



How Generative Can This Conference Be?

The 5th World Appreciative Inquiry Conference starts right now. Together with you. Do you feel you're welcome? You are!

By Griet Bouwen

Take a dive into this sea of possibilities: 14 keynote speakers in 9 plenary sessions, 41 workshops, 5 symposia and 10 paper presentation sessions. Almost too much to comprehend. It's a colorful reflection of how thriving the AI Community is at this tipping point in time.

The Conference Organizing Committee put together this wonderful jigsaw puzzle programme, and is as excited as you are to see it unfolding in the coming days. You'll get to know the 'COC' members soon, when they take the stage to welcome you, to introduce keynote guests and to reflect on what's emerging.

Asking the Conference Organizing Committee about their thoughts ahead of these days this is what they said: "Proud of the program we have put together for this outstanding gathering of Appreciative Inquiry practitioners. Grateful to host about 600 people from all over the world. A bit nervous now it's going to happen for real. And most of all, inquisitive about what will grow these coming days."



"It would be encouraging to understand the generative perspective of AI a bit more than we do today."

The 'COC' members share the awareness that our society and economy are balancing on a tipping point. Prof. René Bouwen, familiar with AI since its earliest days, 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 and compulsory as it is today. These times ask us to develop a new approach, and AI can highly contribute to that." On the question of their highest hopes, the COC members speak with one voice: "For us, the power of Appreciative Inquiry

lies mainly in the generative perspective. It would be really encouraging if we could understand and experience this crucial strength a bit more than we do today."

The Park

By Annelies Poppe

Did you get a chance to walk outside? You should, because the ICC is surrounded by a remarkable park. The Citadel-park is one of the largest parks in the inner city of Ghent. It was constructed in 1875, on the site of what used to be a Dutch citadel. The only thing left of the citadel is the gate. In 1913, the park was reconstructed for the World Expo. Some of the buildings of the Expo were in the park. The second make-over was in 1930, on the 100th anniversary of Belgium's independence.

You should take a good look, because the park is more than a park. It is not just trees, grass and a pond. Hidden under the ground, is a large bunker. If you are inquisitive, you can spot ventilation shafts.

You also find two museums (Modern Art and Fine Arts), a

velodrome (which is an arena for track cycling), statues, a war memorial, an outdoor theatre, a bandstand, a fake cave and a dog's home (you can hear it as well).

Take a good look, because the park, as you see it today, is about to change. The city of Ghent has decided it needs a make-over again. This time, more space will be given to nature.

In the park are 780 trees. Yes, in Belgium, we count them.

Let us know what you have discovered on Twitter #2012WAIC #citadelpark.



The Quotes

Column by Cees Hoogendijk



Towards an 'Economy' of Connecting Strengths.

Did you notice the two quotes? Any clue about their origin?

I'm not sure either, but I like the following theory. It was

in the early summer of 2011. Preparations for the WAIC2012 began to accelerate. Our Dutch AI100 team, involved with its mission to seduce 100 organizations towards an AI-approach, had been learning from the successful Flemish 'AI network'. With them, a warm cross-border relationship had grown, which amongst other activities resulted in co-producing the AI Magazine. Being invited to become member of the WAIC2012 Media Crew seemed a logical next step; above all it was a great honor and a pleasure to me. A draft text for the conference promotion was presented for comments and suggestions. The theme description triggered me. Why talk about an Economy of strengths? Economy, economy. Especially in Europe, the word economy was for me similar to 'cause of the Euro crisis'. So I suggested (but I guess it can be understood as 'I demanded') a change: "Towards a Society of Strengths". To be honest: being a critical reader, I proposed a few more textual alterations. And I touched a few toes. Ouch! "Who is that guy from Holland, daring to challenge the conference theme?" Oh gosh, although with the best intentions, I had demonstrated some Dutch bluntness, and mutual appreciation was not very present... Happily, thanks to the (inter)mediation of Griet, the air was quite easily cleared. But, as far as I was informed, the word 'society' was not to be considered. ("How about 'constructivism' in the States?"; I was thinking.) The summer went by. At some point in time, I revisited the WAIC website. Two quotes winked at me. And I laughed. This Dutch AI apprentice got his part in the co-creation; at least in his imagination. At the end of the day, the quotes around 'economy' are quite generative, don't you think?

To contact Cees

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Media Crew Covers WAIC News

Sixteen voluntary WAIC-journalists gather around the collective aim to make this World Conference become World News. Together with you, this team makes generative news that connects and scales up the best of this event. With these news efforts, the team will reach out to people from all over the world who can't be in Ghent. Every morning, The M-crew will deliver you a WAIC Morning News Paper. You want to co-create the news? Share your thoughts at our group on facebook. Tweet with #2012waic. And comment the stories on our website. Read more on www.2012waic.org

Behind the scenes: reflections through planning WAIC2012

By Andres Roberts



Luc Verheijen is one of the core organisers of WAIC. Here he shares a special point in planning WAIC12 – and a reflection on how Appreciative Inquiry is evolving.

Luc Verheijen has been involved in WAIC since the spark of an idea at the previous WAIC in Kathmandu. Asked about the journey in planning the conference, he shares an interesting moment. Just before the deadline for WAIC12 proposals, only 26 proposals had been presented to the planning committee. There was some doubt and nervousness. But 48 hours later, this number had risen to 126 proposals. And after extending the deadline a further week, 160 proposals had been received. A sense grew that the time was ripe for something special.

There certainly seems to be a sense of important timing to WAIC2012 – reflected further in the number of participants, the strong relationships, and the inspiring energy that has built around the conference. And it is interesting to reflect on the conference theme itself. Asked about this, Luc says: “What we felt through organising the conference is that Appreciative Inquiry is moving from strengths and positive psychology to something that is more about rich purpose and space for connection: for connecting ideas and paradigms for change”.

This more holistic, generative approach seems more and more relevant as we look at the challenges existing in the world. As Luc said: “We have always talked about critical times, yet perhaps these times are more critical than others”. It feels like a call to explore and connect more deeply – to really seek and shape new approaches towards change together. Can we step into this together? When might there be a better time? Can we afford not to accept the invitation?

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Read more news online



What about this Conference 2.0 - By Niel Van Meeuwen –

This conference is all about connecting. Connecting within, and connecting with the outside world. How can the website, twitter, facebook and you app help you to connect? And how can you help the conference to spread the news?

When a wild idea becomes reality – By Cathy Camertijn - The idea of hosting the WAIC 2012 in Belgium was born in the Nepalese mountains.

Packing my bags to come to this conference - By Koen Joly - Koen shares his thoughts, looking forward to the start of this conference.

How AI generates confidence, hope, joy, fulfilment, destiny and future. - By Jac De bruyn. Jac reflects on the préconference workshop with David Cooperrider.

WAIC Radio: tune in!



By Saskia Tjepkema

What will the outside world hear from WAIC? Well, a lot! If they listen to WAIC radio, that is... WAIC radio is the medium to connect both the inside and outside world. DJ's Tjip, Suzanne, Pieterjan and Pepijn will host the shows. Text or voicemail your favourite song or message on + 31 (0)88-7746473

#ksonair - The show will be streamed on the WAIC website and via KSONAIR.nl.

Wednesday: 16.00-20.00 CET -

Thursday: 12.00-16.00 CET -

Friday: 10.00-14.00 CET.

Read the full story online at www.2012waic.org or tap 'blog' on your app

Strengths Movement Still in Act



Given this, some questions to consider

By Michelle Strutzenberger

It was in Belgium more than 20 years ago that David Cooperrider and others created a fuller understanding of Appreciative Inquiry (AI), making this week's fifth World Appreciative Inquiry Conference held in that very same country of historic significance.

David proposes that in some ways we're picking up on parts of that earlier conversation, particularly in thinking about ways to increase the generative potential of human inquiry.

This is an important emphasis, given that -- after so many global strengths conferences and the blooming of the AI and strengths approach worldwide -- we are even so still in the very early stages of tapping the full potential of the approach, according to David.

While the growth and contribution of AI and strengths-based projects are doubling exponentially and looking to do so for a while, David suggests when it comes to creativity in the field and the current learning curve, we are about 10 per cent into the implications of this positive revolution in change that AI helps make happen.

In light of that, what questions might we as conference participants, and those beyond these walls, want to ask ourselves as we consider our roles in this strengths-based movement going forward?

David offers one he says he himself is thinking on these days. How do we ever-increasingly elevate our capacity to lead and manage change at the scale of the whole? He's also seeing a desperate need for questions around the next stage of democracy, proposing that what we've learned in the AI and strengths-based field could have some powerful clues for a new way of being in that as well.

More to Come at www.axiomnews.ca

