Power of AI*

**special** world appreciative inquiry conference



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# FOREWORD

BY GRIET BOUWEN & ANNET VAN DE WETERING



Welcome to this 'special edition' of AI Magazine. Special, because it's totally based on the stories and experiences from the World Appreciative Inquiry Conference 2012. Special also because of the language we use for this edition. Normally, this magazine is meant for the Dutch speaking Appreciative Inquiry practitioners in Belgium and the Netherlands. This time, we write in English and deliver it as a digital magazine, serving insights and stories to the worldwide AI Community. We are proud and happy to do so.

The WAIC 2012 was held in Ghent, Belgium, focusing on the theme, *Towards an 'economy' of connecting strengths, scaling up the generative power of AI.*

Founder and inspirer of AI David Cooperrider started the conference saying it's time for all of us to stand up, step up and scale up our best practices. In David's opinion a leader is someone who wants to make a difference in these times. Being a leader starts with leading yourself, cultivating an appreciative intelligence. To open up our minds and to discover opportunities and solutions, we have to move away from the dominant paradigm of problem-solving. Focusing on strengths connects people, and in this connected space, our urgently needed strengths become more accessible, valuable, aligned and multiplied. An appreciative intelligence can truly drive a new economy based on connected strengths.

True leadership is about serving the benefit of the whole. This seemed to emerge as a theme throughout the WAIC. Instead of running around in the delusion of the day, we need to cultivate a personal leadership based on compassion and openness, reducing the cry of our demanding ego. It's about being able to act local from a global perspective, making decisions with our children's children in mind. Appreciative intelligent leaders honour diversity and share the awareness that in the facilitating of good relational practices, the focus can shift from 'me' to 'we.'

We need to re-think and re-invent society, says Klaas Van Egmond. For him, the urgent solution for our huge sustainability problems can be found in social and cultural dynamics, rather than in technological development only. We must study our values, as these support the economic, financial and societal systems. Therefore he sees an important role for Appreciative Inquiry. The ultimate truth can be discovered in understanding by compassion. This implies that people must engage in connection, emphatically inquiring into each other's worries and inspirational dreams. This leads to recognition and inclusion, the foundation for a new society, able to face the challenges. The collective outcomes of AI-findings can bring humanity to a higher level, aligning technologies with the dignity of mankind.

But where to start? The thoughts of Kenneth Gergen and Danielle Zandee gave us new inspiration for answering this question. Ken and Danielle talked about scaling up by multiplying the micro-moments of change, creating the macro transformation we desire so deeply. Seen from this perspective, scaling up could be more about 'to microphone,' rather than 'to megaphone'.

And this starts by sharing our stories. Our hope is that this special magazine can contribute to multiplying the micro, scaling it up to macro. It is packed with rich stories of hopes, dreams, inspiration and acts of micro-moments. This magazine couldn't be delivered without all these contributions from people all over the world, gathered at the WAIC 2012. Our gratitude also goes to everyone who directly or indirectly contributed to the writing, editing and design of this magazine. We mainly produced this magazine with combined voluntary energy, supported with the financial help of the initiators of the WAIC 2012, 'De Werf'. We appreciate all these contributions a lot.

We hope you have an inspirational journey through this magazine and invite you to comment or add your story at the [facebookpage of the WAIC 2012](#).

# OUR MISSION

The AI Magazine wishes to contribute to the dialogue and development in Dutch speaking organisations concerning the principles of Appreciative Inquiry. At the AI Magazine we embrace all current thinking in the creation of sustainable change.

By practicing Appreciative Inquiry companies and organisations can reach sustainable change and improve their performance by using a tool kit that is much broader than traditional problem solving techniques.

The AI Magazine is a forum of exploration for researchers and writers to exchange their ideas in the creation of a new societal model. The AI Magazine sees itself contributing to a bright and positive future that is full of possibilities, with sometimes more questions than answers but in which we can learn to inspire each other and work together.



The goal of the 5<sup>th</sup> World Appreciative Inquiry Conference is to create new shared visions of a more human and connected world where hope and vision inspire people to take action together. This mission is encapsulated in the topic of the conference: Towards an 'Economy' of Connecting Strengths, Scaling-up the generative Power of AI.

## HEAD EDITORIAL STAFF

Annet van de Wetering and Griet Bouwen.

## EDITORIAL STAFF

Marcel van Marrewijk, Jeannette Schonewille,  
Cees Hoogendijk.

## GUEST EDITORS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE SUPPORT

Michelle Strutzenberger, Philip Sloan.

## PHOTOGRAPHY

Chris Bennet (BJ Seminars International, Australia),  
Jan Somers (Photography Somers, Belgium).

## GRAPHICS

Diana Arsenian, Martine Vanremoortele (Visual Harvesting).

## DESIGN

[www.jacky-o.nl](http://www.jacky-o.nl)

## REPORTS TO THE EDITORIAL STAFF

For Belgium [redactie@AI-Magazine.be](mailto:redactie@AI-Magazine.be)

For the Netherlands [redactie@AI-Magazine.nl](mailto:redactie@AI-Magazine.nl)

# What a pleasure it was, hosting the 5<sup>th</sup> World Appreciative Inquiry Conference!

## The transformational capacity of AI will find its way to the future

*reflections  
from the  
organising  
team*

BY GRIET BOUWEN

Started as a wild and provocative proposition at the World Appreciative Inquiry Conference (WAIC) in Nepal (2009), the 2012 WAIC far exceeded the expectations of *De Werf*, the Belgian organizing team. During the latest Appreciative Inquiry (AI) world conference, they felt a growing sense of a worldwide community, formed by hundreds of people, wanting to devote their work to a sustainable future. The members in *De Werf* share the awareness that our society and economy are balancing on a tipping point. Prof. René Bouwen comments on this: 'It seems to me that at no time before this, the call to take up responsibility for creating a new society, a new economy was so urgent as it is today.' *De Werf* addressed this challenge to the AI community, by setting the theme and building the conference program around this. Asking to their highest hopes a few days before the start of the conference, the organizers spoke with one voice: 'For us, the power of AI lies mainly in the generative perspective. It would be really encouraging if we could understand and experience this strength a bit more than we do today.'

Looking back to all the happenings at the WAIC 2012, the organizing team first of all is grateful. Grateful for the high quality contributions of all keynote speakers, workshop hosts and paper presenters. There was lots of new and highly inspirational content. Combined with a high degree of interactivity, every room became a vibrant space of emerging insights and collective creativity.

Another basis of common gratefulness is explained by Luc Verheijen, one of the core-organizers of the WAIC: 'People came to tell me that the atmosphere at the conference was highly relational and strikingly relaxed at the same time. They noticed how this was a pure reflection of the way we – as organizing team – have been working together towards this conference.' Probably the secret behind it is the fact that everyone who was involved in the preparations, contributed from their personal strengths and hopes, and gave each other full space to do so. Seen from this perspective, organizing this conference already was a fusion of micro practices towards an economy of strengths.

Reflecting on the new content that has risen out of this gathering, the members of *De Werf* are happy with the huge

variety of knowledge and practices, each contributing to a deeper understanding of the real power behind AI.

The aim of making the generative perspective more central to the AI Community was well received by the participants. For so many people, it felt like a relief to be able to admit that AI needs both the positive perspective, and a thoughtful way of building generative relational practices. An important next step could be taken by collecting case studies of really transformational change processes, as Prof. Bushe invited the AI community to. The organizers believe that this can't be too difficult. They refer to all the innovative practices that are presented during the conference.

Questions like those that came up during Prof. Van Egmonds talk, on the importance of including the poor and marginalized people in transformation processes were answered with approval and applause from the audience. In different workshops, this perspective became more explored. Digging for strengths in really difficult situations, and respecting – if not even celebrating – the differences can be the spark of engagement that leads to massive change were most needed.

The conference sparked new ideas, hope and a feeling of connectedness with people all over the world, sharing similar dreams, working towards a world of connected strengths. Seen from this perspective, the WAIC 2012 isn't closed yet. Every participant returned home with new ideas and new

connections to build upon towards realizing their ideas.

How do the members of the organizing team look to their work from now on? Isn't it too silent now for them? Asking them these questions, they share a sense of trust in the power of organic growth. 'What has to emerge, will emerge', they say. 'We have fostered the building of new relationships, through which the transformational capacity of AI can find its way to the future. We are more than curious to discover the future change built upon the WAIC 2012 momentum as we travel to South Africa in 2015.'

For their work in Belgium, De Werf feels highly engaged to continue their AI Learning Networks as a valuable contribution to a strengths based economy. Inspired by the vivid stories of 'Business as an Agent of World Benefit', they want to contribute to the growing awareness of business responsibility for a sustainable future. De Werf also supports the idea to build a generative, strengths based news network together with Axiom News. This is definitely a spin-off of relationships that grew during the preparations of this conference.

What came out of this WAIC 2012 for you? What struck you most? With what ideas and plans did you return home? And how can the AI community contribute to that? Share it at our [facebookpage](#), or send a tweet with # 2012waic.

[griet.bouwen@stebo.be](mailto:griet.bouwen@stebo.be) - @GrietBouwen

From left to right: René Bouwen (KULeuven), Erwin De bruyyn (Stebo), Lut Brenard (Stebo), Wim Croonen (Evenwicht), Arno Vansichen (Evenwicht), Philippe Belien (Belien & Co), Griet Bouwen (Stebo, Evenwicht), Luk Dewulf (Kessels & Smit), Bert Verleysen (Stebo) and Luc Verheijen (Kessels & Smit)



# THE MEDIA-CREW MIRACLE

Started as an experiment, the media crew succeeded wonderfully in creating a constant stream of news throughout the World Appreciative Inquiry Conference (WAIC) held in Ghent, Belgium April 25-28.

Sixteen pairs of eyes and ears, wandering curiously through the happenings of the International Convention Center of Ghent, generated lots of beautiful stories. Every hour, new stories were added to the website. Every morning, a WAIC print newspaper found its way to the 600 conference participants.

Sixteen people, not knowing each other before the start of the conference, became a generative news team from the first minute on. A shared aim and lots of space to contribute to that for each member seemed to be successful ingredients.

This fusion of strengths created an uplifting energy, which resulted in more than 50 articles on the website, thousands of tweets and re-tweets, four daily newspapers and one special closing

The Media-Crew, photographed by a participant, with the help of photographer Jan Somers on the last day of the conference.

From left to right:

under: Michelle Strutzenberger (Axiom News, Canada), Lara Emde (Student, Belgium), Griet Bouwen (Stebo, Evenwicht, Belgium), Jan Somers, (Photography Somers, Belgium), Cathy Camertijn (VIBE-On, Belgium), John Sevenans (Stebo, Belgium), Jeannette Schonewille (CBO, The Netherlands)

edition, as well as hundreds of pictures. The editorial team of this special WAIC edition of the AI Magazine has also made good use of all this beautiful content and fresh perspectives.

It sure was an experiment, started with the question: 'What could happen if we invite some participants to become journalists for four days?' We saw that the making and providing of

WAIC news added something meaningful. It helped the

connecting, learning and celebrating of the partici-

pants. It generated significant content, providing

it to the participants and outside world for a long

period after the conference. Making news is all

about sharing, usually without knowing what hap-

pens next with the provided stories. If words really

have the power to create worlds, and if sparking,

personal and open stories can spark change, news-

making can become a vivid servant to the change we want to

see in the world. Seen from a generative perspective, maybe

that's exactly what journalism has to contribute to society.

*Sparking  
change by  
providing  
stories*

above: Loubna Zarrou (Styrax, The Netherlands), Saskia Tjepkema (Kessels&Smit, The Netherlands), Cees Hoogendijk (OrgPanoptics, The Netherlands), Annelies Poppe (Bermuda, Belgium), Andres Roberts (Kessels&Smit, UK), Koen Joly (Voca Training & Consult, Belgium), Jac De bruyn (Stebo, Belgium), Martine Vanremoortele (21 Lobsterstreet, Belgium), Niel Van Meeuwen (Kessels&Smit, Belgium), Marcel Van Marrewijk (Research to Improve, The Netherlands), Also contributing but not on the photo: photographer Chris Bennet (BJ Seminars International, Australia).



# What's up

Daily news from the 2012 world appreciative inquiry conference



## Harvesting #KSonair

During the conference, four people of Kessels & Smit provided a swinging radio show to the attendees and the outside world. 'It was super fun', they said. 'We felt ourselves somewhere between the conference and the outside world. For example, at one point, we called the newspaper, De Standaard, because they wrote an article on the conference. It was an interesting conversation and different perspectives were shared.' The team also received tweets from Sweden, Georgia, Armenia and Denmark!

There were other wonderful moments. There was the anthem contest: India and Japan coming out strong! There were a lot of touching stories. For example, there was the story of a Georgian lady who succeeded in getting money to build a road to the school in a very small village in the mountains. A big challenge for the DJs was to give words and images to what AI really means, how it works and what examples of it look like. The team also was confronted with more solemn insights, into what tough times really look like. 'The challenge seems to be about looking at this reality with honesty. The opportunity is to use our AI knowledge to talk about this and really work with,' they say.

You can find podcasts of the radio shows online. Visit the [KSonair website](http://KSonair.com).

Based on an article of Cathy Camertijn – [cathycamertijn@hotmail.com](mailto:cathycamertijn@hotmail.com) - @CathyCamertijn

# pre-conference with DAVID COOPERRIDER



Before starting the *World Appreciative Inquiry Conference*, 250 participants followed a 1,5 day preconference with David Cooperrider. The participants were sitting with eight persons around tables. During the keynote speech David Cooperrider asked questions and discussed with the people at the tables. A few quotes from participants shows how inspiring the preconference was for them.

At the preconference David Cooperrider explained how preparing an AI process means that 90% of the time is invested in the selection and choice of the right questions to start with. There are remarkable examples of organisations which experienced great results by using Appreciative Inquiry. The preconference was a keynote presentation about AI with group dialogues and there were three stories about what AI means in the changing process.

*'I came out of the preconference with a lot of energy'*

Bernard Tollec (France)

*'At the preconference there were a lot of interesting people I could learn from'*

Vicky Daniels (Belgium)

*'Learning by doing by walking through the system'*

Frank van der Endt (Netherlands)

*'Very good, especially showing how the process works by telling stories.'*

Gladys Lesia (South Africa)

250  
participants,  
1,5 day

Two stories were about organisations that have had the courage to experiment with Appreciative Inquiry: a group of schools in Hasselt (B) and a pharmaceutical company in Geel (B). Both cases show remarkably positive results. The results showed increasing levels of motivation and less absenteeism amongst the employees.

The employees feel more connection with the organisation they work in. In the story of the schools, the director Ronny Van der Spikken said: 'There are no weak or deficient children. We have to change our outlook in order to see the talent in every child. We have to create opportunities for both children and adults to develop their strengths. Then they can flourish and make a personal contribution to their surroundings.' The last case of Genzyme taught us the importance of changing conversations by introducing appreciative questioning. HR-director Wim Croonen testifies: 'Up to 30% of change efforts become failures, but introducing AI was successful and sustainable'. The Genzyme plant in Geel was awarded the 'Great place to work prize' in 2010 and 2012.

For more participant testimonials, watch the movie on the website

[j.schonewille@cbo.nl](mailto:j.schonewille@cbo.nl) - @JeannetteSchone

Also based on the blog posted by Jacques de Bruyn



David Cooperrider

# Towards an 'economy' of connecting strengths

## Scaling-up the generative power of AI



OPENING KEYNOTE BY DAVID COOPERRIDER, FOUNDER OF APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

Only for the fact that you can see and listen to David Cooperrider in his opening keynote video stream [▶](#), I'm not going to try and give a thorough replay of his speech. And it's not the words that do the generative trick; it's David's attitude that I'm trying to disclose to you in this article. Warmly introduced by the 'Belgian shepherd of Appreciative Inquiry (AI), professor René Bouwen from the University of Leuven,' David recalls his trip to Belgium in 1991 and his appreciation for family life and the joy of his kids visiting 'Manneke Pis.' David loves the word 'Amai.' How on earth am I going to give you a full report on his opening speech? I'm not. Please read the reflections from four voices out of David's audience, and hopefully this will give you a generative impression of what happened there in Ghent, on the morning of Wednesday April 25, 2012. Enjoy reading. It was a pleasure to assemble.

Impressions assembled by Cees Hoogendijk  
[cees@ai100.org](mailto:cees@ai100.org) - [@ceeshoogendijk](https://twitter.com/ceeshoogendijk)

## 'If you can Guide Walmart into a Zero Emission Strategy...'

*This article about the keynote speech of David Cooperrider was to become an example of journalism. I was privileged to look at David's presentation through the 'eyes of wisdom' of Jac De Bruyn. Jac is a global citizen, during his whole live striving for humanity; as member of NGOs, being a manager in a firm, supporting 'chance children' in private. Jac has contributed to successes, but sometimes he missed the sustainability of the changes. In David, he sees the 'prophet' who deserves the utmost podium for his generative, sustainable approach called Appreciative Inquiry:*

'In Europe we tend to see Walmart as the capitalistic, employee abusing supermarket, and maybe that was true. But nowadays, the same company has chosen a sustainable approach, thanks to the (provocative?) interventions of David Cooperrider. Even in just this piece of art, he has proven himself to be someone who can help us make the world a better place. It seems logical – but it is, of course, very extraordinary– that David had significant constructive influence on large scale conventions like the United Nations Business Leaders, chaired by Kofi Anan himself. David's question 'Can business be beneficial to society?' is very intriguing. Personally, I find his style of inquiry, and the way he suggest we practice it, highly appealing. And done collectively, like in the auditorium this afternoon, this inquiry has an amazing strengthening effect on me. In my opinion, David embodies and suggests a method which touches the core, the essence of human being and becoming. For me it is clear that he is the man who we should listen to, and so we did today! And it feels great.'

*This may be the honorable opinion of Jac De Bruyn, but if you would ask me, I would say: 'Jac is right.' What do you think? What are you going to do tomorrow?*



## Pre-conference Reflections of a Senior Participant

*On Wednesday morning, David Cooperrider explained more about the central elements of AI.*

### 'The art of the question is leading us into the process of change.'

When preparing an AI process, 90 per cent of the time is invested in the selection and choice of the right questions to start with. As an example, Cooperrider was telling us about the first meetings leading to the creation of 'United Religions Initiatives (URI).' That is a network of Cooperative Circles bringing persons together of different conviction, faith and spiritual tradition.

As a senior I was touched by this statement: 'One could say a key task in life is to discover and define our life purpose, and then accomplish it to the best of our ability.' Indeed this question was often in my mind, especially being educated in a school of a religious congregation. Personally I suggest all of us to deal with the question David was using in his first AI meeting with religious leaders:

*'Can you share a story of a moment, of the period of time, where Clarity about life purpose emerged for you; a moment where your calling happened, where there was an important awakening or teaching, or where you received some guiding vision? Now, what do you sense you are supposed to do for the rest of your life?'*

The exchange between religious leaders was so rich that it generated energy for the URI creation. It became a fast growing network with about 600 circles all over the world. These circles promote real contact, dialogue, common action.

All of us could start a Cooperative Circle in the URI network. This is how: bring seven persons together of different believes and traditions and start an inquiry into their strengths and common grounds. Being part of a URI Circle myself, it is my experience that this in-depth dialogue broadens our understandings of elements of the Mystery that is carrying the universe.

Jac de Bruyn - [jac.debruyn@telenet.be](mailto:jac.debruyn@telenet.be)



## What's Next for Democracy?

*David Cooperrider offers insights learned from Appreciative Inquiry application*

More than 2000 years of democracy have brought many changes to our world. More change is on the way. In the 21st century, democracy movements have been seen across the world. The cry for deliberative democracy is being heard around the world, and is being enacted from Nepal to Bhutan, and from Syria to Somalia. It's met with some success. But the work isn't done.

That same strength of respecting the voice of the people 'as the voice of God' that has brought about change in the past must be reconsidered to find a new way forward yet again. Deliberative democracy may be part of the answer. E-democracy is a likely part of the ecology. Local communities are one of the core strengths to be turned to in creating new paradigms of freedom. The political sphere is filled with the dialogue of gridlock. Communities are crying foul. Jigging voter systems is an increasing trend. Given these realities, David Cooperrider, Case Western Reserve University's internationally renowned organisational behaviour professor and founding thought leader of the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) movement, suggests we need new imaginations around the next phase of democracy. He proposes the strengths-based, AI approach might offer some clues to a way forward: 'From our small experiments with whole cities, what have we learned that might help give birth to something beyond deliberative democracy or dialogical democracy?'

### What about what might be called 'design democracy?'

'Our experience with AI and strengths based approaches is that the very best in human experiences doesn't come out in the discovery stage of dialogue but in the stage of collective making or designing,' David tells Axiom News: 'As people build artifacts, as they build the new conception of the city, re-design building structures, that's when the very best comes out. Look at when the greatest in our communities emerged in the U.S. in the early days, not in conversations, but in the community barn-buildings, in the designing and building of artifacts. Can you imagine our politicians designing the next smart grid systems together with citizens, collectively designing?' says David.

There was a recent U.K. case where an attacked politician was responding to the disgruntled community with the defense, 'but I held dialogue for six months before we put in the new highway, I followed all the protocol, I ticked in the bureaucratic checklist.' Imagine if he, and the community, had sat at the design table together, creating a new transportation system together.

David is currently exploring further the generativity that comes out in this design phase of AI, and the implications of this for the broader political sphere. He chuckles a little as he shares what would be a definite overstatement of the opportunities, a bumper sticker that reads, 'Down with dialogue, up with design.'

Michelle Strutzenberger -  
[michelle@axiomnews.ca](mailto:michelle@axiomnews.ca)



## The Nations United in Hope

The opening day of the WAIC 2012 gives me the impression that we are ready to take on several challenges. Just imagine if each of the 600 participants talk about positive ideas and AI to one person every day and that number exponentially grows. I think within 20 years we will be able to completely convert the planet. This may be termed as wishful thinking, but we don't really have a choice but to be wishful first and practical next. This is a good beginning to think about transformation of structures that we are disappointed with. We have got to believe that we have a chance and think that all is not lost.

These were the first impressions that I got from the opening session. With the examples that David Cooperrider gave, it will be hard to say that people do not have ways to change things. In my own India context, which is filled with issues of discrimination, poverty, vulnerability and what not, 'How does this make sense?' is the skeptical question that arises. Well, then, the answer comes back as a thud: 'Do we have the language of Transformation?' If we don't, we need to invent it. And for that, Appreciative Inquiry comes in handy and helps us to IMAGINE how my country would be without those troubles. I think that this is the beginning of a long journey that will alter perceptions, beliefs and systems.

Ashok Gladston Xavier



# Embracing Diversity for a Fertile World

## What can we, leaders in change, learn from a chicken?



BY GRIET BOUWEN

At the opening session of the WAIC 2012, the room was suddenly filled with images and stories of chickens. Artist Koen Vanmechelen of Belgium took us on a trip through the history of this domesticated bird. A surprised audience became aware of the power of this metaphor for our thinking about creating a thriving future. It's all about diversity, says Koen. Life can only flourish when we purposely bring differences together.

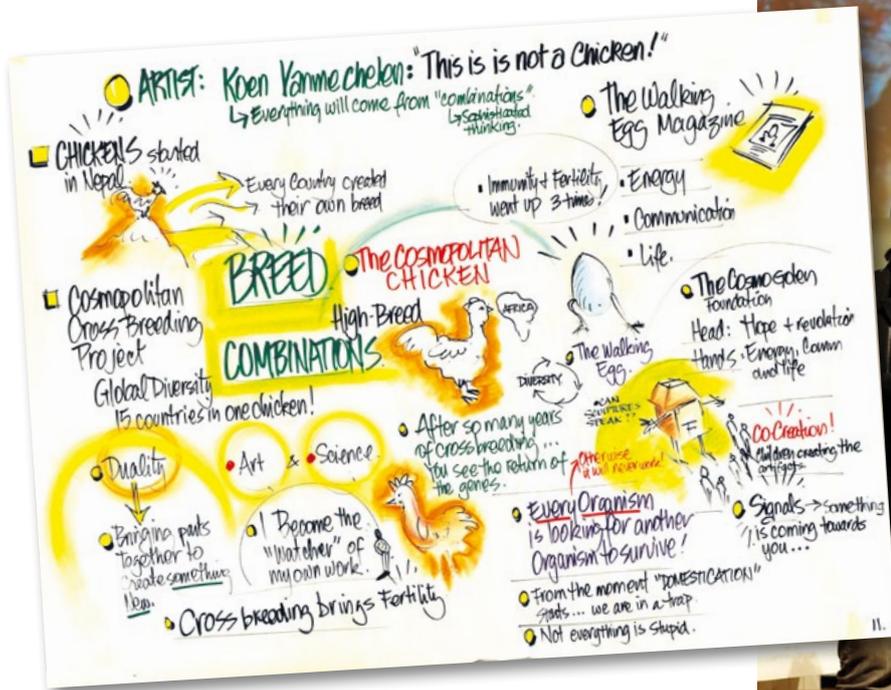
**D**id you know the chicken once only lived in Nepal, at the feet of the Himalaya? From there, all the chickens came out, spreading their genes all over the world. People in different countries manipulated the breeding of this animal, cultivating different varieties.

Koen became interested in cross-breeding these different varieties, intrigued by the question, 'What would emerge in the fusion of differences?' After several generations of cross-bred birds, he noticed that the chickens again started sharing common characteristics. The original genes seemed to return, not only on the surface, but also within the body of the chickens. Koen also argues that the cross-breeding brings fertility, while in-breeding leads to infertility. The cross-bred chickens also are stronger than the original species; they have much better immunity.

In a talk with Peter Pula, CEO of the Canadian Axiom News, Koen explained the inherent message of his work a bit further. First, the question of mankind came up: What came first, the chicken or the egg? Without any hesitation, Koen made it clear: it was both the chicken and the egg.

### Duality is life, life is duality

His conclusions can be highly inspirational for change leaders these days. 'If you abuse an organism, it will come back to you in one way or another,' he says. 'We have to make partnerships. Every organism is looking for another organism to survive. If you are open for diversity, you can bring the best of differences together.'



Graphic Diana Arsenian



Koen Vanmechelen & Peter Pula

## Change can start when we pick up the signals that something is ready to move

The signals come to us in different disguises. ‘There is so much more than speaking and writing,’ says Koen. Some people can say a lot more in a sculpture, for example. A sculpture even asks you what it can tell you. In looking for the answer on this provocative question, a lot of stories can come up. Are you open enough for these stories to reach you? What question can we ask ourselves, as facilitators of strengths-based change, for our work in society? If every evolution is coming from combinations of differences, do we dare to release our need for consensus and compromise? Do we as AI practitioners have the courage to intentionally and definitely go out to other environments, provoking confrontations between completely different perspectives? Can you tolerate and even celebrate the diversity? What could be a next step you could take in bringing different perspectives together?

[griet.bouwen@stebo.be](mailto:griet.bouwen@stebo.be) - @GrietBouwen

[link to the videostream](#)

Talking about the power of metaphors and arts, it seems like the AI practices nowadays become enriched with this perspective. At the WAIC 2012, participants could discover creative methodologies based on other ways of expressing ourselves. Let's look into some examples.

- Figuring Futures, the art of (re)framing challenges creatively. By Elke Gybels.
- Appreciative Inquiring Craftmanship, by dancing tango. By Stefaan Devogelaere.
- An enormous dream catcher welcomed the participants to the conference. Listen to the story of Kristel Franssen, maker of this piece of art.
- Fascinating rhythms creating community connections through drumming with an appreciative twist. In this workshop Julie Barnes and Steve Ball created a new connecting language. See how they took over the conference hall in this movie.
- About improvisation and Appreciative Inquiry, Nathalie Van Rentergem (Inspinazie) hosted a workshop. She wrote a blog on her experiences, which you can read here.

# AN ENGINEER'S DREAM: THE STORY OF MELOTTE



BY MARCEL VAN MARREWIJK

The first full day at the WAIC started with two plenary addresses of businessmen presenting new business models and new approaches to organizing business. Not completely new, but at least different from common approaches focusing on control, resource exploitation and shareholder orientation.

Old globalized manufacturing models generate production waste, use enormous amounts of resources for transporting people and parts, cover mindboggling figures in terms of mileage and at the end of the lifecycle the discarded product is left as waste. Curiously, these business models have been designed according the principles of cost efficiency.

‘What about mother earth?’, Mario Fleurinck, a successful Belgium engineer/entrepreneur, exclaimed. Exploitative models ultimately end up destroying resources, a far cry from sustainable development and offering future generations a better place to live. Current models of growth disrupt our environment. New technologies should make industry more efficient and manufactured products should match our needs.

Back in 1996, Mario Fleurinck joined Boeing in Seattle as a trainee. Engineers in the R&D lab showed him something that he describes as ‘a big fish-tank-like glass box in which

flashy light streams and sparkles could be seen. Out of the sparkles an engine component, layer by layer, slowly ‘grew’. Mario couldn’t believe his eyes but was immediately grasped by the potential of this new technology. ‘I immediately called my father, told him: this is the future and advised him to sell his stocks of manufacturing companies!’

This technology, indeed, is now disrupting manufacturing practices, substituting analogue processes with digital ones. 3D-printing has left the laboratories, offering various businesses new ways of producing unique items at a scale of mass production!

Mario co-owns Melotte (CEO Melotte and founder and owner of InnoCrowd and Methomanica), the company applies ‘direct digital manufacturing’ to the production of dental prostheses. Each mouth is unique and with the aging of society, demand is skyrocketing. Moreover, for every eight retiring dental experts only one is just leaving dental school, entering the market of dental experts. Current business models have shifted production capacity to China, but growing incomes and the increasing local markets for dental care

is quickly absorbing this production capacity and causing prices to go up. A serious need for transformational change exists.

The direct digital manufacturing technique used at Melotte allows 850 prostheses to be produced every day, and 40,000 prostheses a year. The dentist makes a digital scan of the patient's mouth, jaw and teeth and overnight a prosthesis is made with a perfect fit. The local markets can be serviced, while energy used in production is brought down by 80%; no waste and only a fraction of the transport is needed compared to globalized business methods. At the end of its useful life the prosthesis can be returned and the material can be fully used again for constructing new prostheses, without a loss in quality. This is one of the most convincing cradle-to-cradle cases ever recorded!

Melotte's approach is also a powerful example of a so-called Blue Ocean strategy. Instead of 'me too' approaches copying the strategies of competitors, Melotte explored the potential of new technologies, which enabled them to cut back on pollution and multiplying efficiency by a factor of 8. That is an 800% improvement over traditional technologies!

'This is not only good for society and the environment, it also makes good business sense.' In his own authentic way, he lives Cooperrider's motto: doing well by doing good. With a 20% growth per quarter, Melotte generates significant local added value. For the future of our economy it is essential that we sustain our production levels by applying business models using renewable resources and servicing local communities.

In terms of the 4 D cycle, Mario has gone from the 'discover', 'dream' and 'design' phase to 'destiny': working very hard to make his dream come alive. Tuning his business model, spreading the word and sharing his energy and knowledge with people all over the world. This concept is easily scalable and the methods are transparent and accessible for others to use it elsewhere. No strings attached, the Inno-Crowd community of direct digital manufacturers will continue to learn from each other, improving their skills and techniques, enabling more inefficient businesses to benefit from sustainable development.

[marcel@ai100.org](mailto:marcel@ai100.org) - @mvanmarrewijk

Also based on a blog posted by Saskia Tjepkema   
Videostream presentation Mario Melotte 

## THE DESTINY OF DIGITAL MANUFACTURING



# A company based on love

BY MARCEL VAN MARREWIJK



Ilja Heitlager, information officer at the Amsterdam based IT company Schuberg Philis, delivered the second keynote speech on Thursday.

He sketched a situation which was common in the IT industry: 'Without realizing it, we created silos and hierarchy, frustrating the resource chains, inadvertently alienating our experts from our customers. Our people are very skilled and focused, but they were lost.' At Schuberg Philis, they found out that in times of crisis, for instance when a machine broke down, multidisciplinary teams were created, with experts in the front, solving the problems. 'That brought back the energy.'

The IT-customers demand 100% uptime, but eventually machines break down. By bringing expert teams in front of the customer while making them fully responsible for the entire system - not only of a particular machine - employees can show their mastery, their expertise, their craftsmanship. 'Our people are not 'running an IT machine', they are 'running a bank'. If the machine breaks down, people can't draw money, and they know it.'

Instead of focusing on what went wrong, professionals focus on the personal relationships with customers, discussing next steps. Ilja: 'The conversations changed: If people are responsible for the system, and something happens, they don't talk about the past ('what happened', 'what went wrong', 'why did it break down?') or about blaming others. Instead, they talk about the future and about themselves ('how do we solve it', 'how can we get the bank up and running?').'

Another thing that happened is that people built more personal relationships. Ilja: 'We found phone numbers of our engineers scribbled on whiteboards in our customer's offices. They know who to call, instead of just having to rely on an anonymous 0800 number.' At Schuberg Philis this approach became known as 'the cupfighting mentality'. It resulted in a customer recommendation of 100%, obviously out performing their market competitors.

Three years ago, they learned about Appreciative Inquiry, but did not have the guts to apply it in their business. The first annual gathering was a celebration due to a major commercial success; the second event did not bring the inspiration that was expected. The feeling grew: What's next? Leverage was also building up on the content side. At Schu-

berg Philis Appreciative Inquiry was used to work with methods, such as Goldratt's Theory of Constraint (TOC), always focusing on the weakest link within the whole system. It did not feel right anymore. It drains energy. 'We would like to know our strengths? What makes people get up in the morning? What do they bring to work?'

At the beginning, the three owners went to visit David Cooperrider in New York to prepare a three-day AI summit. They invited 200 people, employees, but also clients, family and friends. We started discussing what would we like to keep despite our desire to change? And what kind of culture do we need in order to support a major contribution to society? Indeed, as we spend more time working than with our loved ones, we make our professional lives more meaningful.

'That summit ended with 16 projects. But that is not the most important achievement. The main thing is that it gave all of us 170 people present the same energy and the same level of affection for each other, our work and our environment, making the connection stronger than before. We now go about our business and take decisions with our kids in mind. Will it support their future? That is what fuels our company right now, making work more meaningful and bringing our company to the next level.'

From 'cupfighting' to beyond 'cupfighting' implies a shift from inspiration to sharing, ultimately creating a company founded on affection and love.

## Loving your job and the people you work with

Schuberg Philis

[marcel@ai100.org](mailto:marcel@ai100.org) - @mvanmarrewijk

Also based on a blog posted by Saskia Tjepkema   
Video presentation Ilja Heitlager 

# Such a nice Social Evening

BY JEANNETTE SCHONEWILLE AND LOUBNA ZARROU

During the day it was raining. With a boat trip on the program in the evening, it could have been a catastrophe. Fortunately, the weather-gods were in an appreciative mood, because the sun started to shine to set the scene for a beautiful evening.

About 250 members from 2012WAIC enjoyed Thursday evening together at Het Groot Vlees-huis. After a nice walk through the Citadelpark and a wonderful boat trip along the historical buildings of Ghent, the group arrived at Het Vleeshuis. During the boat trip the group came at the point where the river The Leie meets the river Schelde. This point is recognizable on one side by a statue of a muscled man in a diving position, and on the other by a beautiful woman also preparing to dive. A beautiful connecting point.

The historical building of Het Vleeshuis is a delightful place to be and it was lovely tasting the regional drinks and food. There followed an evening of meeting, talking, laughing, enjoying and plenty of dancing! When the live band Sara Ferri started to play their music, it became a real party. Sara Ferri, along with her band, played a mix of pop with a flavour of gipsy, swing and Bossa Nova. We recommend you to download her debut album on itunes!

The evening didn't end at The Vleeshuis. A group of 40 happy people went across the road to a tavern and took over the whole place. With nice singing going on to midnight, it tailed off a great day all together. Beautiful connections all day long.

[j.schonewille@cbo.nl](mailto:j.schonewille@cbo.nl) - @JeannetteSchone

[info@styra.nl](mailto:info@styra.nl) - @loubie30

Video appreciative dancing during social event ▶



meeting  
talking  
laughing  
enjoying



# twitter

Robyn Stratton Ber @robbiecat  
Of 18 companies awarded First Movers @aspeninstitute  
producing profitability and social value, 3 I know use  
[#appreciativeinquiry](#) [#2012waic](#)

curtisogden: RT @formapart:  
The power of question  
is to open a door to new  
possibilities. D. Cooperrider  
[#2012WAIC](#)

[Center\\_for\\_AI](#): TY 4 the RT @  
CeesHoogendijk Also TY 4 the  
heads up on the upcoming AI  
Magazine - covering highlights  
from [#2012WAIC](#). We look forward  
2 it!

GrietBouwen: @CamilleJnsn  
Thanks Camille! Let's co-create  
this thriving world by serving  
society with appreciative and  
inquiring news. [#2012waic](#)

Cathy Camertijn @CathyCamertijn  
@orfeest Playing For Change –  
YouTube [http://www.youtube.com/  
watch?v=MTreQWz0N14](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MTreQWz0N14)

Griet Bouwen @GrietBouwen Lots of thanks @Axiomnews  
to share my article about the [#2012waic](#) Media-Crew  
<http://axiomnews.ca/blogs/2618>

David Hansen @styrkebaseret [#2012waic](#). Strength-based Lean  
Six Sigma is emerging! [pic.twitter.com/RCDCDKks](http://pic.twitter.com/RCDCDKks)

RT @GrietBouwen: Lots of  
Beautiful Pictures bringing  
back [#2012waic](#) in our  
memory. [shar.es/qvIWB](http://shar.es/qvIWB)

picketthopa: [2012waic](#) Good  
luck to all of you who submitted  
proposals to [#2012waic](#). I can  
only imagine they are the best of  
the best.

DinaPozzo: Australian  
Anthem sung by  
Australian contingent at  
[2012WAIC](#) [#2012WAIC](#)  
<http://t.co/sPZscCOC>

Axiom News @AxiomNews "The  
sense of common cause and  
connection is amazing. The  
sense of concrete possibility is  
remarkable too." [http://axiomnews.  
ca/node/2602](http://axiomnews.ca/node/2602)

Ronald van Domburg @  
RonaldvDomburg Keynote  
van de Wereld Appreciative  
Inquiry Conference [#2012waic](#):  
'going beyond the Positive for  
Transformational Change'...

Saskia Gheysens @  
gheysenssaskia  
thanks to the team, one of  
best organized, interesting  
and motivating conferences  
I attended!@LucVerheijen:  
[#2012waic](#) <http://shar.es/qt1TG>

gert veenhoven @gertveenhoven  
Interesting read: increasing the  
generative potential of #AI : Ron  
Fry and Gervase Bushe - [http://  
www.2012waic.com/2012/04/29/  
increasing-the-generative-  
potential-of-ai-ron-fry-and-  
gervase-bushe-2/#2012waic](http://www.2012waic.com/2012/04/29/increasing-the-generative-potential-of-ai-ron-fry-and-gervase-bushe-2/#2012waic)

Steve Loraine @steveloraine  
The Conference Team thanks you all!  
<http://shar.es/qcWb7> [#2012WAIC](#)  
continues to provide resources,  
connections, inspiration and hope!

Keynote Prof. Dr. Kenneth J. Gergen  
and Prof. Dr. Danielle Zandzee

# Meaning Making from Micro to Macro How to keep our conversations alive?

A DIALOGUE ABOUT NEWEST INSIGHTS FROM SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM AND AI  
'GENOMES OF MEANING AND THE MAKING OF WORLDS'



Prof. Dr. Kenneth J. Gergen  
& Prof. Dr. Danielle Zandzee

Whilst listening to this very important keynote, I felt a sort of resonance in my own system, which I like to consider as impact, generated by the substance of - or behind - the words that came from the stage. I'm not going to try and give you an objective report of what was said, and that is because of what was said. What I hope this article will do is resonate further into your actions, and if so, it would be quite a sufficient report.

Click here to see the complete keynote session on video ▶

**D**anielle opens the conversation by asking for attention to the 'small things' in conversation: 'We are working on better understanding of the small practices, that keep the conversations alive. These micro practices are the building blocks for the macro, to expand the flow, which brings us people further. The writing of just one book – Ken Gergen's *Relational Being* about generative processes of relating – has had a ripple effect.'

Ken is very appreciative towards Danielle. They obviously know each other for a long period. Ken: 'Our relationship too has been very generative. But let me question the suggested impact of my books. Maybe the impact is not a quality of the book, nor of the author, but merely of the reader.' Ken takes the audience to the 'illusion of the object,' defined by our nouns, and he takes us further to the illusion of himself talking: 'Where do my words come from? These are not my words. They are echoes of conversations before. What is the origin of a word? Where did it come to have meaning? And then, it's not about that one word; it's about the moments of co-ordination of words, the moments of appreciation of the words. What is the value of what we say? You have to do something with your words; you have to take them somewhere. Are my movements my movements? All I do comes out of relationships. The question is, what do you do with it? It doesn't have meaning until you do something with it.'

**'You have to do something with your words; you have to take them somewhere.'**

What could be those little practices in conversation that keeps us away from stopping the flow? Ken thinks that 'listening well' is a great practice. Carefully listening – of course, we all know the AI interview – is very generative; it invites the other to tell his or her story and grow by that. Danielle suggest 'laughter' and humor in the conversation. And 'generosity' is proposed as a generative practice, the act of giving, giving your time, your attention, your thoughts, the kindness of your heart.

## A Smile is What We All have in Common

BY LARA EMDE

The moment Dr. Danielle Zandee and Dr. Kenneth Gergen asked about micro Appreciative Inquiry practices in their engaging keynote conversation Thursday, I immediately thought of kissing. If you've been in Belgium for some time, you might have noticed that's our way of greeting. I grew up in Brussels in a Belgian-German family, and I still find it funny to see how German family members, especially men, freeze when they're kissed hello by Belgian relatives. Same goes for colleagues. I love to visit organisations where people stand up from their computers and desks to say hello – and kiss. When I told this to two participants from the UK sitting next to me, they smiled and said 'not possible in our country.' Tapping your shoulder, touching your arm, kissing your cheek, – anyone who has ever been on an intercultural event knows how important and yet delicate it can be. Fortunately, there is at least one micro practice I've experienced at this conference – which brings together many different cultures and nations – at least a 100 times. Everyone does it. It's one of the first things you learn as a baby. It's not kissing obviously. And it's an important part of my life. In the workshop on appreciative listening today Karen Cabral and Jacques Philippaert made a wonderful drawing that I would like to share with you. They drew a conversation, an exchange of words and – on a deeper level – an exchange of smiles, connecting their hearts. What a wonderful day! Enjoy and smile.

[laraemde@gmail.com](mailto:laraemde@gmail.com) - @laralistsens

We see Ken and Danielle discussing the fact that we should look at more than the momentary micro practice, that we should consider the scenarios, and ask ourselves where conversations might go or grow. According to Ken, there are at several ways to respond to the remark 'I'm very angry about what you did last day.' They include giving apologies, or denying the accuse, or getting irritated. But they all kill the conversation. Afterwards, it will not be easy to turn the subject into mutual 'holiday adventures'. The conversation could raise a situation in which colleagues don't speak with each other anymore. Blame game. End of the relationship. Easily done. The question is: How can we get out of this; how do we get generative?'

Danielle and Ken do a little role play, based upon real life experiences: Ken was very late to an appointment with Danielle, in fact to prepare for this keynote session. They showed how the conversation could easily turn into being degenerative: 'Where were you? I was waiting for hours. You should have been here because I was to host our keynote!' 'Hey, if you are the host, than you should know already what to do.' 'No, it is unacceptable that you just forgot this important meeting!' Et cetera. And they showed the audience what, as they said, really happened: 'Oh Ken, I was very worried about you not turning up; are you all right?' 'Oh Danielle, I'm so sorry for showing up so late; this is something I would never do with respect to you, please accept my excuses.' And they went on with their meeting. To me, the difference between generative and degenerative in this little play seems obvious. In the first case, both showed (individual) irritation; in the second case, both showed concern for the other. 'So,' Ken says: 'It's like a dance; whatever you do, you're still connected. What worries me is that if you dig deeper, appreciation can unconsciously turn into judgment. Imagine the sentence 'Hey, you did a very good job.' It might be meant appreciatively, but it positions the speaker above the other, because apparently, the speaker is able to judge how good the other functions. And then this appreciative expression might be more disconnecting than you would expect. On the other hand, negative emotions can bring us closer to each other, for example when you share your sadness. Being aware of this is like being an artist in the field of conversation.'

The last question raised was that generative micro practices are nice, only if you don't repeat them too often. In some organisations you might hear someone sighing: 'O, not another

AI interview, please.' How to avoid manipulation? According to Danielle we need creativity, like the jazz musicians in their jam sessions, never the same: 'Improvisation is what's needed. And therefore Ken and I did not rehearse this keynote, nor design it in detail. We discussed a main line, and the rest would be improvisation.' (And maybe Ken's no-show at the meeting yesterday was a carefully planned act?).

*Until so far this kind of witness report of the keynote. This article would not be complete without bringing in other voices. Like the voice of Lara Emde, suggesting the 'smile' as the mother of the micro practices (see frame). And the voice of myself, now not as a reporter, but as someone in the audience, asked by Danielle and Ken to come up with suggestions for micro practices. Here's my answer.*

## How to interweave micro practices in daily conversation?

Highlighted in the already enlightening dialogue between Ken Gergen and Danielle Zandee was their little play about how conversations can degenerate, and how to prevent this - or even turn them into a generative alternative. Subsequently, Danielle asked the audience to think about ways to 'interweave' or 'interlock' the micro practices into day to day conversations, and make them sustainable. Besides the fact that Ken was struggling with the challenge to keep the practices 'fresh,' one could question Danielle's question, referring to the great philosopher Richard Rorty and his theory around the contingency of language. In fact, he suggests (!) that we are simply unable to 'interlock' practices in the conversation, because conversation itself is an in-between-emerging process, causing the language to develop, including the interpretations and meanings. You could say then that we have a solution to Ken's struggle, because conversation itself undergoes renewal. But I'm afraid this renewal does not always move into a generative direction, so to speak. I love Rorty's book title "Take care of freedom, and truth will take care of itself."

Prof. Dr. Danielle Zandzee



Prof. Dr. Kenneth J. Gergen



## Imagine micro practices taking care of their generativity themselves...!

Let me give you an example. Until the age of 50 years or so, I used to talk about 'non-profit organisations'. And I was very unaware of the degenerative substance of my vocabulary. Until that afternoon in Ghent, where I attended the closing conference of the First Flemish AI Learning Network. On a certain slide I read the word 'social profit organisation' and the words struck in my mouth. The Belgian next to me said: 'Ala, you Dutch people, you call this non-profit, don't you?' I was flabbergasted, in a positive way that is. From that day I never used the word 'non-profit' anymore. How silly can it be, calling an organisation by what it not is? (Do we call a human being a not-dog?) This micro practice, referring to 'social profit instead of non-profit' is so strong that it does the trick itself. And as far as I can recall, everyone I told this story to, adopted the 'social-profit' alternative immediately.

I would like to call this a self interweaving micro practice. The question is: How do we find the strong, self-emerging ones? My suggestion would be to approach this quest in a sort of Darwinian way: let the strongest, the most intelligent and the ones most adaptive to change be the surviving micro practices. And let us – as Koen Vanmechelen said – keep on making new combinations to fill the linguistic evolution as appreciative and as generative as possible.

What do you think of 'birth-line' instead of 'deadline'? Is it going to survive? Yes, as far as the WAIC Media Crew is concerned. During Diana Whitney's great performance I received an SMS from Arno Vansichen: 'What about a Warm Idea instead of a Cool Idea?' My reply: 'Idea, I dear, You dear, We dear... What about a Wedea in stead of an Idea?' Arno: 'Windeed!'

This article co-created by Cees Hoogendijk  
[cees@ai100.org](mailto:cees@ai100.org) - @ceeshoogendijk

# Leadership in Appreciative Inquiry

'Every organisation  
needs a  
positive revolution'

BY SASKIA TJEPKEMA

With this strong statement - a variation on the great Thomas Jefferson quote - renowned AI consultant and author Diana Whitney opens her keynote. She explains: 'In an era where we need co-creativity, Appreciative Inquiry just fits very well. Leaders nowadays worry about questions like: 'How do I engage our people? And our customers?', 'How do I build bridges?' AI helps with exactly those questions.'



Diana Whitney



A quote from one of my teachers that I always remembered is: 'Learn to live and work in the energetically positive. Understand and do what gives life to the people.' And that to me is exactly what AI is about: we focus on those things that enhance energy, vitality, wellbeing to a system.' Leadership is very important to the AI process. To Diana, 'Leadership is a story of why things happen, (or not)... It is not about a person.' She has the audience reflect on leadership in AI processes and key elements that characterized it. After a few minutes of buzzing, she collects some of the words. 'Letting go of egos, trust, *being* AI, ...' She embraces the words that the audience comes up with: 'It is important to continually enrich our vocabulary of leadership.'

Diana and her colleagues have done research into the behaviour of leaders of successful AI initiatives. They found four common denominators:

1. Leaders engage with other members of their organisation or community to create a better way. With being a key word here...
2. People are surprised by their own learning and changing in the process. Diana; 'They typically say: I thought it would change the people. I never thought that I would learn so much myself!'
3. They care for people, profit and planet.
4. Leaders practice and believe in the power of positive attitudes, emotions, intentions and images. To illustrate, Diana shares a story of a father who taught his daughter how to drive, by constantly using positive image: 'Now is a good time to move your car to the middle of the lane.' (instead of: 'get away from the curb!')

She captures it in a nutshell: 'To me, appreciative leadership is the relational capacity to unleash the creative potential of a group and turn it into a positive power, by which you make a difference in the world.'

Leadership of an AI process requires several capabilities. I'll list a few highlights here.

Perhaps first and foremost: the *wisdom of inquiry*. Diana: 'Powerful questions set the process in motion. Typically, those are questions that are value based: what do you value and want to see more of in this organisation or our world.'

The genius of inclusion is equally important. As a rule of thumb Diana indicates: 'Everyone whose future it concerns,

needs to have a voice in creating that future.' Leadership means including those people. Even if that creates challenges. She relates of an AI summit for a school of deaf and blind children, where not only the teachers, parents, support staff, local politicians, but also guide dogs and sign interpreters were all involved. And leaves the audience with a question to ponder: 'Have you included everyone? Who are the voiceless and invisible in your organisation and community? And how can you invite them in the process?'

#### *Focusing on strengths*

is another trait she explores. Stressing the advice to keep it relational. 'If you use tests, like the VIA or strengthsfinder, they work excellently to provide language. If people then talk about those strengths together, relate it to actual situations and stories, and look at each other's strengths, the constructive process flows... Otherwise, such test results are just 'labels.' Her encouragement is to work on discovering strengths in small-scale interviews. Inviting everyone to become a talent-spotter, using their own words.

She calls it the art of *illumination*. 'Through what lens do we look at people and events? Are we generous in interpreting what we see? Do we do 'positive gossip'? And look at things through a lens of awe and wonder?' If we do, Diana contends, opportunities increase and positive emotions and comments flourish.

A final one to point out is the importance of *integrity*. 'Leadership is making decisions that serve the greater whole. It is not about you as an individual, or even a group. How do your actions benefit the greater system? Everything is interrelated. Working from that kind of consciousness is essential to appreciative leadership.'

And so, whom should take this list to heart? Only the project leaders or the CEOs of this world? To Diana, quite the opposite: 'everyone has an influence, so we are all leaders'.

A message well picked up by the audience. Even though it was the end of the day, the people in the large room were brimming with energy. A tweet from @JokevA sums it up nicely: 'AI leadership = understand and do what gives life to the people.'

[stjepkema@kessels-smit.com](mailto:stjepkema@kessels-smit.com) - @SaskiaTjepkema

Video presentation Diana Whitney 

# So many things yet to discover!

The World Appreciative Inquiry Conference became a rich environment full of insights, stories, practices and new scientific knowledge. Besides all the inspiring keynote sessions, the conference turned out to be a forum for more than 170 people, sharing their experiences and knowledge with the 600 participants.

In between the plenary keynote meetings, there were five slots of twelve simultaneous breakout sessions. It sometimes was a real challenge for participants to make a choice between all the 44 workshops, 10 paper sessions, 5 symposia and 53 beautiful posters. You'll sure agree with us that bringing all this inspiring content in one magazine is completely impossible.

Therefore, the conference organizing team keeps the [www.2012waic.org](http://www.2012waic.org) website online. The website transformed into a rich source of information and inspiration. You can dive into this endless stream of stories, insights, pictures, movies, presentations, graphical charts, posters and papers.

## Compassioned Economies?

Some notes from my participation in the workshops

### 1. How can our economy be both efficient and connected?

Lessons from the past, questions for the future (Sara Lewis and Jem Smith)

### 2. Compassion. Bringing Good to Organisations and the World (Joan Hoxsey)

We often take for granted the terms and concepts widely applied in our daily lives. We forget that these terms are always interpreted towards specific contexts.

For instance: what is included in the costs? Do prices reflect the proper information in order to make sustainable business decisions or responsible consumer purchases. Critics know that prices rarely include ecological costs. What is a 'just' price?

What is efficiency from a broader perspective? Do 'free markets' exist? If yes, who benefits? Is the 'invisible hand' a transparent hand?

Economics grow due to our dreams and ambitions. But do economics support our dreams with respect to the quality of our lives? How can our children discover – the earlier the better – what authentic sources generate happiness and life giving dreams?

There is abundance, in fact it is the genetical code of life. Scarcity only appears when we exploit our resources instead of supporting the generative powers in nature and our talents and creativity.

Greed for money or power disrupts the organic flow. Building communities and supporting connectedness helps boost the quality of life.

What was the best appreciative publicity you ever have seen and how was it affecting you? What has been the best experi-

ence in your company or organisation where you felt proud about what you did for the good of people and/or planet? What did it do to you and your colleagues? Should organisations and enterprises also foster skills of compassion?

We invite business leaders to transform their approach by taking care for the future of our communities. By appreciatively inquiring about the strengths and dreams of the people active in these working communities. We also have to address trade union leaders to participate in it and by introducing a similar process in their own organisation.

Jac de Bruyn - [jac.debruyn@telenet.be](mailto:jac.debruyn@telenet.be)

## To The Essence Through Beauty

There was a special energy at the workshop on autobiographic stories and art. By exchanging stories by means of pictures and artworks, we saw a powerful way of getting to the essence of understanding and connection. This beautiful energy came from the combination of Eric Koenen and Lieve Scheepers... a combination of rich human knowing and storytelling magic. Eric Koenen has written a book about the use of art in organisational change and has used art in various projects supporting transformation. In the workshop, participants first got to experience this process. First they chose images that represented a personal desire related to a special project. After placing the picture on chairs, participants then chose a second image, but this time with fear in mind. With two pictures in our hands we partnered up with another participant and exchanged stories in relation to our work.

Some reactions from the participants: 'What a great way to discover communalities'. 'This way of sharing stories goes

much deeper than other conversations'. At the end of the workshop Eric showed us the last two minutes of the movie *Over Canto* about 4 pianists playing with no music sheets, but still somehow connecting with sight and sense. The last two minutes show the moment the pianists stop playing after a last decisive look at each other. In this moment we saw the silent power of art and story in the context of change. This is an amazing power, and something special for us all to work with. *Over Canto* is a documentary about the effect of *Canto Ostinato*, a piece of music composed by Simeon Ten Holt in 1923, on the lives of 9 people.

Loubna Zarrou - [info@styrax.nl](mailto:info@styrax.nl) -  
@styrax\_training

### Please, Stalk your Classmate

'This week you will be secretly following Björn', the teachers proposed. Make sure he never finds out you're investigating him. Try to find out what his strengths are. At the end of this week, reveal to him that you were observing him and give him a few strength-cards.' Yakov (17) and Björn (16) are taking a sabbatical year at the Arbeidsinstituttet Buskerud in Norway. Is it a special school? 'Students must feel good at our school, Yakov says. 'We are trusted by our teachers and they take us very seriously. Teachers and students are always available for each other, willing to really listen to

each other. That results in a school where everybody knows everybody.'

*Nerds don't exist*

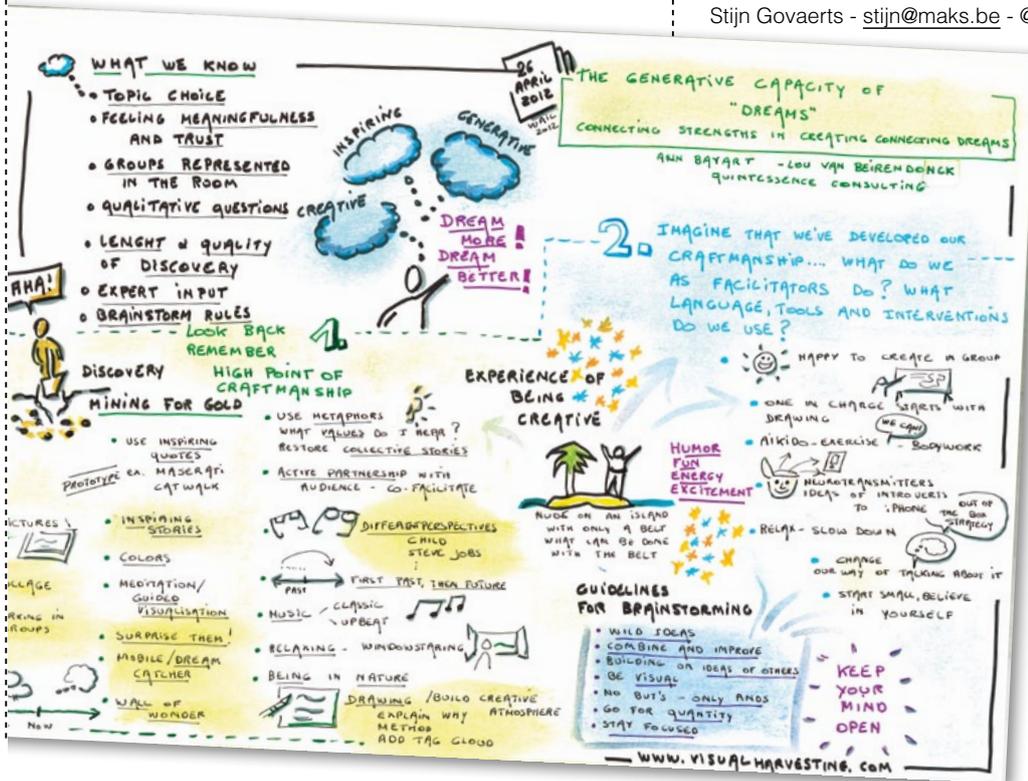
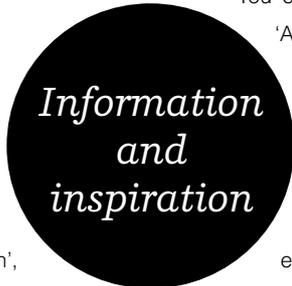
'Nerds or losers don't exist in our school' Yakov continues. 'There is no room for bullying, cutting class, or forming gangs competing against each other. We walk and talk together about our strengths.' 'Please don't see it as something cheesy or awkward' Björn laughs. 'We just hang out and talk, as normal people do.'

'You can attend this school for one year' Yakov says. 'After that, you go back to your old school and talk about your experience to other students and teachers.'

*Dreams and goals*

Björn dreams about building a house in the United States and own a classic Mustang. 'My teachers are helping me to achieve that dream. I had to write down goals to achieve. If I reach my goals, I am much closer to achieve my initial dream. I wrote down that I wanted to learn to breakdance, produce hip hop music, and I want to learn how to fix broken down cars. Waiting for my dream to come true by chance is not going to get me anywhere. I must act. Teachers will help me to achieve my dream instead of flunking me because I haven't reached my dream yet.'

Stijn Govaerts - [stijn@maks.be](mailto:stijn@maks.be) - @stinusg



seorlab

Graphic workshop  
"The generative capacity of dreams" of Martine van Remoortele

# ‘Societal Appreciative Inquiry: rethinking human dignity and sustainability for re-inventing society’

BY MARCEL VAN MARREWIJK



In the dark plenary hall of the Ghent Convention Centre the album cover of Hotel California appeared. The beautiful tones of the Eagles filled the room. The audience sang alone in a harmonious karaoke:

*'Mirrors on the ceiling,  
the pink champagne on ice  
And she said 'we are all just prisoners here, of our own device'...*

Klaas van Egmond appeared on stage. Obviously a professor - an environmental scientist. His opening view is that our devices - not least greed - have caused the emergence of materialistic patterns in our (Western) civilizations. And the song points out where we find ourselves:

*... gathered for the feast.  
They stab it with their steely knives,  
but they just can't kill the beast.*

Van Egmond is motivated by Dennis Meadows' (1972) Club of Rome report: *Limits to Growth*. This carries a number of doomsday scenarios which have been ridiculed by many over the years. Yet, the forecasts in the report, while not all accurate, do point to events such as peak industrial performance in 2010 and seem very close to reality.

In fact, today we find many of the warning indicators in the report on an exponential growth curve. And as van Egmond stated clearly: no system on earth cannot stand *infinity*. It will all come crashing down if we do not alter current patterns.

Van Egmond argues that we must re-think and reflect upon human dignity and sustainability in order to re--invent society. He has learned that the solution for the sustainability problem has to be found in social and cultural dynamics, rather than in technological development only. We must study our values, as these support the economic, financial and societal systems.

Van Egmond has approached this challenge through researching the characteristic values of thousands of civilians over many countries. If the wisdom of the crowds stands, the pie-chart below is the reflection of our current status.

This chart has been constructed along the lines of the old Celtic Cross, symbolizing the two opposites people have to reconcile.

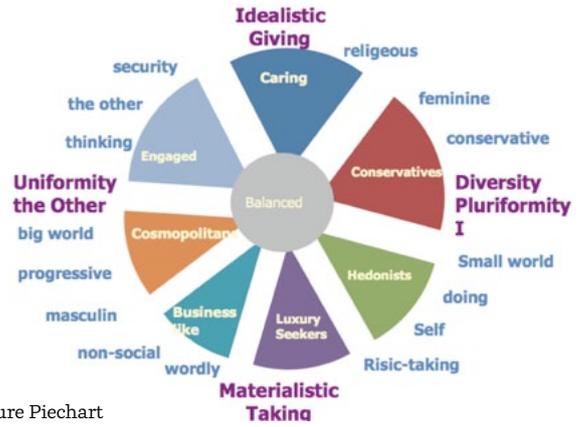


figure Piechart

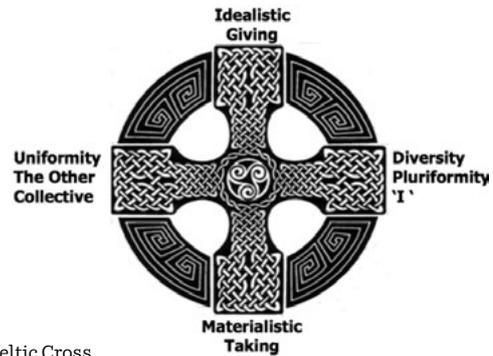


figure Celtic Cross

Both lines have inspired different philosophers and scientists. Mind vs. matter, to have or to be, I against the world. It fragments and it pushes people out of their boundaries, out of touch with the point of balance. Since the Heisenberg experiment we know that we are both part and the whole at the same time. It is now the time to understand what these scientists were saying from a wider perspective. It is time we learn from our history!

Van Egmond sketched a brief history of the Western Civilization, starting with early Christianity and the rise of the church. He explained that here we saw our first catastrophe: the inquisitions, killing thousands of heretics. Many years later Marx explained that social conditions influence the quality of our lives, but this thinking quickly perverted into hardcore Stalinism, killing millions in the Soviet death camps. In a similar way, Darwinism was perverted into a political system (Nazism) with the same outcome, but with the Jews as their main victim. The fourth catastrophe emerged when the industrial revolution led to environmental degradation, exploitation and pollution. Reagan and Thatcher appear in the story next, favoring individualism and autarky. Their thinking aligns with a perverted version earlier pub-

lished in *Atlas Shrugged* by Ayn Rand. It made way for financial greed and the dominance of Wall Street. Finance no longer supports the real economy but created loops in order to make money with money, completely out of bounds, endangering economic progress and the quality of life. We now risk decadence, hedonism, barbarism, and the fragmentation of all against all.

We have failed to stay between the lines, the zone that represents the balance. We should have kept the virtues in the middle, as the old Greeks already said. Our lack of consensus in the understanding of human nature has allowed societies to degenerate into their own caricature and led to associated catastrophes. Instead of a focusing on balance, reconciling the controversies, we over-exposed into extremes, one-sided versions of certain human values.

But there is always hope. Van Egmond joyfully highlighted that only the night before, the Dutch parliament succeeded to draft a new, more inclusive approach that included all political parties! For once, the adversaries choose to collaborate in designing a common future. Working with partners from opposite ends automatically results in a virtuous centre.

Klaas van Egmond takes examples from the rich Western cultural heritage. The wisdom introduced above is acknowledged in many religions and recognized by various artists and poets. To give only a few examples from his long list:

- William Yeats wrote the *Second Coming* and used the metaphor: *The falcon cannot hear the falconer* – expressing that virtues pervert to extremes, out of touch with their core and consciousness.
- He related to Icarus' burning of his wax of his 'wings' when he enters dangerous heights, failing to stay between the lines.
- Cinderella kept the balance middle between the two ugly sisters, each of whom represent perverted extremes of 'heaven' and 'earth'.
- He reflected on several paintings of islands; wherein the land represents consciousness while the sea reflects unconsciousness... the hero's role being about bridging the opposites.
- And he told of stories such as Wagner's *Ring der Nibelung* – full of allegory for human struggle to find balanced wisdom and virtue.

Van Egmond spends extra effort in describing Percival's quest for the Holy Grail. In his early life he encounters a king but fails to make the ultimate inquiry and is thrown into the dark periphery, where he encounters all of man's temptations. Only at the end of his life is he able to appreciatively inquire into the king's health, becoming a true connected leader, including all values and virtues. The knights of King Arthur's Round Table represent our circle of values. Each time the King sent them out to confront the darkness – gaining deeper understanding from the extremes – to return to the table enriching the group's collective wisdom.

How about the Asian heritage? Many old stories, such as the Hindu Mahabharata, beautifully align with the core of Western wisdom. Currently, Western focus is aiming at uniformity and materialistic values, slowly shifting to more spiritual ones, while the Eastern cultures focus at opposite values. However, materialistic tendencies grow in importance. The ends meet and together – at the global scale – we can cover all necessary values. That is hopeful.

Good and evil are a matter of circumstance. A particular event can be good to balance a development, but can turn into evil when it is perverted at the other extreme. A one-sided approach is always bad. We need more than democracy. We need systems and institutions that are able to reconcile all opposites, discourage all extreme caricatures, encourage the centripetal forces bringing systems at ease in the virtuous middle, a balanced position, a synthesis at the centre.

Klaas van Egmond sees an important role for Appreciative Inquiry. The ultimate truth is knowing by compassion. This implies that people must engage in connection, emphatically inquiring for the matters that worry, the dreams that inspire. It gives recognition and inclusion, establishing new societies at a higher level of complexity, able to face the challenges at hand. The collective outcomes of AI-findings will bring humanity at a higher level, aligning technologies with the dignity of mankind.

Sustainability is the skill to stay out from the periphery. And we have no choice but to take action. Because when we think of this world: *We can check out anytime we like, but we can never leave!*

[marcel@ai100.org](mailto:marcel@ai100.org) - @mvanmarrewijk

Video presentation Klaas van Egmond ▶

# Harvesting words and concepts



*An  
AI-learner*

BY RUSSELL KERKHOVEN

Participant Russell Kerkhoven looks back on his experiences in the 2012 World Appreciative Inquiry Conference. What a week!

For five days, I was embedded in the thought and language world of Appreciative Inquiry (AI). Days later I seek to make sense of the impressions, connections and inspirational words. For me – an AI-learner – the conference was rich enough to enable many different search angles to be followed. Presentations and quotes can be found by tracing the outputs of the conference media-crew. I recommend you browse the conference website [www.2012waic.com](http://www.2012waic.com) and select appealing titles.

Overall the focus on questions and the commitment to craft questions to fit the audience, issue and stage of inquiry, showed the need to respect the emergent nature of an (appreciative) inquiry process.

The pre-conference with David Cooperrider treated us to a host of insights and conversations with new people. David asked us: 'If we want to explore whole-system change, this requires moving out of our comfort zones of small groups and small incremental shifts. Where might an AI approach multiply value in your work, business and life?'

David gave an impressive example of using an appreciative approach in connecting with his children through sports. He also pinpointed the need for a balanced inner dialogue that enables you to stride along and step out of the box. For this a positive image of the future, positive emotions, an 'open' mind and self-acceptance are paramount.

David questioned the group size with which we generally work. Effective groups are often considered to be around seven people. He challenges us to explore these forms of closure with creativity as AI practitioners are increasingly showing that whole system change can be achieved through AI summits at scale! David asked: 'Could it be that we have created this belief in effective group size based on our old deficit-based thinking? Because we feel comfortable with this size? Have we sought to develop strengths in dealing with large groups of diverse stakeholders?' The animated table conversations suggest that many do indeed have experience with larger groups. Maybe we should draw on these experiences?

## *I warmly recommend embracing the Appreciative Inquiry attitude and position*



Russell Kerkhoven

It was exciting to discover the close link between social constructionism and Appreciative Inquiry. The plenary on social constructionism and the ongoing dialogues, exploring abstract notions was acted out powerfully by Kenneth Gergen and Danielle Zandee. The conversations emphasized that AI is a philosophy and not just a happy positive method. As an inquiry method, AI consequently emphasizes the importance of crafting the right questions.

Micro practices such as active listening and using the imaginative eye form building blocks for craftsmanship. Active engagement through dialogue, creating space to think and playing with your inner dialogue are distinctive of successful AI practitioners.

Starting a plenary dialogue with Ronald Fry, Gervase Bushe acknowledges that 50 per cent of his AI interventions failed, this success rate compares favorably with other change paradigms. Gervase said: 'Do not be blinded by the notion of newness. What counts is that the idea is compelling to take action .... people hear it and want to join in ... Generativity is more than a thought process. It is about what's happening with the ideas. Strands of experiences that are special, energize people to take action.' Generative design, generative connection is a beckoning horizon that can be reached during the AI-process. Ron Fry said: 'appreciation tends to rise above inquiry and positivity attracts and becomes an end in itself'

Methodologically, they explain, the AI Destiny phase can be confusing and unclear, emphasizing the need for frequent improvisation in this phase.

More excitement came with Klaas van Egmond, who spoke at a lightning speed, using powerful imagery with myths, art and fairy tale personas. He started his keynote with the Eagles' song 'Hotel California' and he explains that at this point in 'our' civilisation 'we are in this together, there is no way back, only forward!' To achieve this he makes an electrifying plea for redefining our societal values and cautions us against the small world of the I. Klaas favours the idea of a dynamic balance, that reconciles opposites.

Leo Bormans – in a hi-speed and spirited performance – spotted mega trends and shared micro moments as an active citizen. Believe in happiness and do something with that 'wisdom'. Hope is something we can choose! Pessimists are not in the majority, they just happen to make more noise', Leo said. He calls for including an irrational dimension of participation and ends with: 'kind men create mankind.'

Emerging from this all, I warmly recommend embracing the Appreciative Inquiry attitude and position. You can have so much more fun. Starting from what is can be so infinitely more rewarding.

[rgk2you@gmail.com](mailto:rgk2you@gmail.com) - #rgk4you

# Conversation about cases of Appreciative Inquiry in nation building and regional development with the active support of business



BY JEANNETTE SCHONEWILLE

Anastasia Bukashe and Ilma Barros have had a dialogue amongst multi sector stakeholders in the aim of regional development. They presented the highlights of successful cases of Appreciative Inquiry that have led to large scale regional development and nation building. These are examples from South Africa and Brasil. These cases have led to regeneration in all sectors and cross borders.



Dr. Anastasia Bukashe



Dr. Ilma Barros



**A**nastasia Bukashe and Ilma Barros shared their stories and experience in Appreciative Inquiry for nation building on stage by asking each other questions. What has been happening? How were companies inspired to incorporate the processes? Their stories are remarkable examples of how to stimulate business interest in societal issues and how to stimulate change.

## What is happening in Brazil?

Business As Agents for World Benefits (BAWB) comments 'Every single and global issue we face is a business opportunity in disguise' Peter Drucker said sometime. Ilma Barros explains the purpose of the BAWB 'World Inquiry' is to discover, amplify, and promote extraordinary business and society innovations that:

- Revolutionize the way the world eradicates poverty
- Restore the biosphere
- Build stronger communities
- Shape sustainable peace

World Inquiry is a worldwide action research initiative that uses Appreciative Inquiry (AI) to learn more about the role of business in society. In Brazil, Ilma Barros started in 2003 BAWB conferences where participants and innovators gathered every year in different regions of the country. Appreciative Inquiry promotes 'Generative Encounters'. This initiative has inspired other organisations to increase their societal awareness. During these conferences Ilma shared stories of how companies scale up their societal efforts. World Inquiry always sparks exchanges about the role and potential of business: *How to be Great by Doing Good?* Ilma says 'the sharing of stories of mutual benefit will promote new thinking, conversations, connections, and learning that will lead the world toward a healthy, peaceful, and sustainable future' After the conferences, companies generated new and interesting partnerships and a whole new way of working together that even impacts on the growth of their businesses'. It became both a process and a platform for increasing the quality of exchanges year by year in four of the five regions in Brazil. The number of conferences increased from 14 in 2003, 15 in 2004, 54 in 2005 to 43 in 2006.

Three phenomena have occurred as a result of the BAWB in Brazil:

1. The participants were enthused by the positive experiences of the BAWB conferences in Brazil
2. They discovered the urge to initiate more exchanges to forward their ideas and insights and bring them to fruition.
3. They saw the possibility that their 'doing good' projects could in fact become a new business in themselves.

In this way business has the opportunity to be a new creative force on the planet that could contribute to the wellbeing of people, profit and planet. By sharing stories of creative initiatives that have already taken, we can scale up the generative power of AI.

## What is going on in South Africa?

Anastasia Bukashe presented the creation of new developments in South Africa. She has been working as a practitioner extensively in Africa, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, North and South America, and recently in Asia. This work focused on reconciliation and building sustainable peace. In these settings she always works closely with local communities and organisations to build capacity and learning in jointly enriching ways. Anastasia is frequently asked to present at conferences and global forums to highlight issues of human rights and peace-building.

The Axiom News wrote about the contribution of Anastasia at the WAIC in Ghent 'while some are saying South Africa was supported by the African continent during its struggles, and those deeds to be honoured now, others are angry about the opportunities that are being stolen by foreigners.' 'We need to have a different conversation about what it means to be in Africa, and what it means to be South African in Africa,' says Anastasia. 'What is the world calling for Africa to be, what are we calling for each other to be, and what are we witnessing in each other that makes that possible?'

She has been working for more than a year now to bring these questions to groups of citizens and civil leaders. It's been incredibly slow work, she says, with a few significant shifts here and there, as when she convened a group of key civil leaders for such a conversation.

[j.schonewille@cbo.nl](mailto:j.schonewille@cbo.nl) - @JeannetteSchone

Video presentation Bukashe and Barros 

keynote Prof. Dr. Gervase Bushe  
and Prof. Dr. Ronald Fry

# GENERATIVE ENGAGEMENT: GOING BEYOND THE POSITIVE FOR TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE

BY MARCEL VAN MARREWIJK AND SASKIA TJEPKEMA



Gervase Bushe



Ronald Fry

Saturday morning, two professors took the stage: Ronald Fry - holding a chair in Organisational Behaviour at the Weatherhead School of Management, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, USA - and Gervase Bushe - professor of Leadership and Organisation Development at the Beedie School of Business, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, Canada. The theme of their talk was: Generative Engagement: Going beyond the Positive for Transformational Change.

The topic touched the heartstrings of AI-practice among AI-practitioners. Gervase Bushe admitted that in his early days as an AI-practitioner, he experienced several summits that 'sucked'. A sigh of relief was felt among the audience. A participant stood up and referred to the positivity-thing typically associated with Americans, 'but here in Europe, we sometimes see it as superficial. We prefer to allow other types of experiences into dialogues that enable progress in line with AI.' He received spontaneous applause.

Fry started the conversation by giving examples of people who - after participating in an AI process - volunteered to do something. In his view, this is the most special trait of AI: a successful AI process leaves people committing themselves to unplanned activities, new cooperative action, unleashing energy and turning it to something worthwhile with respect to their common dreams. Throughout the world, this has been the effect of AI. Was it just the positivity? No, not entirely.

Bushe once researched the results of eight organisations, all of them had spent an AI summit in a positive environment. After 18 months the outcomes were quite different. Four of the groups had generated transformational change, two managed to achieve incremental change and two teams had experienced no change at all. One other study, according to Bushe, showed that out of twenty teams, seven cases had transformational outcomes and thirteen incremental change, with no differences in 'positivity' measures. What differed was the creation of new ideas, the emergence of a generative metaphor altering the landscapes of the people involved, and an improvisational approach to the destiny phase in AI.

Positivity may be a necessary condition, but is certainly not sufficient for planned transformational change. The key insight shared by Fry and Bushe is the 'generative connec-

tion. 'It is not just about creating new ideas, brainstorming or dreaming, but doing so in a way that also creates a desire to act upon them!'

The rest of their keynote was about exploring the nature of generativity - specifically the generative connection - its role in transformational change, and how we can infuse Appreciative Inquiry with this generative potential.

For a long time AI practitioners and researchers have focused on leveraging, spotting and appreciating strengths. More and more the inquiry aspect ('the I in AI') is gaining momentum. Generative questions unleash the potential within people. They spark connectivity and bring people to a generative state.

Positivity boosts reciprocity between members of a group. It has a contagious effect and stimulates cooperation and as such is a necessary condition but not an end to itself. The espoused effect is generative connection, interactions that bring feelings of energy, aliveness and potential to create more enduring, expansive and transformational outcomes. Connectedness will then result in 'the development of new and innovative ideas that will generate a better understanding of how inquiries might be even more generative and it might add to our repertoire of thoughts and actions', Fry says. Or in the words of Ken Gergen, already phrased in 1978: 'Evidence of creativity and innovation in conversations; the invention or surfacing of alternative possibilities' and - Fry added - 'a demonstrated capacity, energy or the will to act in harmony with those possibilities in the future'.

In 2007 Gervase Bushe wrote:

'It is the quest for new ideas, images, theories and models that liberate our collective aspirations, alter the social construction of reality and, in the process, make available decisions and actions that were not available or did not occur to us before. When successful, AI generates spontaneous, unsupervised, individual, group and organisational action toward a better future.'

This emphasis on generativity has implications for the 4D process. To what extent can we sustain the generative connection throughout the 4D process and afterward?

## Powerful questions

Which questions should we ask to elicit conversations that challenge the status quo? What initial question would lead to the most generativity (most likely evoke a powerful new idea)? Imagine you are organizing a conference, and you use AI to design it. Which question would be most powerful?

1. Tell me about your most positive, high point conference experience. (When you felt happiest, proudest, most inspired, alive, joyful?)
2. Tell me about the most provocative conference experience you had. (When you felt most challenged? - perhaps your thinking was upended, your values were confronted, your ideas were challenged, your emotions were provoked, or your choices were questioned by you).

The audience almost unanimously voted for the provocative question. That one focuses most clearly on an energizing and generative conference experience. And thus it is worthwhile to examine (if you are looking to organize such a meeting).

Imagine what questions can do when they cause people to reframe their reality ('help you rethink what you take for granted'), when they are novel or surprising, when they engage people's hearts and spirit ('just the head is not enough') and when they build and strengthen a relationship while discussing them? Generative questions relate to deep and connecting experiences. These are appreciative, but they are not necessarily positive ones, as we sometimes have to value, acknowledge and embrace the shadowy side of our lives and our mistakes. Questions that fit all of these criteria are not easy to come by. You need to tweak and shape and search for the right words and focus.

## Making good use of stories

Another element that is common to almost all AI interventions, is stories. Bushe offers some good advice: 'I more and more like to do 'the storytelling-thing' before the actual summit or AI meeting. We can get more out of the stories, I find, if we let people share them before hand, write them up and then use the stories as a jumping off place for our inquiry into the generative topic.'

A way to make the most of 'Discovery': 'I begin by letting people read the stories in a small group, one at a time. And then brainstorm. What associations and thoughts are triggered?' He stresses that it's not about analyzing them. It is really about using the stories as a spark for new ideas. 'And then the group just keeps on reading until the brainstorm fades out.... In my experience it leads to great results very quickly.'

## Dreaming as a first step to action

Fry: 'Dream is to me about creating a mindset of possibilities, about seeing bigger wholes. It works very well to use kinetic experiences. It is common practice among AI practitioners to have people make something, create stuff, use imagery and materials.' He has some very clear-cut advice on how to make the most of such activities. 'Fill the space with imagery. Do not try to order them, or focus on just one, or look for the common thread. Just leave the images as images. Let them be. People also don't need to look at all of them - sometimes it is better only to share stuff in small groups. You do not need an overarching way to organize the images. Our brains can't even handle it.'

The real relevance of these dreams in the shapes of posters, drawings, collages or whatever is the fact that they are made. Fry explains: 'Materializing our imagery is an important step towards taking our intentions into action.'

## Generative design: play and embrace the mistakes

In the speaker's view, dream and design do not have clear-cut borders. Fry: 'Generative design is about making visible our highest hopes, dreams as a first signal of intention to act. The important part is that we not talk about actions, or make action plans, but rather build something, design it.' Even if it is only a first prototype. 'The key to an impactful design phase is that people dare to engage. If all went well, you built some trust in the earlier stages. But it still requires a leap of faith. And then, that they engage in play, start trying, dabbling...'

He builds a case for embracing our mistakes: 'I know of a world renowned design company, where the first thing you see if you walk in their headquarters building, is their wall of mistakes. They don't hide them. They are proud of them! They appreciate them. As designers, they embrace mistakes because they were small steps that lead eventually to the successful breakthroughs. We have to find ways to let the mistakes also be here in the practice of AI.'



### Destiny: improvise! (not projectize)

A truly generative AI process leaves people knowing where they want to go, and are energized to act. Bushe: “That is what generativity is about. That people start acting, don’t wait for permission, but take voluntary, visible action.”

“This is why getting the whole system in the room is so important. If you have everyone there you don’t need any people to control actions afterwards. You don’t need to wait because someone needs to approve plans. You can make decisions on the spot. And start.”

The real danger here is to ‘projectize’ too quickly, Bushe warns. ‘If you really want people to do something you need to help them make the first step. Some voluntary, visible step of action. Pay attention and when you see good stuff happening, fan the fire, find ways to amplify the efforts.’

To managers or leaders he always compares their role to that of a farmer: “The seeds have been planted. Now go see what happens. Give fertilizer to the stuff you like, pull out the weeds. Especially in hierarchic organisations people can find that very refreshing.”

It’s not just an idea. They are backed up by experience and research. ‘Our studies have shown that the improvisational approach leads to far greater success. Build it step by step, learn from what happens, include new insights and build sustainable action out of that.’

### Enabling conditions for ongoing success

And that basically is the key for the next steps as well. The last question Fry addresses is how to foster ongoing success. Here’s some of their tips:

- Get the key decision makers fully engaged in the inquiry. Get the ‘right people in the room’. Fry: ‘I always try to include more external voices than the client is comfortable with. Get the voices of the client, patient, end-user... in the room. That makes such a big difference. Also: get the people who are financially responsible there...very important, easily overlooked.’
- Strive for stakeholder alignment – not agreement. If you keep the conversation alive, you can work with the differences in opinions and needs.
- Pay attention to how people, who were there, invite new people. As the circle widens: how are new people included? Are they also invited to share their stories and dreams, too?
- Keep the narrative alive.... Create a ‘hub’ (like a website, newspaper, regular meetings) where new stories can be shared and learnings can be harvested. So that the ongoing improvisations are made visible. Start follow-up meetings with stories and experiences (to avoid falling into ‘regular meeting mode’).

### Generative keynote

Time was up. But the ideas are not! Fry and Bushe themselves stress that these are not the ‘definite’ answers, and invite everyone to keep exploring and experimenting: ‘how do we make AI as generative as possible?’.

‘Beyond positivity’ was well received by the audience. They got a long and enthusiastic applause.

[marcel@ai100.org](mailto:marcel@ai100.org) - @mvanmarrewijk

[stjepkema@kessels-smit.com](mailto:stjepkema@kessels-smit.com) - @SaskiaTjepkema

Video presentation Fry and Bushe ▶

# How to Megaphone positive change? What you focus on, is what you get

BY JEANNETTE SCHONWILLE



Leo Borgmans

Keynote speaker Leo Bormans tells with passion and energy how to loudly broadcast the message. In his keynote speech he delivers the message that happiness is about being positive and optimistic as well about the problems, worries and feeling of sadness we have. It is about real life; about you and about us. Leo told the audience his story 'Happier societies don't just 'happen'. He asks the questions what can we do ourselves? What makes people move, what pushes them forward?

### We all have our vegetable box

This story from Leo Bormans youth came up after he heard David Cooperrider saying: 'we have to stand up, step up and scale up'. This made him remember the vegetable box anecdote in his youth. With humor and gusto he knows in his story how to catch a core. He told the story of his father who was a salesman for small grocery shops. When Leo five years old his father took him to these shops, put a vegetable box upside down and asked to recite a poem which earned him afterwards an ice cream. He told everyone how reciting poetry trained his memory and still helps him while he is doing his speech on stage. 'I stand up on my vegetable box, doing my poem and afterwards I hope I'll get my icecream'. Everyone needs his own vegetable box.

### What is your strength?

He told a number of stories about his own experiences. When he worked for the Ministry of Education he started a magazine for parents, teachers and students and published 1 million copies. He told of how much he learnt from a school director when he was told to stop the school magazine he produced because the teachers were against it. Leo saw in the eyes of the school director that he believed and trusted him which was very important for him. What is your main strength friends ask him sometimes. They know at heart the answer is that he is an optimist. To Leo, optimism is a combination of belief and behaviour. After his book about optimism, he wrote the World Book of Happiness. This book is based on onscientific research about happiness. Leo found that worldwide 3000 professors are studying happiness. He talked with 100 of them in 50 different countries. How to broadcast the message? By asking Herman van Rompuy, the President of the European Council, his book was distributed to all world leaders. In his letter Herman van Rompuy wrote, 'the cynics will immediately dismiss these proposals as naïve, but positive change is no longer something for drifters and dreamers. It is a possibility.

### Why don't we choose hope?

We are living in a global environment. We are living in a complex world because we have never had so much information as now. What we actually need is inspiration. Nowadays we do not lack information but somehow we have lost our wisdom. 'Wisdom in knowledge and wisdom in information'. We are overwhelmed by an ocean of information but people have lost their direction. In this world we are driven by fear which prevents people from reaching their potential. We shouldn't live in a world to be afraid. Why don't we choose the road of hope? Leo introduces in his perspective two new words that we need. The first is Glocalization; global in spirit, local in character. This is what is needed in the welfare state, the media and the economy. The second is Infospiration. 'We need books to inspire people, we need people to inspire people'. Imagine what would happen if we were to be driven by hope instead of fear? This choice is fundamental. And people can make the choice themselves.

### What you focus on, is what you get

What makes people change? What is the button that needs pushing to make people act? The key to this is in an experiment Leo demonstrated on the stage with a member of the audience. When pushing, pulling and asking people to move they will but immediately afterwards they go back to where they were. To Leo the key to move people is to be a coach. How do you do that?

1. Be a partner
2. Give positive feedback
3. Give structure and freedom
4. Show the direction and give space

In Nepal they use the word 'Namaste'. Namaste means 'I have seen you', 'There is a positive power in you' and 'I bow deeply to that'. People in Nepal say it a hundred times a day to each other. According to Leo, we need a mechanism within



us, a switch, that makes our communication process strong, warm, interactive, transparent, creative and with hope & humor. It is all about believing in the power of change, daring to dream, interacting with people, being open without hidden agenda's, giving colour to your personal interventions and your actions. Don't let routine take hold, focus on what can be and not on fears and problems.

So, do we need a megaphone for scaling up? Leo: maybe you can use a microphone for your own voice and give the microphone to other people. But when you really want to change your perspective in the journey of your life then use a telescope. A telescope changed the way we look at stars and the sky, it is just a matter of focus.

And focus is what we need. Optimists focus on all the possibilities on the horizon and are driven by hope and action. Pessimists focus on everything that will be a problem and are paralysed by fear and cannot act. If you are the (wo)man with the telescope you are the one that can always change perspectives. In our society we also have a word the same as 'Namaste' in Nepal. That is Enthusiasm.

[j.schonewille@cbo.nl](mailto:j.schonewille@cbo.nl) - @JeannetteSchone

Video presentation Leo Bormans ▶

## *Wit(h)ness*

*Cees Hoogendijk*

*Witnessing appreciation, from a position slightly detached  
Connectedness experienced, mutuality in the air  
With You*

*Witnessing tango, the standpoint freeing the generative step  
Dancing is appreciative inquiry; I follow, my eyes are closed  
With You*

*Witnessing Diana, bridging the auditorium with presence  
Synchronicity inviting me to a performative 'wow'  
With You*

*Witnessing the media crew, wholeness is our middle name  
Opening up worlds with sparks of generative news  
With You*

*Witnessing the other is entangled with co-creation  
Let me be witness of an appreciative society arising  
Co-creating Withness*

# Participants Portraits

BY SASKIA TJEPKEMA



## Daniel

AI is taught at many different Schools and Universities. Daniel Richardsson from Sweden is a teacher at Mid Sweden University. His AI course runs at the Quality Department at the Faculty of Technical and Sustainable Development. He is also AI consultant and.... an athlete. What brings him here, to #2012WAIC?

### Forest orienteering and AI

'In 2006 – I was working for an NGO back then – I was given the 'Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry' by my manager. He asked me to study it and see if it was anything we could use. I was so surprised when I read it. Because it gave words to a mindset that I already knew...'

Read more **B**



## Rafael

Rafael Olemoon is a Masai from Tanzania. And one of the participants of #2012WAIC. What brought him here? 'I have been working with Leif Josefsson, for the past few years in Tanzania, where I live. Leif is doing a programme on AI, and he uses 'nature' as a metaphor for learning. I am a Masai, we are a nomadic people and live the pastoral, tribal life. With our herds. We derive a lot of our wisdom from nature.'

### Familiar mindset

Though the cold is tough to get used to, Rafael thoroughly enjoys participating in the conference. 'Mostly because of all the people I meet here! Everyone looks for the positive in things, in people. That mindset is very familiar to me. It is how we think as Masai.' Being surrounded by others with a similar view is more than just 'nice'. 'It encourages me to go forward the way that I am doing now. It strengthens me in that sense. But it also gives me more words for something that I did not have words for. It comes naturally to me to look appreciatively. But now I can also explain it to others.'

Read more **B**



## Shelagh

'The words we use construct the world we live in' is the tagline on Shelagh Aitken's business card. She works as an editor for AI Practitioner, the journal on AI practice and theory. What brings her here?

'Well, we have a stand here, with the journal. I am here to share information on it, to meet with the authors. And to remind people that participants can download a free copy before April 29th!' She laughs. 'Please put that in, it seems not everyone is aware of it.'

### Meeting people

It is Shelagh's first AI conference ever. And that is very special. 'I am meeting people here that I have been working with for over 5 or 6 years, but have never seen before. We only 'meet' online. And now I see their faces, talk with them. That is great. I met Diana Whitney for instance, in the hotel lobby. She heard my name and immediately said: 'Oh, you are Shelagh!' That was such a great moment. And there are many more, also unexpected ones, like with Tim Slack from Appreciating People. We didn't know each other, but share a stand together and get along great.'

Read more **B**

## Jean, Grace and Perla

Sitting at a table, taking a little break, are two participants from the Philippines, Jean Lapa and Grace Tyler. They are students at SAIDI School of Organisation Development. What brings them here? 'Well, very simple', Jean says, 'our Dean, Rosa Fuentes, presents a paper here, and we came to support her!' 'And to learn for ourselves!', Grace adds with a big smile. Both agree: 'You can only support something that you believe in yourself'. And it is clear that they are very enthusiastic about Appreciative Inquiry.

Read more **B**

[stjepkema@kessels-smit.com](mailto:stjepkema@kessels-smit.com)



# The closing process of the World Appreciative Inquiry Conference in Ghent

*Your Presence Highly  
Appreciated!*

*Playing  
for  
Change*

BY JEANNETTE SCHONEWILLE AND SASKIA TJEPKEMA



The fifth World Appreciative Inquiry Conference ended with a musical note. Musicians Francois Viguie delivered the final interesting story about Playing for Change: a group of musicians on a mission to 'connect the world through music'. It started one decade ago when filmmaker Mark Johnson and his team set out to create a documentary about 'music from the streets' with the subtitle 'Peace through music'. Mark deliberately visited different parts of the world – also nations with tense relationships, or histories of (civil) war – and investigated the power of music in bringing people together and inspiring positive change.

The project was a huge success – especially the music clips which spread very fast on the Internet, and got millions of 'hits' on Youtube and Vimeo. The documentary was one of the 'Disruptive Innovation Awards' honorees of 2012 Tribeca Film Festival because of its impact. Mark kept on traveling, shooting new videos, and the group of musicians grew steadily. They were invited to perform on ever more events and went on tour. This success inspired them to take the next step and they started in 2007 the Playing for Change

Foundation for building music schools. This Foundation is investing in music education for children in areas where schools are otherwise scarce. Francois Viguie is involved in building music schools in Ghana and Mali and spoke about it with passion: 'In music education we do so much more than teach music and arts. Music is a tool for positive change because it is about creating. Children also build a sense of self when they learn to express themselves through music' Moreover, whole communities are involved in building the school, these buildings then often become meeting places, where knowledge is shared and music made.



## Generative connections, dreams, stories & songs

All in all, it is a story that fits the basic spirit of Appreciative Inquiry very well... The power of the initiative lies in a strong dream, and the generative connections that these musicians make. Stories (and songs) are shared, people join, get into action, and the whole project grows, the 'building the bridge as you walk it' -way, improvising steps as new challenges and opportunities arise, involving and activating more people at every step along the way.

In order to make us feel what it is about, Francois brought some musicians with him, amongst them were Clarence (Netherlands), Tula (Israel), Hugo Chavez (Angola) and Roberto Luti (Italy). They delivered a very special musical ending to an inspiring conference.



See you in  
South Africa  
2015

## See you in South Africa 2015

We are looking forward now to South Africa where the next World Conference will take place in 2015. Dr. Anastasia Buskashe said absolutely Yes to the question: 'Will Africa host the 2015 World Appreciative Inquiry Conference? Participants from Africa responded with spontaneous excitement. Immediately at the thought of it, dreams came up; dreams of establishing AI in Africa and internalizing it in humankind. AI will be a great opportunity. Asking Anastasia Buskashe about her wish for the next World Conference she answered: 'I am wondering how to invite the global community to come to Africa. My hope is to co-create the 2015 World Appreciative Inquiry Conference with the whole global system represented in the room'.

With this aim in mind she is starting up a dialogue and invites everyone to answer the following questions:

1. What is your greatest hope for the proceedings and outcomes of the 2015 WAIC?
2. How would you like to contribute to the conference?

Anastasia invites to send your answers to:  
[anastasia@wilgespruit.com](mailto:anastasia@wilgespruit.com)

More on the Playing for Change Foundation can be found [here](#).  
Playing for Change music clips can be found on their [site](#).

[j.schonewille@cbo.nl](mailto:j.schonewille@cbo.nl) - @JeannetteSchone  
[stjepkema@kessels-smit.com](mailto:stjepkema@kessels-smit.com) - @saskiatjepkema

Video Playing for Change 1 ▶

Video Playing for Change 2 ▶



# Merging micro- to macro-practices for a sustainable world



BY PROFESSOR RENÉ BOUWEN

Professor René Bouwen makes his retrospective reflections on the World Appreciative Inquiry Conference 2012

The wide variety of inputs during the conference by keynotes and all other presentations, is a clear illustration of the broad 'foundational' and 'methodological' implications for Appreciative Inquiry to take up the challenge of upgrading its generative power towards a 'new economy' of strengths.

The workshops, symposia and paper presentations mostly document the wide variety of creative work forms in designing AI interventions in a wide variety of contexts. The challenge for creative designs, looking for inspiration in all domains of human expression and also immigrating in always new territory of training, coaching, helping and facilitation, is picked up very well. People from very different disciplines and areas share the common inspiration offered by the AI principles.

The challenge remains to deepen and to broaden the AI practices, from micro-practices over a wide continuum of organisational practices towards macro practices.

A first element of the deepening of the AI practice process may be for each practitioner and scholar to nurture the personal appreciative stance in your own private life and practice. A most remarkable moment during the conference for me was when the first question, after our symposium presentation on the mutual enrichment of process consultation and AI, pointed towards 'What do you do to maintain your personal appreciative stance throughout the daily course of events?'

The foundation of AI does not lie only in a scientific and pragmatic stance, but encompasses the personal life attitude needed to enact AI practices in an authentic way. Time

*go beyond the  
positivity, towards the  
generativity of AI*



René Bouwen

for silence, personal space and a meditative stance was rather scarce during the conference busy sometimes noisy practices. The keynote of Klaas Van Egmond was certainly an intellectual underpinning of this personal integrating stance by 'balancing the opposites'. I vividly remember a sentence of dialogue partner: 'If you see pain as part of the cycle of life, it does not need to become suffering...'

Another element of deepening is the challenge to '...go beyond the positivity, towards the generativity of AI'. That positivity is yet a goal itself must have been expressed somehow during the conference practices as they were reported out in the local newspapers. The papers spoke of 'a new movement' or belief system to push aside all problems by focusing only on the bright sides of life. The strong connection to positive psychology may also be tributary to this one sided perception of AI by a novel audience. Therefore the keynote of Ron Fry and Gervase Bushe on 'Beyond positivity' was perceived by most people as a very welcome and necessary specification of the AI philosophy and methods to come to maturity in a our challenging society, aspiring towards sustainability, social inclusion and personal integrity.

Ron Fry especially was inviting further thought on 'a new positive theory of change'. He stresses the need to develop a new language to phrase the process of energy exchange and mutual trust that is co-created in a truly appreciative dialogue between conversational partners. The creative and energizing 'change moment' is an enactment of wholeness – maybe holiness – beyond diversities but based on the existing differences, encompassing them in a new co-creative outcome. The enactment quality makes the differences between stagnation and change. It is the act of inquiry that has the impact as expressed in the 'Gergen-Heisenberg effect' as Ron said. The active observer-participant creates the 'measurement' or realization of the new social reality.

It was Kenneth Gergen in a 1978 article ("Towards generative theory") who introduced 'generativity' as a quality of any social research act. Here the quality of all micro and meso practices comes in as a distinctive characteristic of all relational practices, as was illustrated and even enacted on stage by Kenneth Gergen and Danielle Zandee. They documented how meaning is not a given – as is 'the illusion of the object' – but continuously co-created during the listening-responding double interacts in the micro moments of life. These micro practices are not 'words' as we are used to

## *The creative and energizing 'change moment' is an enactment of wholeness – maybe holiness*

in so much change work, but every active exchange in play, art or work of any kind. The assemblages of micro practices constitute organisational meso-practices that can have the same high interactive qualities and thus also generative qualities or new possibilities.

The broadening of scope of AI on the macro or societal level may be the most important challenge in the scaling up process. Here very diverse stakeholders, different disciplines, opposite interests and competing competences are interacting with each other. Inventing new combinations is the task here, as Koen Van Mechelen was illustrating in his Cosmopolitan Chicken project, but is maybe even more explicit in Koen's Cosmogolem project. A radical transformation is evoked here in an artistic way, where the individual is invited to transcend differences and opposed forces into a balance of always new combinations.

A new sustainable world – balancing people, profit and planet – is in need of a whole new technology and a whole new way of working together (open source) as Mario Fleurinck from Melotte illustrated through direct digital manufacturing. In addition ecological constraint challenge the state of the art of our macro management practices that we could develop up to now, but which don't live up yet to the enormous sustainability challenges we are facing. They are yet too fragmented and isolated and new interacting platforms and wider and more organic issue definitions have to be created where the whole variety and richness of differences -stakeholders, resources, culture, cooperation strategies, sustainable products and services - are brought in for new combinations.

Here the merger of the qualities of micro practices into the quality of the macro practices -in global issues and with global stakeholders - is the necessary progress we have to search for into our Appreciative Inquiry practices.

[rene.bouwen@ppw.kuleuven.be](mailto:rene.bouwen@ppw.kuleuven.be)

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**special** world appreciative inquiry conference

de werf



stebo  
ondernemend  
voor de samenleving

