

Non-profit or social profit? Deadline or birthline?

Appreciative Inquiry addresses a human art, involving conversational craftsmanship. It takes specific, carefully chosen words, questions, gestures and of course deep listening to help conversations being generative, appreciative and empowering. The good news is that the instrument called language is in reach of everybody on our planet. Imagine everyone would encounter his or her fellow citizen 'the AI way'... together building the sharing Society 3.0.

"What started out as an editing assignment swiftly became a personal discovery into Appreciative Inquiry, a term I now frequently elicit in my own vocabulary. From the first concept of communication starting 'between the noses' to Society 3.0; you are taken on a journey incorporating music, business communication, art, corporate strategies, Buddhist gestures, commercial synergy, poetry and interviews. My editing deadlines soon became editing 'birthlines' as I spent hours discussing and challenging those around me to immerse themselves in the ideas that are so innovatively presented in this book. Appreciative Inquiry has no limitations in where it can be used or by whom. All that is now left is to discover, dream, design and allow yourself to have Appreciative Inquiry delivered to you."

~ La'eeqa Kajee, editor

"Appreciative Inquiries of the 3.0 kind is a courageous step in what I believe to be the "new frontiers" of Appreciative Inquiry, simply known to us in the community as AI. I say this because as the ideas of AI begin to spread, and as practitioners and academics weave these ideas into their daily lives, we are seeing the challenge to take this life-giving approach into the very heart of ordinary life. It is therefore with pleasure that we receive this edition as a special gift to our 2015 global gathering in South Africa, a place where AI resonates deeply with our history and can continue to give life to our future. This book is for anyone who desires to create a life worthy of our highest aspirations as a species, now, today and every day. Enjoy the read, it will change your life if you try this at home!"

~ Revd. Dr. Anastasia M Bukashe, Conference Chairwoman
2015 World AI Conference South Africa

Cees Hoogendijk
Appreciative Inquiries OF THE 3.0 KIND

Appreciative Inquiries of the 3.0 kind

HOW DO WE CONNECT, SHARE AND CO-CREATE
FOR TOMORROW'S HUMAN WHOLENESS?

Cees Hoogendijk



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*How do we connect, share and co-create for tomorrow's
human wholeness?*

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Please try this @home and @work!

Thank You

Karin, Desie, Floyd, Colin, Woody, Billy, Dwight, Ronald, Elise, Ferhaan, La’eeqa, Albertine, Joep, Marcel, Griet, Arno, Annet, Jeannette, Alice, Loubna, Alexander, Jan F., Wil, Onno, René, Cor, Lidy, Bob, Geertje, Kim, Paul, Monique, Angelique, Alexandra, Jonny, Rudy, Marianne, Miranda, Gert, Wim, Hugo, Rens, Jan H, Erna, Maaïke, Bas, Peter, Gerwin, Marjo, Niels, Joke, Renée, Jan A., Ann, Christina, Nico, Eric, Erik, Arthur, Mark, Anastasia, and all others I’m connected with,

thank you for – more or less consciously – being a partaker of this book, contributing

to spread AI in the world!

With special thanks to Dr Anastasia Bukashe, director of Appreciative Inquiry Foundation and Chairwoman of 2015 World Appreciative Inquiry Conference, South Africa.

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Imagine all the people mutually appreciating...

You may call me a dreamer but I’m not the only one

» John Lennon

...in remembrance of our parents,
and for the sake of our children...

1
WELCOME

Why?

Sometimes there is no clear explanation for doing the things we do.

When somebody asks my wife and me why we gave birth to six beautiful children, we can only answer that we did not follow a plan. When we were still young, we had dreams about four children, but at that time we didn't even know what it meant to have children. And at some point in our lives, we were a family of eight, and because of boyfriends and girlfriends, our family is still under construction.

"Why did you study mathematics?" I don't really know. Maybe I was good at it at high school. Maybe I respected the math teacher. Maybe there wasn't much choice at that time. I'm not even sure I really liked it and I'm sure I was not a very good student, but I succeeded. Many years later, with the insights of today, I would say that my mind resonates with complexity and that studying mathematics was the logical thing to do. (Or vice versa...) But at that time? Not a clue.

I can recall a few more 'life decisions' and I can assure you that these decisions were made in a split second and not supported by practical arguments or 'business cases'. Compare this to the stamp "please try this at home" on the cover of this book. Only this stamp saw eleven versions before we decided this was the one... Yes, please do laugh at this.

Then why did I write this book? Before I started, I wasn't really sure about the why. It just had to be written. Appreciative Inquiry deserves to be spread around the world. I'm a fan and I can put words on paper. So, why not? Perhaps there was a little why that made me start writing: "Let's make AI practical, accessible to lots of people. Let's take it beyond the context of organizational development. Let's try to enable AI to become common language. Let's try to invite the majority of beautiful ordinary people to interweave AI in their daily conversation." I'm not very sure whether this was my initial why for writing this book, but by now I fully subscribe to these intentions. Perhaps the answer to 'why this book' is a lot more self-centered: "Just for the sake of practising my AI skills."

I'm 55 now. I believe that in my first 40 years, I mostly developed the left side of my brain: logic, ratio and control paradigm. Then I encountered the University of Humanistics, and started – yes, another life decision – a PhD called Humanization of Organization, which addressed – and still addresses – my personal and professional mission. Since then, I started to develop the right half of my brain: feeling and intuition. It's not that black and white as it seems, but if you count the years, it will take me into my 80s to get those brain parts in perfect balance... In particular the development of the right half has to be performed by interacting with others, within relationships, in connecting with you, dear readers.

This book is intended to facilitate the quality of relationships. At the same time, high quality relationships enabled me to write this book. On almost every page you will find a name of a beloved, a friend, a teacher, a pupil, a colleague, a client, a co-maker, a family member, a professional crafts(wo)man, who inspired me, helped me, or was just there for me; I would like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to all of them, to all of you.

Sometimes, when trying to write another ‘appreciative inquiry’ in those quiet late night hours, the question “why are you writing this book” seemed like “who are you to write this book?” During these moments, I felt great reassurance by the words of one of our master teachers, H.H. Dalai Lama. Perhaps his words really explain why this book has been written.

Cees Hoogendijk
May, 2015

“As we progress, we must apply what we learn. There is a Tibetan saying that there should be no gap so large between our mental state and what is being taught, that we could fall through it. As you read, I hope that you will relate what you are hearing to your own personal experience; as I teach, I try to do the same. If the material I am trying to impart, remains opaque to me, how can I possibly convey its meaning to others? Though I can’t claim to have great mastery of the subjects we are discussing here, with subject matter as important as I feel this is, even a mediocre understanding is much better than none at all. However, as a result of your reading a book that stems from my mediocre understanding, you can only hope to gain an understanding that will be half knowledge and half ignorance. But this, too, is much better than no understanding at all!”

How do we want to live our world?

Foreword by Ronald van den Hoff, trend maker and social entrepreneurial friend

We live in a time of contradictions. Look at the New York Stock Exchange, the leading stock exchange of the world, trading approximately 1.46 billion shares each day. In 2014, it reached an all time high. Economic centers like New York and California prospered as ever before, however the number of homeless people in these states increased to an all time high as well. Of all the homeless people, 20% in the US live in those ‘prosperous’ states. In the last decade, my home country The Netherlands rose steadily to become the second most prosperous country of the European Union (behind Luxembourg). In the same period the number of Dutch people in need of welfare food support increased with an annual average of 25%. In 2014, the US financial policymakers slowed down the program of buying mortgage-backed loans and state bonds, by which they took so far \$85 billion out of the market every month to keep the US economy alive. US policymakers realize that this can’t keep going on. Happily, they are outnumbered by Japan, where the Abenomics policy, a portmanteau of the Japanese Prime minister ‘Abe’ and ‘economics’, creates a never seen before waterfall of money being poured into the Japanese economy.

Thanks to the Internet we can work anywhere in the world, at any physical location, as long as we are connected. Which makes it more peculiar that lots of people still leave the countryside and cluster in mega-cities. Traditional organizations and companies are struggling to survive, and desperately searching for their ‘raison d’être’, whilst groups of connected people, often in local initiatives, seem to thrive in creating sustainable economic value. Words like ‘sharing economy’ or ‘collaborative economy’ keep popping up.

The list of contradictions is endless. Some developments feel ‘right’, other feel outright ‘wrong’. We are experiencing a transitional era, in which we are moving from the industrial based society of the last century towards something new. The Dutch Professor Jan Rotmans states in his latest book *Nederland Kantelt*: “We don’t live in an era of changes, we are living in a changing era.” This era of transition can easily be compared to the Industrial Revolution. The invention and improvement of the steam engine, between 1700 and 1770, caused a widespread replacement of manual labor by new inventions or machinery in the 18th and 19th century, resulting in the social-economical transition from an agricultural society to an industrial society. This had an enormous impact on almost every citizen of this world. During this revolution we reinvented every system we know, from our democratic to our educational system, from our organizational systems with its economic models to our financial systems and from our country and city development systems to a global power shift, with world wars in its wake.

Today we don't have the luxury to spend 200 years for our revolution. Internet is our contemporary steam engine, causing time to speed up, so we have to transfer our whole system within a mere 50 years. On top of our Internet with its social media, don't underestimate the influence of the scientific developments in fields like bioscience, 3D printing, nanotechnology and robotics. Software design itself is guided by artificial intelligence and is creating even more dynamics. Over the past 25 years, this new Society 3.0 has slowly become visible and is really shaping itself for another 25 years. So far, this has not been an easy process. Yet the worst is still to come. According to thought leader and social economist Carlota Perez it is still possible that whole regions will be destroyed economically; unemployment may rise quickly; and, in general terms, the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

Over the past years we have seen the rise of the disruptive low cost carriers like Blue Air, Southwest Airlines, Ryanair, and EasyJet turning the airline industry upside down. With a 55% market share (and still growing) on internal European flights, these airlines have become sizable players, pushing the traditional carriers out of their comfort zone and out of the market. The entire sales system of these parties runs through the Web, leaving the traditional middlemen, such as travel agents, on the sidelines. Holding meetings at physical locations, like libraries, empty offices, town halls and in private homes (as coordinated by my own Seats2meet.com) will be the deathblow for the conference rooms in traditional hotels. In addition, hotels have formidable competition from couch-surfing: staying over, free of charge, at the home of somebody you have met via the social Web. Through Couchsurfing.com, there are over 20,000 free beds available in The Netherlands alone. Globally there are over 7 million beds available on this website. Couchsurfing is presently the largest hotel chain in the world without owning and/or operating one single hotel. And then there are Airbnb, Wimdu and many more hotel disruption sites. Of course a platform like Airbnb is traditionally financed by venture and public capital. The short term shareholder interest will prevail the more long term participating sharing-fan interest. Consequently these platforms are not sustainable, but they are useful in breaking up the establishment: Schumpeter's creative destruction in optima forma. We have seen the music and movie industry change resulting in the perishing and vanishing of many publishing- and technology companies. The transportation markets with its disruptive Uber.com will change, where banks and other financial institutions (disruption factors: micro-payments, Bitcoins, crowd-funding) as well as insurance companies (self driving cars don't crash) will be the next in line. And if the sharing economy, using social capital (value creation outside the tax system) as its currency really takes off, government financial money streams will evaporate. In the end even the government with its country, as an economic entity will lose its power.

Our legislators don't know what to make of it – are these new players commercial bed and breakfast and taxi ventures, or aren't they? Criticism is uttered, as wages on some of these platforms are extremely low and user/workers protection is almost non-existent. The establishment complains and government officials start fining expeditions. It's useless.

There is a complete lack of oversight. And there is an undercurrent, an unstoppable social development, which is opening up an ever-widening road to Society 3.0.

Thanks to the Internet we have global access to goods, services, people and knowledge, so instead of scarcity there is abundance in our economy. In my book Society 3.0 I introduce a new economic system, called the Interdependent Economy as our next playing field for economic value creation. It is a playing field where we will have to mobilize ourselves to find solutions together. Everybody's involvement is an absolute prerequisite for this. The personal is global. We are deeply dependent on each other. We can call it a new form of collectivity and solidarity, but it is a solidarity driven by choice, and not imposed by government or by any other ruling class. It is a playing field where connectivity, sustainability, and reciprocity are the most important rules of play. Groups of connected people start to interact, creating a value network. Groups of value networks, or value constellations, will replace traditional value chains. According to Jeremiah Owyang, founder of the US based Crowd Companies: "People are bypassing companies by sharing goods, services, space, and money with each other in the sharing economy. They're also empowered to build their own goods in the maker movement by crowd-funding, tapping global marketplaces, and preparing to accelerate this with 3D printing. The crowd is starting to become like a company: self-financing, self-designing products, self-manufacturing, self-selling to each other – bypassing inefficient corporations in the process."

Value creation conveyed in 'capital' does not just mean money for the Society 3.0 citizen in the Interdependent Economy. Capital is made up of social capital, the combined transactional value systems (money in the classic sense), and the alternative value systems (or local currency). In this mix of ingredients, reciprocity is much easier, and naturally realized. So our future is all about connecting and meeting people, building trust and collaborate in social networks. Most of these networks are like mini-circular economic systems in themselves. Acting from abundance, social capital, reciprocity, and trust complements the traditional monetary systems.

In his book *Civilizing Process*, Norbert Elias describes the increasing complexity of our society and the appeal that this complexity makes to people. Elias published his theories in the interbellum (the period between the end of World War I and the beginning of World War II), a turbulent era. He believed there is a parallel between the increasing complexity of society and the increase in – and condensing of – networks in which people move. He states that networks will interweave emphatically, both nationally and internationally. And, these networks will connect between themselves, too. Elias calls this "figuration" and these groups have an external as well as internal dynamic. Elias named the external dynamic the socio-genesis: an increasing number of connected networks create a greater cohesion of everything with everything. The internal dynamic, the psycho-genesis, concerns self-analysis and self-knowledge, and refers to the place in a network in which one is assigned.

Suppose you invite someone to enter a community you belong to personally, like Seats2meet.com or Twitter. The unique value that person will add, such as knowledge, authenticity, skills, or a membership to other networks or communities, for example, will give that person and you a (new) position in that network. Taking part in these configurations requires the individual learning capacity to occupy a place from within. This person requires adaptability, creativity, and self-knowledge. Self-knowledge leads to development of one's own autonomy, and this leads to self-management. This is when people follow the road to authenticity: the capacity to freely choose from within what information, or which community, to connect with (or not).

To optimize this personal development process, followed by the step into and participation within value creation networks as a connected Society 3.0 citizen, Appreciative Inquiry can play a vital role. After all, according to the founding father of AI, David L. Cooperrider: "Appreciative Inquiry is about the co-evolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the relevant world around them. In its broadest focus, it involves systematic discovery of what gives 'life' to a living system when it is most alive, most effective, and most constructively capable in economic, ecological, and human terms". So this book is an invitation to enter this new world of AI, as a philosophy, a set of tools, lessons and more to help you in your quest to become a Society 3.0 citizen.

Welcome to Appreciative Inquiry!

By Joep de Jong, dear friend and master in appreciative leadership

When Cees Hoogendijk asked me if I would be willing to write a preface to his new book *Appreciative Inquiries of the 3.0 Kind – How do we connect, share and co-create for tomorrow's human wholeness? (please try this @home and @work)*, I immediately said 'Yes', as you often say yes to friends. I must admit that there was probably limited awareness around the implications of that 'yes'.

A 'yes' to the challenge of trying to understand what has been happening to Appreciative Inquiry since the early days in the second half of the eighties, when David Cooperrider, Ron Fry, Frank Barrett and Suresh Shrivasta gave birth to the concept of Appreciative Inquiry. What has been the development over the past nearly 30 years? How it has developed to something that we can now comfortably call 'Appreciative Inquiries of the 3.0 Kind'? Cees is already lifting the veil a bit in his subtitle, explaining that it's about 'connecting, sharing and co-creating for tomorrow', a serious claim with a smile.

But let me first reflect a moment on this notion '3.0'. It presumes that there must have been a 1.0, a 2.0, maybe even versions in between and also implies that there might be even 'Appreciative Inquiries of the 4.0 Kind'. In the best traditions of social constructionism I'm not pretending to have 'a truth' here, let alone 'the truth'. This is merely the meaning I have tried to discover in the many dialogues – indeed not discussions – I have had with many people in and outside the Appreciative Inquiry community.

We can probably safely say that Appreciative Inquiry is coming to maturity and as a result is also becoming more widely accepted worldwide. But what is it that we let into our lives when we embraced Appreciative Inquiry? What is it that we accepted when we started working with Appreciative Inquiry 1.0? Although I'm the first one to acknowledge that I probably should nuance this a bit, we did give ourselves the gift with 1.0, of working with a positive approach, honoring the best stories of a community of people in a fairly fixed and well structured process, methodology if you wish. It resulted in the 4 D's – and if you are creative you could have 5, 6 and once I even saw 7 D's. Together with the first faithful questions that was the fairly straightforward methodology that we followed. In hindsight we might say we had learned another trick, one that was often successfully applied.

In our quest to understand what was really happening in that process we started to focus more – or some might say we revisited – the foundations like action research, social constructionism and elements like the generative dialogue. Using Appreciative Inquiry became an art, a skillful art in which we needed to give unconditional room to the stories,

the creativity and the believe that it is absolutely necessary to connect our minds and hearts. So we arrived at Appreciative Inquiries of the 2.0 Kind, the stage of adolescence.

But like pretty much everything, the journey, the story, continues to develop and unfold. From the conversations with Cees and others I see the changes in our society creating a need, a demand to look for more and other uses of the knowledge we have acquired. There appears to be some sort of logic in seeing the sequence of knowledge (1.0) – experience (2.0) – wisdom and finally wholeness or spirituality. And what Cees has done in this book is capturing what is happening to us – and our society – when we enter this realm of Appreciative Inquiries of the 3.0 Kind. It is the stage where Appreciative Inquiry reaches adulthood and wisdom enters the room.

It is the space where we understand that personal wellness and human wholeness are interwoven and inseparably linked. It is the stage where we understand that it is not only our stories that connect us, but that we are simply connected. And only through the understanding of the vital importance of that connection we can work on our own personal wellness and contribute to human wholeness. In our conversations Cees and I spoke about ‘the journey of the soul’. The journey whereby you get access to who you are, a greater understanding of yourself, a discovery of the soul. From that place of wisdom we will then be able to spiral upwards and contribute to human wholeness. And as the subtitle of this book says; please try this at home. That’s the place where it all starts.

Maybe that is the revelation of this book, of Appreciative Inquiries of the 3.0 Kind; it takes us to a new realm, still fully acknowledging and embracing the earlier stages. The stage where we see the importance of understanding our own stories in connection, in relation to others. This book invites us not only to share more stories, but to start a generative dialogue and to give meaning to those. It invites us to engage in appreciative inquiries from a place of silence, where we listen and discover who we are in order to discover our place in the world and contribute to human wholeness. Appreciative Inquiries of the 3.0 Kind illustrates a way of living, a way of being.

So what about Appreciative Inquiries of the 4.0 Kind? Journeys are often most successful if taken one step at the time. I guess that right now it will probably require already substantial amounts of wisdom to embrace the notion of a journey of the soul. A journey that will serve us in the discovery of who we are and from there serving human wholeness. I am however convinced that once we learn more about that, make it an integral part of who we are, we will be ready for the next step. A step where we may use the acquired wisdom of ourselves and humanity to serve our planet and grow our understanding of this vast, wonderful universe we live in. I’m certain Cees is already contemplating that!

I wish everyone who picks up this book a wonderful, adventures journey into the discovery of his or her soul and a great time in using the wisdom found to contribute to human wholeness (and yes, please do try this at home).

Birth of the AI100 action learning program

*By Marcel van Marrewijk,
dear friend and master in organizational development*

The first time I learned about Appreciative Inquiry was on 20th November 2008, during a speech of David Cooperrider, delivered at the Pentascope Conference. I believe it was David's first visit to continental Europe. Although he was the second person to talk, after an eloquent speaker – whose name and speech I cannot recall – David spoke of Magnifying the Strengths Revolution, introducing New Horizons in 'AI' Theory and Practice. One of the quotes I can still remember was by Peter Drucker: "The task of leadership is to create an alignment of strengths ... making a system's weaknesses irrelevant." And this is the content of the sheet that struck me at that time:

DEFICIT MANAGEMENT (deficit based change)	APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY (strength-based innovation)
Identify problem Conduct root cause analysis Brainstorm solutions & analyze Develop treatment – action plans	Appreciate "Best of what is" Imagine "What might be" Design "What should be" Create "What will be"
Machine Metaphor: Organizations are "problems to be solved"	New Metaphor: Living Systems "web of infinite strengths"

I warmed to Appreciative Inquiry immediately, but to be honest it didn't generate any action. The second time AI crossed my path was when Cees Hoogendijk told me about a gathering organized by TNO Management Consultants, only one week after the aforementioned conference: 27th November 2008.

It was the launch of the first AI-network event. A Flemish couple, Griet Bouwen and Arno Vansichen, gave an introduction on the AI-action learning program they had initiated together with their friends Werf. They had arranged considerable funding from the European Union; Ron Fry, one of the AI-co-creators, presented the AI-lectures. Within a year, 50 organizations had started 90 AI-pilots. Fire works!

Cees jumped in: “If the Flemish can do 50, we can do 100!”, winking at the competitiveness between our two nations. He suggested a similar initiative in The Netherlands: “Let’s try and invite 100 Dutch organizations to become interested in AI.” During this gathering, people already decided to join forces in formulating the ambitions and determining the feasibility of such an initiative. Representatives of The Hague Municipality volunteered to become the host of the next AI-network event, and afterwards a first meeting would be held.

I was also present in the Hague on the 19th of January 2009, and Cees suggested that I stay a while longer to join the meeting around the ‘AI100’ initiative. At that time, there were ten attendees: a wide variety of self employed people, consultants and representatives from industry and social sectors. We started to formulate our Bhags: big hairy audacious goals.

Just imagine... if we could inspire 100 (preferably more) organizations to join forces, to adopt and apply Appreciative Inquiry as a method for strength based change as well as a way of life ... What kind of a impact would that generate?

Organizations fulfill a crucial role within society. When they start acting in a positive, constructive manner, it will stimulate the connectivity and a level of trust between its stakeholders. It’s the ripple effect of the pebble in the pond, firstly contributing to the humanization of organizations – not entirely coincidental the mission of Cees – and the success of their businesses, and ultimately supporting the transition of society.

Several sessions were held and in the end, four members of the initial group decided to start a social enterprise, committed to launch the AI100 action learning program, in our opinion the best vehicle to support our ambition. In addition to Cees and myself, Annet van de Wetering and Jeanette Schonewille, two colleagues at TNO Management Consultants, joined the social enterprise.

We came up with a slogan – De Waarde van Kracht – suggesting two meanings: ‘applying strengths adds value’ as well as ‘values matter’. The slogan also implied that we wanted to develop a Dutch approach, an innovative way to introducing AI within organizations.

Annet was trained at the Weatherhead School of Management on the principles of AI, but the four of us decided to design a colloquium that would reflect our insights and experiences within a wider realm, but definitely related to the world of AI. To us AI was much more than a strength-based, organizational change method. Connecting strengths opens the worlds *within* people, not only between people. It might be a tool structured around the four D’s – discover, dream, design and destiny – but it also relates to the art of appreciative living, the ability to postpone judgments in a conversation, listening with appreciative ears and connecting by formulating inspiring and generative questions.

Of course, in the AI100 program we trained our students in preparing and facilitating AI-summits. We even included a two days AI-summit, switching all the time between actually participating and hovering at a metaphysical level, evaluating *why* we were doing *what* we were doing. But we also presented a professor teaching a full day on social constructionism knowing we could also spend our total of 16 days solely on this topic. The same applied to all our study topics covering the 15 month learning journey:

We travelled to Leuven, to honor the Flemish contributions in the field of AI. Our students challenged professor René Bouwen with appreciative questions on his wide experiences in the field. They also asked Griet Bouwen on her latest developments with respect to generative journalism. I spent a day with the students talking about my research on the phase wise development of organizations. Traditionally, organizations tend to have dominant structures, with bosses telling their employees what to do. There is not much room for AI. Contemporary organizations mainly focus on control, and maintain hierarchical structures that lack appreciation. However, organizations functioning in complex environments must develop more open structures allowing professionals more freedom to develop their strengths. AI relates to this modern development level. No, AI is the common language within effective professional organizations.

We apply the theory of phase wise development also to our individual students, for each has a unique value pattern. To some students, AI feels like a homecoming, while others have to stretch themselves in acquiring AI-related skills. The next topic we introduced in our AI action learning program comes with a bio-feedback device. The strength and impact of appreciative inquiries increases when one allows one’s inquiries to first touch the heart. Being appreciative is indeed a heart-based activity. A yoga teacher who is also knowledgeable in heartmath techniques trains the students for a full day. The device helps to control one’s heart rhythms to quickly rebalance mind, body and emotions for greater intelligence, creativity, decision making ability and communication skills.

We spent a day in practicing pure language, deepening our skills to formulate the right AI-question. We practiced the preparations of AI-summits in depth and explored the complexity of introducing AI-activities in complex organizations.

We also introduced a sequence of five intermediate days that placed each student and their pilots in the centre of appreciation. By practicing AI-skills the group members support the person who has brought his challenge out in the open. In 2015, we finished three programs, delivering more than 30 alumni and we started the fourth one. Over the period of one and a half years we see the participants grow and develop. And this is the sheer beauty of this whole program: we see them changing into ‘better persons’, according to their own ambitions, applying AI into their professional and personal lives.

Cees, so far it has been a beautiful adventure and we won’t stop when we hit 100!

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BEFORE THE BEGINNING STARTS TO BEGIN

Preludes as Principle

In 2011 we prepared our first AI action-learning program. It was a colloquium; a 16-day course with a list of excellent speakers and trainers, but we had no participants. How does one acquire a full group, when we felt that traditional, commercial marketing methods are not applicable for recruiting AI-participants? Other than pulling, persuading or even seducing potential participants to attend our program, we prefer them to invite themselves to join. (How do you invite someone to dance?) We wanted to start an experience of co-creation and co-ownership from the onset. And you'll understand that this subtle way of 'being present' resulted in a modest start. Initially we attracted a small number of visitors on our website, and those that did join often felt somewhat insecure about the actual start of the program due to a potential lack of participants.

We also chose a customer intimacy approach, which meant we aimed at small groups of about twelve participants. The first two groups, I am proud to say, delivered 25 AI-alumni. So we initiated a third group, aiming to start the course in January 2013. At that time we only had six participants, too few to start a full program. At the same time we appreciated the fact that six people had shown their interest and trust. How would we proceed? Were we going to simply postpone the starting date (again)? We found a better solution.

Why not just start with those six people? Not the formal program, but prelude sessions. We gathered for the first meeting and started 'doing AI' with each other by getting acquainted via the first steps of an AI-interview. There was plenty of room for questions of course, so we practiced AI before we studied it and why not? During four of those prelude meetings, we welcomed two new participants, which brought the total to eight. Together we decided that we would start the formal training program, with a few alterations.

It became a success. With our tiny budget trying to save money on training locations, we decided we would not invite our lecturers to our location, but to visit them in their working environments. So we travelled (coffee and cakes in a picnic basket) to Leuven where professor René Bouwen is seated, and to the University of Humanistics to attend a lecture by professor Alexander Maas. The decision to organize the preludes consequently gave us time to re-think the program, and to involve the participants in the 're-design'. The preludes were even more valuable than we could imagine...

Because we 'practised' AI during four meetings, the group was more attached and involved than ever before. When they followed lessons on social constructionism for example, they could link their experiences with the given content, resulting in deeper

learning and happy teachers. The third training group was a small one, however it exposed high quality learning.

If you are to organize a meeting, conference, party or other group process, when does the gathering actually begin?

At what point in your preparations would you already involve the people you would like to invite?

Can a preparatory meeting be organized as a small preview version of the actual meeting?

How can you be the 'director' of the program and co-maker simultaneously?

#002

In Dutch we call it un-must

So, what word is applicable to describe two people, sitting next to each other, after their handshakes, stirring their coffee and exchanging some first words in order to get comfortable with each other? What is this moment before the real conversation begins? Do we call this 'to encounter', 'to meet' or perhaps 'to get acquainted'? Sometimes we refer to this activity as 'saying hello', but which of these words best define such a situation?

The philosopher Martin Buber said, "All actual life is to encounter." The social constructionist Ken Gergen said, "In the beginning is the relationship." Before a conversation can start, we have to build a relationship, only then do we produce better conversations. But you probably knew this already.

In Dutch, we describe this 'comforting acquaintance of getting to know each other' with the verb 'ontmoeten'. Literally translated into English, 'ontmoeten' means 'un-must'. How's that?

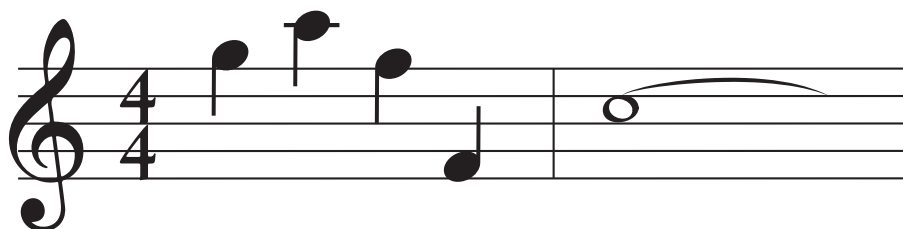
What would a conversation look like when the 'must' factor has been excluded?

How are you going to 'un-must' each other, the next time you are rushing into a meeting?

#003

ta-di-da-da-du

Do you remember the five-tone sequence from the movie *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*? This was where the connection between humanity and the foreign species was made. This connection was made when the two languages – of human mankind and of the extraterrestrials – found each other. It was a starting point for further contact, understanding and trust. Ta-di-da-da-du. Ta-di-da-da-du.



It was only after I came up with the title of this book, that I looked up the definition of ‘close encounter’. The term was introduced by astronomer and UFO researcher J. Allen Hynek, in his 1972 book *The UFO Experience*, which had the appealing subtitle: *A Scientific Inquiry*. (I guess it was an appreciative inquiry as well.) Close Encounters of the First Kind are about visual sightings of an unidentified flying object less than 150 meters away. In a Close Encounter of the Second Kind there’s also a physical effect of perception: someone or something is reacting. Hynek calls it a Close Encounter of the Third kind when an animated creature is present; at that point (as I interpret it) there’s the possibility of co-creation. And here’s the connection with the 3.0 prefix. Somehow I felt there was more to know about it...

Now for the encounter between two humans of the same kind. But are they? Are they the same? I mean, isn’t it somewhat peculiar that we often run into another person, for instance in a business meeting, and start to share our questions (or demands) at once? What are we thinking at that moment in time? Do we think about the mood, the background, the culture, the needs of the other person? Wouldn’t it be very wise to inquire about this before raising the subject of the conversation? What would be the best sound, the tone of voice, to use in this encounter? Which words do we chose to make a connection? If the circumstances are international, you might be aware of the possibility that the other person speaks another language. But isn’t it very likely to assume that every other person somehow speaks another language? What would you do with this insight in order to have a fruitful meeting for instance?

In the mid 1980’s, I worked with computer software specialized for hotels. In those years, all the reservation data was collected and rearranged in long batches of computer programs throughout the night. When something went wrong – don’t ask – and my customer needed support, I first tried to connect from my home to the hotel by using modems and a telephone line. I learned that two remote computers need a lot of ‘encountering’ before they are able to exchange data, and in those days you could hear some of that through the earphone. When the two modems started to engage, they sent out ‘white noise’, like a radio that is off-channel. Both the modems did that at the same time, while shifting the amplitude (or baud rate, or something like that). At some point you could hear a mere bleep-bleep-kind of ‘music’ which gave me the idea that at that point the two modems found the right channel to connect on. After that – as I learned from specialists – there was still more work to do. X-on/X-off, Odd/Even Parity and even a ‘Handshake’. And when all this had been carried out properly, data exchange could begin... (And if it hadn’t, I stepped into my car and drove to the customer’s computer...) Are you still with me?

So, back to ‘human data exchange’... What can we do – what should we do – to prepare communication? What can we learn from connected computers, always making the effort to ensure that they ‘understand’ each other before they ‘communicate’? How do you find out the ‘baud rate’ and the ‘parity’ of the other; before or during the ‘handshake’?

Maybe it’s an idea to show and share your own ‘user guide’ with the other. If you are willing to engage with people successfully, what would you like to mention in that user guide of yours?

What’s your ta-di-da-da-du?

#004

Bavardage

It was only a short while ago that the word ‘bavardage’ entered my vocabulary. The Dutch professor Alexander Maas introduced this peculiar French sounding word, during a lecture on social constructionism (see #020). It’s also an official English word, meaning ‘prattle’ or ‘chatter’. Professor Maas explained different methods of observation within the context of (organizational) change. He introduced two main streams of observation: focusing on the connections between people and their opinions; and focusing on the differences. Bavardage is one of the methods for being open to differences. Other methods are ‘slow listening’ and ‘producing differences in the conversation’.

Suppose you would like to interview a child, or perhaps a child with autistic characteristics. How would you start the conversation? I remember Gerwin, one of our young AI-students, who already worked with autistic children and chose to study AI just for that purpose: the appreciative approach and the art of conversation. He was very pleased with the concept of ‘bavardage’. How can it be of help in ‘difficult’ situations? The idea behind bavardage is that you need to be in some sort of conversation already, before you can engage in the real conversation. Bavardage is the ‘art’ of talking, just for the sake of talking to each other or simply talking around the subject. It doesn’t matter what it’s about, so it can be about anything. From the perspective of the interviewer, you must find out what it takes to get the other person to speak words. That will probably succeed with subjects that are very familiar to him or her. In observing the other person, what do you see worth mentioning or worth questioning about? Perhaps it’s a toy, a sports picture, clothing, the shape and size of the body, books, TV series? Use your observational skills together with your imagination – and your appreciation. Try to understand the other person’s reality. Translate this into tiny comments, subtle questions, and moments of silence. Cherish the moment where the other person starts talking, and sustain the bavardage...

Forget what you came for, and be happy with any conversation that develops. Maybe that will be all that is talked about in the first meeting. If you feel you can take a next step towards your main subject, be very careful. It has to be genuine and based on trust built by the two of you. That’s how bavardage can be an enabler of a discussion.

Do you recall situations where bavardage could have been valuable?
How are you going to prepare your next ‘difficult’ conversation?
How subtle can your questions be?

#005

Why are you reading this book?

Hold on. Time out. Take five.

How did you come to read this book? What is the connection to what you want to know or learn?

Who is the person you have to thank for suggesting to buy this copy or for giving it to you as a present?

What has appealed to you in this book so far?

Is this page – by chance – the first you are reading? What are your expectations until now? Is it not exactly knowing what comes next?

What do you need, what does this book need to sustain your attention?

Would you like this book to do something for you? Would you like to do something with this book?

How would you envision the relationship between you and this book?

Please take your time. Consider your own learning style. Read this book as it appears to you, either from the beginning to the end or just at random. It’s okay, if it’s okay for you.

No obligations.

Pure invitations.

Give or take; the energy question

*Can you remember a person who highly inspired you?
Would you tell me about your favorite music, or song?
What are you most proud of?*

These kind of questions – so-called ‘energy questions’ – help the other person find examples of inspiring experiences they once had. The act of remembering positive emotions boosts one’s energy. The person feels good while appreciating its positive memories and appreciates the question and the one questioning it. He or she is willing to share more and, if invited, to tell the full story behind it. In other words, an energy question is the perfect starter for a constructive conversation and it’s fun for you as well! Just look at the face of someone who is talking about something that makes her proud...

Asking these questions puts you in an appreciative mode. Being in an appreciative mode helps you to find more energy questions. It’s generative!

Loesje¹ says: “I have known you for years, but I’m sure you have new ideas.”

Once you start using energy questions regularly, you’ll find there’s an unlimited supply. Add an age to the question, for example “what would you have liked to become when you were eighteen” and you open up a complete new source of energy.

So, what would be a suitable energy question for the first person you meet? Would you like to give that person and your question some thought? And when the two of you meet, will you go for it and ask the energy question?

¹ Loesje is an astute, Dutch social organization of which the core process consists of co-creating strong, short, beautiful slogans, with the aim of making the world a better place. They relate to actual themes, and at the same time they are timeless. Examples (freely translated): “Imagine you are happy, but you don’t know.” “Extremely moderate is also a bit suspicious.” You’ll find a complete archive on www.loesje.nl.

Arvo Pärt – Spiegel im Spiegel

Jan Flameling is ‘my’ brilliant Dutch social constructionist philosopher who taught me to do philosophy (besides trying to understand all that difficult matter). At a management conference, Jan once told his audience about this strange western phenomenon called ‘I’. There are lots of cultures and languages where only the word ‘we’ exists. This was quite a new perspective for most of the managers. Jan created a setting for the audience to experience a moment where there was more than I. He asked the attending managers to listen to a piece of music for about ten minutes. It was very quiet, almost minimal music. Some of the people became nervous, others were in tears, most of them were staring, but they were all silent. There was only this peculiar music. One piano note every five seconds, helping you to come to your senses and enabling everyone the experience of being connected to something a lot bigger than the ‘self’. Beautiful.

Spiegel im Spiegel is the title. Arvo Pärt the author. Playing this music is a powerful means of preparing people for a group conversation or a meeting. Just allow these ten minutes to happen. If you are the chair, suggest three steps during the appreciation of Arvo Pärt. First, connect to your breathing, and be open for your ‘self’. Second, after a few minutes, when it feels comfortable, connect to your thoughts and ask yourself: what am I here for, what are my expectations of the meeting, what else is on my mind? And third, connect to the others in the group, one by one: what is on their minds, what are their expectations, why are we here today? During this third phase, keep your eyes open and look around, connect. Music has an effect on a situation. Preparing in this way will influence the proceedings of your meeting. It’s very valuable, and it only takes ten minutes. The impact? A completely new atmosphere.

You may not have bought or downloaded this serene piano music yet. But perhaps, reading the above gave already you a sense of calmness. This is simply what music can do. This is what even reading¹ about music can do.

Consider your first upcoming meeting, in business or in private. Which music are you going to play, inviting everyone to connect before they start their conversation?

¹ And if you would like to experience this in depth, read *Music* by Michel Serres. A book experienced like sounds.

#008

We are all on AI land

Ghent, Belgium, 28th April 2012. The World AI Conference is shifting towards its completion. In Plenary Session 4, Prof. Dr. Klaas van Egmond argued¹ that sustainability is synonymous with human dignity.

Receiving a standing ovation for his wisdom combined with his motivational eloquence, shivers ran down my spine. He defined his circle, this island where we can find trust and safety. This is where pure freedom keeps us balancing within the boundaries of the dialectic, which helps us to stay away from the extremes, where connectivity becomes unsure and the sea of the unconsciousness awaits us. What to do? Whether it was Icarus or Parsifal, they left their safe harbor in search of their Grail. And in doing that, they developed great personal potential and impact. (Yes, Icarus had an impact too because his story is still being told today.) When they returned, the island seemed bigger. The travelers had developed the Grail within themselves and the word Grail includes AI...

Then there's me, looking as a spectator for congruency in other people's behaviour (and as a co-creator trying to be congruent myself... quite a quest): How did Klaas stay so well within his self defined circle and at the same time being able to talk about the outer parts of it? His answer might be, "Because we are Part and Whole at the same time." I think I saw Klaas exercising this principle. From giving deep insights he switched fluently, with a bit of humour, to connecting with us ... and back again. In fact, he reached out from his circle, travelled around the auditorium, and... stretched his circle in a way that we found ourselves back on his island. Geweldig! (This is the Dutch translation of 'awesome'.)

During the conference week, participants became parts of a new whole. The ICC in Ghent grew into AI-land. There are no extremes to be found here. This afternoon, the moment we step outside, we dive into a sea. We have a good swim, though it may be a struggle from time to time. Remember the circle where you came from, that you are part of. We will stay connected. Let's promise to meet again in AI-land, and let's try to keep scaling up our circle day by day. Imagine where we and all those others will stand two years from now... Amai! (This is the Flemish translation of the Dutch 'geweldig'.)

What does your 'AI land' look like?

Are you ready to enter?

Are you prepared to leave?

¹ Find all keynotes and proceedings on www.2012waic.com

#009

Everything flows?

When was the last time you received a compliment? Do you remember the situation when you did something well and someone told you, "You did that very well!" What did it feel like? How did the conversation continue? Please take a moment, to focus on that moment.

Or maybe you yourself gave a compliment to someone recently. What was the story behind it? Can you recall what words you used?

Until I heard the considerations of a certain Ken Gergen¹, I thought a compliment was a good thing in itself. Until then I wasn't aware of possible 'negative' effects of giving compliments... Excuse me?

Gergen suggests that you have to do something with your words; you have to take them somewhere. This is what Appreciative Inquiry is aiming for as well: making conversations and relationships generative; we want to keep developing them. Relationships should be alive and growing. It's like a dance.

What worries Ken Gergen is that if you dig deeper, appreciation can unconsciously turn into judgment. I beg your pardon?

Imagine yourself saying the sentence "Hey, you did a very good job." It might be meant appreciatively – no problem with your intentions – but it positions you above the other because apparently, you are able to judge how good the other person functions. You might even have tapped on the other person's shoulder, and in this line of thinking you could see this as a kind of hammering the other through the floor, widening the gap between the two of you...

Okay, this idea might seem a little overdone. But on the other hand; what would you say when somebody tells you "Good job!"? You might answer, "Thank you" (with a blush),

¹ Ken Gergen is the authority on 'social constructionism'. He wrote a many books on the subject and gives wonderful lectures. One of his most famous books is titled *Relational Being*, in which he has a lot to say. The book itself is quite hard to read. I find Gergen at his best when he 'thinks out loud' about what happens when people communicate. The compliment-example used here, has been video recorded and can be found on www.2012waic.org.

Two paradigms

“It was nothing” (which of course is not true) or you remain silent. And here, mister Gergen proves to be correct. The compliment, meant so positively, stops the conversation instead of extending it.

We’re addressing the art of conversation; finding the words that really do what you want them to do to the other (hopefully appreciating, empowering, learning, reassuring, comforting, loving...). Are you somewhat confused? Don’t be. The intention behind giving a compliment is okay. The idea that a compliment can help the conversation further makes you aware of what words can do. So please, keep on giving compliments.

How do you improve the phrase “Very well done!” You want your compliment to be ‘generative’? If that is your sincere intention, then you will find the right words. For now, please accept a small hint. Tell the other person how grateful you are, and ask how he or she managed to do the job.

Wrapping a compliment in a question will bring the conversation further. Will you give it a try?

Imagine yourself on a winter’s night at a beautiful square in your hometown. The square is quite empty and your attention is drawn to the numerous lamp posts surrounding the square. It appears to you that one of the lanterns has a broken lamp. What is your first inner response?

“Oh, what a pity, the entire setting is ruined now that I’ve noticed the faulty one and I can’t get it out of my sight.”

Or: “The broken lamp creates a shadow, that might be a dangerous spot. Tomorrow morning I’ll notify the local council and inform them that it needs to be fixed.”

Or perhaps: “Interesting. It seems to me that all those lanterns at the edges of the square look nice, however in the middle it’s still quite dark. What kind of lighting would be required to really ‘enlighten’ the square?”.

It’s rather fascinating to see how the story of one broken lantern can cause several reactions. If you dig deeper, you might distinguish two approaches. Firstly we have the problem-oriented approach: one faulty lantern ruins the surroundings and only by fixing it does the ‘bad situation’ become a good one. On the other hand we have the possibility-oriented approach, where one lantern is missing, the place is still well-lit. In this case we ask ourselves, how can we improve the lighting? How can we make an ‘enlightened’ square of this place? This is the Appreciative Inquiry approach, to recognize the existing good and dream about possibilities to make it even better.

Summarized:

1. Starting from ‘bad’, we can fix it, resulting in ‘not bad’. This is a very useful approach when minimum quality is needed to guarantee smooth functioning, for example in the case of loose bolts in aircraft construction.
2. Starting from ‘good’, there are no boundaries in getting better. Personal health is more than fixing a broken leg. Organizational change is more than ‘reorganizing’, this is where Appreciative Inquiry can provide miracles...

Business School Netherlands (BSN) is part of an international business school organization that enables students to pass an Executive MBA. The students are mostly executive professionals in the heat of their careers, hard working with young families and on top of that investing lots of energy (and money) in this four-year time consuming study. I’m not always so sure whether the MBA-title produces the leaders of my choice.

Please try this at home (and at work)

I was surprised and honored when BSN invited me to be a guest lecturer on AI on a voluntarily basis. (Of course, I don't lecture AI; we spend the afternoon experiencing AI.) In doing that a few times a year with great pleasure, I encountered our two paradigms again. When I deliver my 'AI-performance' in the afternoon; the morning sessions have been filled by another lecture on 'Risk Management'. Here the students can really experience the difference between the two. What a perfect 'bridge' for me to make a start after lunch. As I said, there are situations in which it is suitable to manage risks, and there are situations where discovering possibilities is recommended. The fact is, that in the morning session all the chairs and tables are lined up, a lot of Powerpoints are presented and the lecturer speaks, sharing his valuable knowledge. In the afternoon session the group is mixed and divided around randomly placed tables, talking with each other in pairs (throughout the building, walking outside) or in roundtable dialogues. The room is regularly filled with music. Sweets are on the tables. The session ends with all (approx. thirty) people in one circle, everyone sharing their insights. They all get a flower, inviting them to share their experience with the family at home. The lecture is called "The appreciation of the manager".

How do you perceive a situation before you?

Do you carry both paradigms in your system?

Are 50% filled glasses, half empty or half full to you?

Okay, let's consider the former chapters as a 'warm-up' or perhaps as first exercises. Appreciate this book just as you like. Although every chapter has a number to it, you can choose your own reading order; or pick out what appeals to you. So why does every chapter have a number? That's because there is a kind of logic in the construction of this book. It follows the path of the AI100 action learning program (you can read about it in the introduction by co-founder Marcel van Marrewijk).

It took a few years of puzzling on how to arrange all the topics in this learning course. Yet we're still not totally sure whether to start or to end with the basic principles of social construction; whether to do practical stuff first and the theory afterwards, or the other way round. Nevertheless, the structure of the AI100-course inspired the collation of this book. Does that turn this into a textbook?

Once you grasp an AI-activity, you're a practitioner all right. But there's a big chance that in the next minute, you want to know what you did, and why it worked (or did not). The question is: do you want this book to be your guide in a learning process? It definitely can be used that way. It has been written based on many experiences out of a learning program. Do you want to skip sections? Feel free, and maybe the book will see you back later. Still interested in the main structure? Here it is.

As said before, the Preludes are little acquaintances even before the study begins.

The next section, 3, is called *Sources of Social Construction*. Do you need this for the purpose of studying AI? Not necessarily. But at some point at being an AI enthusiastic, you might want to find out what kind of thinking has led to what we now call Appreciative Inquiry. You will notice that this thinking has roots far away in the past and at the same time very nearby in a fine small country called Belgium. The journey of AI starts often by encountering an AI source. My choice of 'sources' is a personal one. The section is meant for honoring and admiring and referring.

Section 4 is called *Social Construction*. The chapters lead you along underlying and associating principles of Appreciative Inquiry. This might seem purely theoretical, but don't get me wrong; social construction is preferably something we *do*.

Section 5 *Who am I to Appreciate?* Invites you to inquire about yourself from the perspective of being an AI apprentice – which I still am. What does it take to (further) develop yourself as an AI-person?

Being a participant of an AI summit doesn't necessarily demand any knowledge or experience in AI, but attending a summit can make you curious. Where we let our students dive into a two days 'AI Summit', section 6 *My Next AI Summit* intends to do the same. What is this multi-stakeholder practice around Discovering, Dreaming, Designing and Delivery, that makes it so accessible and powerful? Take the plunge.

Section 7 is called *Appreciate Yourself*. Compared to the 'what should I do?' question in the section before, you could ask yourself 'how (appreciative) am I?', whether it is possible to influence your own 'ground state'?

The basic ingredient of Appreciative Inquiry is 'high quality communication'. Titled *The Art of Inquiry*, section 8 is about what can happen (and happens) in the conversation between two people, and how your ability to ask questions can enable the empowerment of the other. 'Can I start with section 8?' you might ask. Please do.

From being participant in AI-circumstances to being the one to perform Appreciative Inquiry to others – there's more. Section 9 *CFO in Appreciation* addresses the possible role of the facilitator of the AI-process of others, mostly groups. This is about designing an AI-summit or another form of a constructive meeting. Try this at home? If you have a large family, yes. Please try this also at work.

Section 10 *Encountering Complexity* brings you within the organizational context. What is it like to intervene in such a 'chaordic' system? Are you making it a better place? If you recognize the familiarities in your work, then please try this knowledge 'at your home base at work'.

In following these sections, in theory you are following – more or less – our learning program. That is: without the fellow students, without the highly experienced teachers. Please find others to join you. Section 11 *Further Reading* tries to give you some extra support. And appendix 12 brings you even further if you like.

Please forget everything you've just read. Celebrate faith. Choose a random page and start (or continue) your journey. If you wish, explore www.appreciativeinquiries.eu and leave your comments and suggestions. It's highly appreciated!

In the past year, what did you learn or study to become a better person?

What exactly is your best learning style?

In the coming year, which of your skills or talents you would like to explore somewhat more?

3 SOURCES OF SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION

AI? Artificial Intelligence?

In 2007, I met Annet van de Wetering and at some point she told me I was quite ‘A-I’.

Being a mathematician, I first thought she meant ‘artificial intelligence’, but a few moments later I had learned a new term called Appreciative Inquiry. It was at the time I was writing my book *Kracht zonder Macht. (Strength without Power)* This was a by-product of my (still endless ongoing) PhD, at the Dutch University of Humanistics (UvH) regarding ‘power relations and vertical dialogue’.

Vertical Dialogue refers to the idea that managers in organizations carry – by position – the power to step back in favor of open dialogue with co-workers. (That’s why I call it ‘vertical’.) Being an organizational development consultant, I had developed a few methods – or recipes – to enable Vertical Dialogue. Convinced that my book should be co-created with others, I advertised on the internet, calling for similar recipes and Annet was one of the responders. She added two chapters to my book, both describing Appreciative Inquiry practices.

Was that my AI starting point? I’m not sure.

Perhaps the unconscious interest was already present at my last formal job at DHL. Being responsible for ‘the people side of the change’, where I encountered both serious power play, as well as the opportunity to experiment with dialogic strategic planning processes. It was DHL that funded my entrée at the UvH-PhD-program. It was the ‘rude’ organization of DHL that made me long for humanizing initiatives. It was the UvH that presented my personal mission in the title of their PhD-program: “Humanization of Organization”. This all happened to me in the years 2004-2005, whilst preparing to become self-employed. When my old friend and learning consultant Onno Geveke gave me the book *Presence*, in the summer of 2004, somehow my AI-starting point arose in that period.

The rest is history. *Kracht zonder Macht* was published in March, 2008. In November 2008, TNO Management Consultants organized a gathering of a new Dutch AI network facilitated by ... Annet van de Wetering.

Why am I telling you this? Perhaps because it’s standard AI practice to recall important events that have occurred in the past. The above mentioned events were important occurrences during my AI learning journey. Now back to the present, where connecting to strong sources is also the content of the first step in our AI100 program. The next chapters tell small stories about people who I consider to be my AI-sources; some of are close to me, most of them I ‘know’ through being a part of their audience or by having read some

of their work. It's not that I'm standing on their shoulders; I'm trying to follow, to study and to practice their insights. Hopefully, you will get inspired too.

Could this book be your first AI-encounter?

Can AI be as new to you, as it was to me back in 2007?

Who are your great sources of inspiration?

#013

Between the noses

In my opinion, two important representatives of AI-sourcing in Europe are Griet Bouwen and René Bouwen. Within our AI100 learning journey, we are very proud that they are available to inspire our students on their opening day.

Griet is to be admired for 'doing AI' on a large scale in Belgian society. She was co-founder of Vuurwerkt.be: an impressive emerging AI-network aimed at empowering people to re-enter the labour market. Afterwards she recalled her valuable experiences in her book *Leiden naar Talent en Bezieling (Leading towards Talent and Inspiration)*. Until today she is constantly active in AI-practices like generative journalism.

René is – besides being Griet's uncle – emeritus professor at Leuven University, Faculty of Organizational Psychology. René Bouwen can be considered a true source of the emerging Appreciative Inquiry movement in Europe. The story goes that when René hosted a 'positive psychology' presentation by David Cooperrider in the early 90's in Leuven, the audience of fellow professors in psychology responded with cynical laughter. Apparently, René survived (as did Cooperrider) and nowadays Leuven can be seen as the place to be for studying organizational development on a social constructionist basis.

When René is teaching, he invites his students to practice High Quality Communication. Within René's perspective, the essential ingredient of Appreciative Inquiry is not merely the focus on the positive; it is about the Quality of the Relational Practice. It's here that we can construct connections together, out of a future which is being produced – generative connections, as he calls it.

Furthermore, René tells us, knowledge is not a substance or something we have, but it is something we create in interaction all the time. Subsequently he presents his brilliant one-liner, summarizing all his wisdom into one beautiful saying:

“Knowledge is not something between the ears, it's something between the noses.”
(And because we have only one nose, now you know where to find knowledge...)

Being a co-creator himself, René ends his lecture with the following quote by Sheila McNamee: “There is no method, just watch the relationship”.

When did you take part in 'high quality communication' and what happened afterwards?

What would you like to see growing in your community, or family?

#014 Based on strength

Undoubtedly, the primary Appreciative Inquiry source is David Cooperrider. Although I've never had the opportunity to meet him, David is so active in facilitating AI, publishing and speaking about it, that you can't miss him when you start exploring AI.

In 1986, Cooperrider completed his doctoral dissertation *Appreciative Inquiry: Toward a Methodology for Understanding and Enhancing Organizational Innovation* at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. In 1980, at the age of 24, David studied Organizational Behavior and started researching the question 'what's wrong with the human side of the organization?' His object of research was the Heart Clinic of Cleveland. What started as a conventional 'consulting' study, developed into curiosity for the positive cooperation, innovation and egalitarian governance he experienced in the clinic. David's research adviser Suresh Srivastva, suggested he should keep focused on the 'exciting parts' of the research. This experience set the stage for David's dissertation from 1982 when he was also highly inspired by Ken Gergen's *Toward Transformation of Social Knowledge*.

If you would like to learn more about the impressive arising of the Appreciative Inquiry approach, there's a nice *AI History and Timeline* on the internet¹. In his 'slipstream' Cooperrider generated many, many early adopters, who can all be considered founding fathers that brought AI further. It was – and still is all about co-creation!

Bringing it back to normal proportions: instead of asking "what are the problems in this organization?", David Cooperrider suggests asking questions like "would you tell me about your best practices?" and "what is it that makes this organization remain successful?".

How about you?

Where and when are you going to apply the question "What is going well here?"

¹ appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/intro/timeline.cfm

#015 To be Present

In my modest opinion, Appreciative Inquiry can be regarded as the practical application of Theory U.

Excuse me?

Rethinking my enthusiasm for Appreciative Inquiry, I lean to the conclusion that this all resonates on ideas that struck me when I read the book *Presence*¹ I regard this book as a plea to organizations, and especially their leaders, to set an example for good citizenship; to be Present. The Marblehead Letter, mentioned in *Presence*, describes quite conclusively the desired corporate social responsibility of organizations.

THE MARBLEHEAD LETTER

A natural agenda of issues is shaping the future, especially for corporations with global scope

- **The social divide:** the everwidening gap between those participating in the increasingly interdependent global economy and those not. *How long can 15% of the people get 85% of the benefits of globalization?*
- **Redefining growth:** economic growth based on ever increasing material use and discard is inconsistent with a finite world. *How long can we keep piling up more junk in the same box?*
- **Variety and inclusiveness:** developing inclusion as a core competence in increasingly multi-cultural organizations. *Who is the "we"?*
- **Attracting talented people and realizing their potential:** developing commitment in a world of "free agents" and "volunteer" talent. *What are we committed to, really?*
- **The role of the corporation:** extending the traditional role of the corporation, especially the global corporation, to be more commensurate with its impact. *Just how accountable will society expect us to be?*
- **The system seeing itself:** the challenges of coordination and coherence in social systems. *How can we stop going faster while our ability to see further ahead is decreasing?*

June 2001

¹ *Presence, Human Purpose and the Field of the Future* by Peter Senge, C. Otto Scharmer, Joseph Jaworski, Betty Sue Flowers.

The journey towards such a state of ‘connected being’ follows the path of Theory U as presented by Claus Otto Scharmer: “Learning to See is the preparation for a deep dive into the Silence – being present, connecting to the whole context – out of which we arise to become a Force of Nature.”

The intentions behind Theory U (‘transforming the system’) and Appreciative Inquiry (‘strength based generative transition’) are – in my opinion – very parallel, and both methods include ‘the whole system’. In some interpretations of Theory U, there’s a ‘discovery’ stage at the bottom of the U, a state of co-presencing, out of which co-creating and co-evolving can take place. Put this alongside the Discover- Dream-Design stages of Appreciative Inquiry and you might discover resemblance.

When did you really feel ‘present’?

What means being present for you?

“If you start thinking about the way you think, you are changing the way you think.”

This beautiful insight was raised by David Bohm, who I consider both a source and a hero. Once you have read the sentence above, it can’t be unread. If we are able to change our own thinking with our own thinking, how much potential do we carry? I consider this, and all of Bohm’s ideas, a foundation for understanding Appreciative Inquiry.

David Bohm was a theoretical (quantum) physicist. One of his very accessible works is titled *On Dialogue*, and is about how we together, co-create meaning. Dia logos – through meaning. Between the noses? Or with the whole of our bodies, and everything in between and around us? Bohm’s less accessible, very scientific work is called *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*. I’m still trying to understand it, so I’m not going to recall every intelligent quote right here. His work suggests the existence of an underlying potential, an underlying whole (the implicate order) out of which everything, mind and matter (the explicate order) is continuously re-created. Are you still with me?

For more than 25 years, David Bohm worked together with one of the most profound educators and philosophers Jiddu Krishnamurti. A physicist and a spiritualist in co-creation? I think that makes both persons even more special. The co-production *The Future of Humanity* describes some of their inquiring dialogues on human consciousness. Krishnamurti said: “To be is to be related.”

What about the relationship between my thinking and your thinking? Imagine yourself descended to quantum level, flying between our elementary particles... you would experience a lot of space, and few particles on your way. Even more, you wouldn’t know if you were flying within the boundaries of my body, or your body, or somewhere in between. You wouldn’t see any difference between the elements I’m made of, the elements you are made of, and the elements the space between us is made of. From that perspective you could regard you, me and our in-between as one whole. And in that view you and I are very connected, especially when you consider that ‘our’ elements don’t stay within our body: electrons and family tend to travel freely.

I find it very assuring that nowadays quantum physicists and Buddhist teachers are connecting their insights for the purpose of exploring human consciousness and other processes on a quantum level...

So what do you think about ‘your thinking’ and ‘my thinking’?

#017

Happy to be uncertain

Imagine a cyclist on the move. We can see where he is, and we can measure his speed.

Imagine one of the elementary particles we are built of. If we know where it is, we don't know its speed. And if we know how fast it moves, we don't know its position. So, the actual existence of this particle is uncertain. This is not a fairy tale. This is called *Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle*.

In terms of my Appreciative Inquiry sources I can't leave out some geniuses that lived in the early 20th century, and together found out what is happening on the smallest scale we can imagine: quantum level. Considering the fact they weren't in the possession of proper instruments to discover or measure the things they researched, it is even more brilliant what they did. I'm referring to Max Planck, Niels Bohr, Albert Einstein, and at least ten or twenty more brilliant thinkers¹, every one of them filling in pieces of a large puzzle, implying the idea that there might be no smallest particle. At that smallest level it's just energy flowing...

We consist of energy, and we're never sure where that energy is flowing to...

Recalling what I said in the Preface about 'only half the knowledge', I admit that quantum physics has my full interest and curiosity, but I fear I'm still at the level of a junior apprentice.

May I recommend Werner Heisenberg to be the representative of the above mentioned scientists, impersonating a source without whom David Bohm (#016) could never have done his magnificent job?

Personally, and also from an AI perspective, I like the idea that 'everything flows' and that we are part of an 'undivided whole', and that 'uncertainty' is one of the main ingredients of that whole...

I also like the idea that I carry almost unlimited energy resources, that I can let my energy flow toward others, that I am able to produce movement... sometimes even in the desired direction. I really like the idea that I can be energized by others, simply by being connected to them...

¹ Manjit Kumar wrote a book called *Quantum*, telling the complete story of these scientific heroes in a marvelous, understandable way.

To introduce AI-practice, often the following motto is used: "It's our mind that creates this world." This insight seems to be a mixture of ancient wisdom and scientific brilliance, don't you think?

How certain are you regarding your human potential?

Where and when has uncertainty brought you further?

Imagine your unleashed potential... what do you see?

#018

Mastering your Path Unwinding

“The Master is detached from all things; that is why he is one with them.”

You just read a piece of verse 7 of the *Tao Te Ching* (The Book of the Path) by Lao Tze. It's a very old source (around 500 BC).

Below are the last of the 81 verses, without any comments or questions...

True words are not eloquent;
eloquent words are not true.
Wise men do not need to debate;
men who need to debate are not wise.
Wise men are not scholars;
scholars are not wise.

The Master desires no possessions.
The more he does for others,
the happier he is.
The more he gives to others,
the wealthier he is.

The Tao nourishes by not forcing.
The Master imitates this,
acting for the good of all
and opposing himself to no one.

#019

Familiar Sources

How about cause and effect? About following order?

Within Appreciative Inquiry projects, it has been proven that change and improvement already take place from the moment the first generative question is pronounced.

If you are reading this book sequentially, you have been presented with my AI sources in the chapters before. They were not only my AI sources. The insights of Connectedness and being Present helped me to become self employed at a point in my career where this was my only true option. Ten years wiser now, I understand the principles of being Independent (the main reason for my career change) and being Connected at the same time; connected with co-workers, partners in social enterprises, co-writers, customers, friends; besides my own family it feels like family... and still on my own. On my own? Not in the least: fully supported by my lovely wife and our six beautiful kids. Please, let me share my gratefulness to you all. You are the ones to complete my list of sources; sources of energy. Thank you!

Consider yourself an inspiring source. (By reading this book you actually are performing this role for me already, thank you for that.) Yes, you are! What is the inspiration you would like to transfer?

4 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM

#020

Basic lecture

Sometimes, professor Alexander Maas sends out his students to go to the supermarket. They are instructed to place a liter of milk in their shopping basket and try to negotiate a lower price at the cash counter. Can you imagine this? Here's another experiment: at home, behave as if your house was a hotel and if you were a guest, for a few days... How would your family react?

The idea behind this is to make us aware of human patterns we regard as 'normal' and what happens if we try to make a 'difference'. Difference is what matters, according to Alex Maas.

In the Netherlands professor Maas is associated with Erasmus University / Rotterdam School of Management and the University of Humanistics. In our AI100 program, he teaches our students a full day on a short history of social constructionism and the principles of 'being socially constructionist active'. This is no easy stuff, but everyone senses that this is important knowledge with respect to AI.

On one of his first slides the following small story is shown: "Once I, Chuang Tzu, dreamed that I was a butterfly and was happy as a butterfly. I was conscious that I was quite pleased with myself, but I did not know that I was Tzu. Suddenly I awoke, and there I was, visibly Tzu. I do not know whether it was Tzu dreaming that he was a butterfly or the butterfly dreaming that it was Tzu. Between Tzu and the butterfly there must be some distinction. (But one may be the other.) This is called the transformations of things."

Dreaming plays a major role in Appreciative Inquiry. In dreams, as we all know, sometimes very unusual things occur. The ability to dream is very much like the ability to see things besides the normal. Alexander Maas suggests the following three-step approach in order to observe situations carefully. As I said before: no easy task, but you can try it at home.

Firstly, become aware of what you and others consider 'normal'. This can be called the existing 'discourse'. Can you imagine that this 'normal behavior' can be dominant, that usually we are not aware of our own 'discourse' and that it can block us from discovering 'reality'? Secondly, ask yourself the question whether the same situation can be seen differently. Can you 'deconstruct' it? Can you come up with things or behaviour that is excluded from the 'normal situation' but without which the normal couldn't exist? What do you see differently? What is obvious, and what is not so obvious? Finally, focus on the difference between the obvious and the not so obvious, between the normal and the difference. Grasping this 'difference' is perhaps the essence of being someone capable of change, the core of being a social constructionist...

What is this, a bottle?

It must be hard for professor Maas to choose from such a tiny selection to fill one day's teaching, compared to all of his wisdom. And still, that day is so rich... This chapter could only try to summarize it. The question to you is:

How slow can you listen?

I recall a teaching by Ken Gergen at the University of Humanistics. Personally I find his writings quite difficult. But you should hear him speak – or is it thinking loud? You can easily find him on YouTube.

At some point in his lecture, Ken looks at the plastic water bottle he was carrying all the time, and poses the question: “What is this? A bottle?” Then he demonstrates what Alexander Maas was suggesting in the previous chapter, about finding out what is obvious and what is not. Is this a bottle? Or is it a piece of plastic, combined with another smaller piece of plastic, that can be fit together? Is it especially made for water? Is it a thing you can look through (and why would you)? Could you regard it as a leg of a chair? What is it Not? What is the shape of the air around the bottle? What does this bottle mean to me? And what could this bottle mean to you? And so on and so forth, for over thirty minutes... Being in the audience I was amazed by the many interpretations and lines of thought one small plastic bottle can lead us to.

I'm not suggesting that you do this all the time, with all the objects you have in sight. But do we have it in ourselves to look at something from so many points of view?

Eight years later, I was pleased to be in Gergen's audience again, at the World Appreciative Inquiry Conference in Ghent, Belgium. Together with Danielle Zandee¹, Gergen performed a sort of act. Ken and Danielle had an appointment at five o'clock; it was already half past, and Danielle was waiting for Ken to arrive. Ken was stuck in traffic as well as having phone problems and could not inform Danielle about his delay. At last Ken arrived. How did Danielle react? How would you react? Based on your own problem, being annoyed or distressed (we're going to miss the movie)? Or would you be worried, for example because Ken may have had an accident? So, Danielle reaction could be somewhere between “Where were you, *&^%\$, you kept me waiting endlessly and didn't even bother to give me a call!” and “Oh, I'm so glad to see you, is everything okay with you?” And what could have been Ken's words? “That is not fair; you should know how stressed I was by missing the bus.” Or “Dear Danielle, I'm so sorry that I'm late, and that I had you worrying about my arrival.”

Which one of the lines – of both actors in the play – do you think would cause a ‘show stopper’ and which would help the conversation further? What are the micro-practices

¹ Danielle Zandee is a Nyenrode professor in sustainable learning organizations and a contributor to the international AI community

I am my father

in our conversation that keep it moving? If we are able to formulate sentences that help generate subsequent sentences – positive or not – we are contributing to ongoing conversations, and we prevent the communication from stopping. This is why the word ‘generative’ is used so often with regard to Appreciative Inquiry.

Can you remember yourself using a ‘show stopping’ sentence in the last few days?

With your present insight, what could have been a more ‘generative’ formulation?

If you would like to re-vitalize that conversation, what would be your opening words?

At some point in his lecture on Social Constructionism, professor Alexander Maas becomes quiet and says: “I am my father. If I look at my hands and his, playing the piano: totally the same.” And: “I am my mother.” He gives examples of their resemblance. There’s also something of his grandmother in his personality, and also of his uncle. It’s a beautiful story about Alexander Maas.

Is he referring to ‘being like someone’ or ‘partly being someone’?

Exactly thirty years and one day. That was the age difference between my father and I. Because he passed away some years ago, the time difference between us no longer exists. I might say our lives have become more parallel. He is still here. In me. I am my father.



C.J. Hoogendijk (*19-11-1959)



C. Hoogendijk (*18-11-1929 †22-7-2011)

Maybe I am quite substantially my father because of his talent to deconstruct and construct. No, my father was not a philosopher, but he had a mind of his own and that mind told him to act when it was needed. Although his career turned him into a very capable people oriented manager, he primarily worked with his hands. When something in our house broke, whether it was a clock or a sewing machine, he would take it apart unsupported by any knowledge of the construction. He would do this by simply unscrewing, lifting the cover, taking all the elements apart until everything was completely deconstructed. He came to understand the device whilst deconstructing it. Most of the times, one of the parts appeared to be broken. In that case, my father would first try to mend or glue the part together; then he tried to create a replacement, and the final solution would be to find or order a new part (without the internet, that is). Having received the ‘missing link’ he would reconstruct the device and in most of the cases, it worked again.

This is what I was exposed to for the first seven years of my life; what I assisted in the next seven years and what I had copied and taught myself in the following seven years. My father made me do it and now, in the next generation, I am my father.

Which of your ancestors do you recognize in your own being?

How would you appreciate the word 'generative' again?

#023

Are you a non-dog?

When explaining social construction as an introduction to an Appreciative Inquiry experience, I often use the following 'sentence' by turning over five flip charts, saying:

CO-OPERATE

I'D RATHER

STOP WITH IT RIGHT NOW

THOSE ENDLESS DISCUSSIONS

I WANT TO GET RID OF IT

People in many organizations recognize this. And because it's just a matter of turning back the pages I always find great pleasure in reading the sentence 'upwards', only to be encountered by smiling faces. A surprising alternative emerges:

I WANT TO GET RID OF IT

THOSE ENDLESS DISCUSSIONS

STOP WITH IT RIGHT NOW

I'D RATHER

CO-OPERATE

So with the exact the same words, we can encourage a complete turnaround! How about that?

Let me tell you about a devastating turnaround of words: it's called "non-profit organizations".

It took me fifty years and an encounter with the Flemish AI network to find out that our economy does not consist of 'profit organizations' and 'non-profit organizations'. Why should we call a huge group of organizations – such as schools, hospitals and local councils – 'non-profit organizations'?

(We don't place a human being in the category 'non-dog', do we?)

Is the best they can do 'not getting any profit'? On the contrary, they do produce profit! They produce education, healthcare and subsequently support our society profits. Educated children, healthy people and active citizens are worthwhile results, won't you agree? These organizations produce significant Social Profit!

So, we have *profit* organizations and *social profit* organizations.

Five AI starting points

Perhaps working within a social profit organization might be a more positive experience. And please remind your accountant that it's not 'non-profit' he or she should be aiming at; the 'balanced scorecard' should be better focused on the social outputs and outcomes of the company.

If you are writing a story, do you prefer to write against a deadline or towards a 'birth line'?

Do you know of any words that – after further inspection – are quite negative, and ask for a constructive alternative formulation?

Why does Appreciative Inquiry have underlying starting points? After all, AI has been derived from practical research. So, if the 'method' would rest on certain foundations, these might have been added afterwards... Perhaps academics may find this problematic. But I guess this is not a problem for social constructionists who can easily switch between cause and effect. Additionally, asking this 'how come' question is of course 'good de-constructional practice'.

Nevertheless, it helps to understand Appreciative Inquiry if we regard it as built upon five basic principles. I want to show my appreciation to Kim de Groot, Jeannette Schonewille and Annet van de Wetering, who succeeded to summarize these principles in a very informative article, published in our first AI100 Magazine in June 2010. I'm very happy to make use of their text, which is also flavored with some beautiful quotes.

1. The social constructionist principle and AI

"We do not see things as they are, we see them as we are." (Anais Nin)

This first AI principle tells us that there's no objective reality or truth; it's what we make of it. Or, like the pragmatic philosopher Richard Rorty said: "True is what works." In other words: we construct reality.

2. The poetical principle and AI

"If you focus on problems, you find more problems. If you focus on successes, you find more successes." (Mac Odell)

Every story – think of a poem – is subject to endless interpretations. So, except for the poem itself being a creation, our interpretation of it is also a creation. In fact it's our creation. The more attention we give to something, the more it becomes part of our experience.

3. The simultaneity principle and AI

"All questions are leading questions." (Michael Hoyt)

This principle supposes that asking a question is the first step toward change. The change takes place from the moment we start to inquire. It is not about finding the right question, but finding the question that leads us in the right direction.

4. The anticipating principle and AI

"If you want to build a ship, don't drum up the people to gather wood, divide the work, and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea." (Antoine de Saint Exupery)

Our actions and decisions are lead by our internal images about the future. We can change our future by creating new, inspiring images.

5. The positivity principle and AI

“When we seek to discover the best in others, we somehow bring out the best in ourselves.” (William Arthur Ward)

Research by professor Barbara Fredrickson showed that positive emotions are not just pleasant experiences; they play an important role in the wellbeing of people.

What are your basic principles in living your live?

What are the strongest internal images about your future?

It's time to introduce the 3.0 kind. Basic ingredient: asynchronous reciprocity. Huh?

In 2008, when my book *Kracht zonder Macht* was to be presented to the public, my publisher Paul Quist, expecting about 100 people (family and friends) suggested a meeting room in a place called Seats2meet¹ (which I had never heard of before). I didn't only get a room, but also a website www.krachtzondermacht.nl: all the 100 visitors of my book presentation became member of the digital community, created for me by the people of Seats2meet. A co-creating relationship started, and is still going strong. When and where I can, I will check into a S2M location. You can live, meet, work, rest and develop at the same time, because of the special atmosphere and the explicit invitation to meet new people. And all this – the seat including wifi, coffee and lunch – is for free, or let's say in return for 'social capital': your willingness to share knowledge and meet others.

The founder of this enterprise is Ronald van den Hoff, a visionary on social entrepreneurship and how to enable and enforce it. We became good friends in 2011 after he asked me to be the editor of his 'magnus opus', the book *Society 3.0*. Starting with 1200 pages of content, and stripping it down to one third... you can call that friendship. In 2014 the book goes international in an English translation² titled 'Mastering the Global Transition on Our Way to Society 3.0'. Besides criticism on the existing national governance (1.0), and lively review of the consequences of the upcoming internet (2.0), the book suggests a certain behaviour (3.0) of us citizens if we are willing to build a sustainable society together. We should leave the idea of transactions behind, of give and take, and adopt a way of inter-relational being called asynchronous reciprocity: “let me help you, and maybe at some point and from an unknown direction, someone appears and will help me”.

My conviction is that Appreciative Inquiry contributes to building and mastering Society 3.0. Ronald invited me to state this in his book. You can find my plea for 3.0 behavior in section 14.3 of Society 3.0. Furthermore, shouldn't AI be added to the set of 21st Century Skills?

In short: referring to internet activities, 1.0 was the monologue type of communicating: using your website as a shop window. When we became interactive, we called it 2.0: we were able to give a comment on someone's blog. What Ronald means by 3.0 is that we

¹ I can only say: that was 2008 – check out Seats2meet.com. In 2014 they opened locations all over the world.

² Download your free copy on society30.com

Social Enterprising is Priceless

co-create value. We enforce each other. We keep on finding out which connections can help us and society further. In terms of economic value: we just don't rely anymore on the 'old school, dinosaur companies'; we build social enterprises around an appealing idea and take off. For the better.

Don't get me wrong. There's a lot of old school entrepreneurship going on on the modern Internet. Too often, we see shareholders, not stakeholders. In my interpretation, however, the label 3.0 stands for adding sustainable value, and that's more a social than a financial thing. Let's focus on the social opportunities of digital and personal interaction, because this is what the author of *Society 3.0* is suggesting. Be a social entrepreneur, whether you have job or are self employed. Let us support Ronald van den Hoff with his valuable intentions.

When and where did you experience 3.0 behavior?

How about examples of your own 3.0 talents?

What would you like to contribute to Society 3.0?

Please let me give you just one example of a social enterprise I'm part of. To give you an idea.

'Huisacademies' is dutch for 'in-house academies'. In short: the in-house academy represents the upgrade of the training department in an organization to become partner in sustainable human resources and organizational development; aiming for the organization to become a learning organization in all its fibers. Building or upgrading an in-house academy addresses a lot of organizational complexity.

In the past few years, fellow organizational developers joined my ideas, and we co-developed our 'company' into a 'guild'. In our external presentation, we are viewed as a real company, with a website, a logo, business cards, publications, customers and appealing results. But in fact, the members of the guild hold no formal contracts whatsoever. We share a WhatsApp group. We plan frequent meetings, because we like to meet each other. We share our knowledge and experiences. And everyone is connected to more initiatives than just Huisacademies. Together we formulated one rule (never wrote it down, and never signed it): if one of us obtains a project, he or she involves one of the others, purely for the purpose of learning and experiencing together. The customer doesn't need to be aware of this, unless there's a productive role for the other as well. Some members have left the guild, but are still friends. Others joined just us recently. What keeps us together is our shared vision on learning organizations and exploring our craftsmanship in contributing to that vision.

Not long ago, a large consulting firm invited me to a meeting. The director admired the 'Huisacademies' views and publications. I had the impression that he was interested in acquiring our 'company'. Before he would or could make an offer, I told him how we were organized; that we were just 'a loose bunch of fine people'. I suggested to him that we would be honored to work together with some senior learning consultants of that consulting firm, to exchange experiences, to exchange customer opportunities. This director promised to 'discuss it internally', and I have never heard from him since. My guess is that he just wanted to 'buy' us. And I like the idea that you can't buy a social enterprise.

What do you think of the idea that someone wants to buy you?

Are you involved in a group that you could call a social enterprise?

If so, what would you suggest in order to stay social and add value?

How to do things with words?

Once upon a time long ago, Confucius was asked by his pupils what he would do if he was chosen to be leader of the country. The wise man thought for a while and answered: “I would use language carefully.” The pupils looked very confused¹. Confucius explained: “When leaders don’t use language properly, then their words do not reflect reality. Things that have to be done, will remain unfinished. The result of all this will be that the good and the beautiful will fade away, society will lack justice, people will get confused, and the community will definitely fall apart.”

In fact, language can have an effect. Some words or sentences cause more impact than others. Shouting, and calling names, really can harm people. Are you aware that you are ‘doing something’ when saying “I promise you to do that”? This kind of speech is also an act. Like the priest or council member who says “I declare you husband and wife”. After that, the happy couple is actually married. Imagine the chairman of the Olympic Committee (on the right day and right time) speaks the words “I declare the games hereby opened”. Then something has really begun, don’t you think?

Back in the 1950’s, John L. Austin gave a series of lectures which were later published as *How to do things with words*. The idea of ‘performativity’ was introduced: words or sentences that represent ‘performance’ in itself. Warning: only read this book if you really like very technical linguistic analyses. Maybe it’s preferable to imagine yourself preparing a speech, or finding the right words for a specific situation. What is needed in an E-mail subject heading in order to attract the attention between all those other entries in the Inbox? How can you really help someone a step further? By giving answers? Or by asking questions? What questions are ‘performative’? In Appreciative Inquiry context, we like our conversation to be generative: it should not stop; it should go on; the relationship should continue. Please let us use the words in a way that our relationships will last...

What language makes you affirmative, generative, performative?

How are you going to make dreams come true?

Which words can help you live a fruitful social life?

¹ At that time, a joke about Confucius and confusion was not very appropriate yet...

It’s your mind that creates this world

How we furnished our world.
How we built our societies.
How we formed our nations
How we designed and ran organizations.
How we lived our lives.
How we used resources and made things.
How we behaved towards each other.

All we have created so far, was created in our minds beforehand.

This might lead to the reassuring thought that we can create the world as we want it to be.

So let us remember:

How we – for the better – behave toward each other.
How we – for the better – use resources and make things.
How we – for the better – live our lives.
How we – for the better – design and run organizations.
How we – for the better – form our nations.
How we – for the better – build our societies.
How we – for the better – furnish our world.

What’s on your mind?

5
WHO AM I
TO
APPRECIATE?

The Genericity of Inquiry

In case you started your first reading on this page, let me tell you that this book has been designed along the lines of our Dutch action learning program about AI: Appreciative Inquiry. One of the pillars throughout the learning journey is – of course – inquiry. One could say that inquiry lies somewhere between search and research. Obviously, an action learning program can only fully flourish when the participant applies his or her newly gained knowledge and skill to a specific case. This section tries to give you some thoughts on having – or being – a case study...

By the way, this study case of yours doesn't have to be related to organizational context. For me, and for our learning program, Appreciative Inquiry is about (facilitating) strength based change processes. It's also about the quality – the art – of interpersonal communication and conversation, and it's about the 'quest' into your positive core. (Maybe, just by reading this, thoughts might arise in the back of your mind about what could or would be your own case study... Please bring those thoughts to the forefront of your thinking!)

So, developing AI skills and understanding takes at least two learning lanes. There is your own personal path of development and there is the development in the study case. Subsequently, if you take into account that, in fact, the subject of learning itself has to do with inquiry, please get comfortable with the insight of covering three layers of search, inquiry and research:

- In taking up AI as a learning objective you will adopt skills to inquire (search, research);
- You will – at some point – be seeing yourself as a case study and you will inquire about the path upon which you are learning and developing;
- In order to find out what AI can do, you can apply research to your study case and find out whether change and development are taking place during the time of your AI-interventions.

Only three layers? Considering AI is a generic human interaction process, there will be people – because of your interventions – experiencing the generic powers of AI and they might 'spread the word'. How many layers did I say? Appreciate the 'genericity' of AI and consider the endless constructive flow you might be able to initiate. That's why the book cover invites you to 'try this at home', to take it further.

Your next question could be "Is this book actually meant for me? Am I ready for it?" A similar question would address the candidate participant for our learning programme:

“Is there such a thing as the ideal candidate? Does he or she need pre-qualifications? Are there indications for the participant to be a successful student or not?”

Do you need to have the right profile for studying and applying Appreciative Inquiry? My answer would be: No. I'm convinced there's this positive core in everyone. At the same time I think that some have to put in more effort than others in order to 'become appreciative'. Some people (and I know one very well) have to put a lot more effort in losing weight than others, who seem to be able to eat whole day without gaining an ounce. Some people I met, were unconsciously talented in Appreciative Inquiry, while others were aware of their talent. They would lean to negative criticism, and would face hard labour. All of them grew along with the AI learning program. I hope it works similarly for readers of this book.

How would you consider your 'ground state' compared to 'appreciativeness'?

Can you recall a situation when your 'positive core' was undoubtedly present?

Are you willing to study yourself; searching and researching your personal development?

Can you think of a desired situation, that needs 'constructive change support' realized?

#030

My Values, my Drivers, my Strengths?

Imagine yourself as a coworker in a company, part of a team, or a partner in a relationship. Out of the blue, a new context arises. Somehow, the new arrangement is that all agreements, rules and procedures have become completely obsolete, null and void. Imagine this is really happening. What is your first thought?

Read the following 'possible thoughts' and find out which one most resembles your primary reaction, when suddenly confronted with this peculiar change.

1. I have to make sure that my income, my finances are secured.
2. How is this possible? This is not how we do things here, is it? Are we simply throwing away all our valuable traditions?
3. At last! Now I can do what I always wanted to do. No objections. Now we can move in the right direction.
4. How can we know if this works out right? If everyone chooses their own direction, it will become a mess, won't it? There should be some kind of organization.
5. What an opportunity! This really encourages entrepreneurship. It might be somewhat rigorous, but it gives me lots of possibilities to become successful!
6. All in all good circumstances for harmony in our relationships. Especially under these circumstances we must communicate and solve our problems together.
7. What is this idea all about? What's the underlying strategy? What can possibly happen? Will it turn out well, or are interventions needed? Could it go terribly wrong? If this wasn't serious, I would consider this an interesting experiment. But I'm curious whether everyone can cope with this new situation.
8. If we all open up and let go, we can and will get in touch with a much larger community than before. We would be able to fully connect with society as a whole.

I derived this not very scientific test freely from a value systems model better known as Spiral Dynamics. The eight ‘typical’ reflections point towards dominant value systems in our being, which can be considered drivers for primary behaviour¹. The value systems are identified by a colour. So please find your corresponding ‘dominant driver’ below. Note that each of us has a palette of colours and that my interpretation of the whole theory has been reduced to the max...

1	Beige	Basic survival system. Note that every person can fall back to this state, depending on the situation.
2	Purple	Tribal system. Traditions. Looking for the trust and safety of being part of a group, clan or belief.
3	Red	Power, respect. Looking for speed, getting things moving, results.
4	Blue	Structure, assurance. Looking for rules, agreements, well organized, predictable.
5	Orange	Opportunities. What’s in it for me? Looking for success, competition, awards.
6	Green	Social, harmonious. Looking for consensus, co-creation, partnership.
7	Yellow	Freedom, intellect, complexity. Wants to analyse and understand.
8	Turquoise	Holistic, connected. Striving for meaning, sensemaking.

The founder of the theory behind these ‘levels of human existence’ is Clare W. Graves. Please take a few minutes to appreciate his thoughts, which originated somewhere in the early 1960’s:

“At each stage of human existence the adult man is off on his quest for his holy grail, the way of life by which he believes men should live. At his first level he is on a quest for

automatic physiological satisfaction. At the second level he seeks a safe mode for living, and this is followed, in turn, by a search for heroic status, for the power and the glory, then by a search for everlasting peace, a search for material fulfillment in the here and now, a search for personal fulfillment here and now, a search for integrated living and a search for spiritual peace in a world he knows can never be known. And, when he finds, at the eighth level, that he will never find that peace, he will be off on his ninth level quest.

As he sets off on each quest, he believes he will find the answer to his existence, and as he settles into each nodal state he is certain he has found it. Yet, always to his surprise and ever to his dismay he finds, at every stage, that the solution to existence is not the solution he thinks he has found. Every state he reaches leaves him discontented and perplexed. It is simply that as he solves one set of human problems he finds a new set in their place. The quest he finds is never ending.”

Very much like the development of being appreciative, would you agree?

Did you gain a little bit more understanding of your self?

Which of the colours would you consider to be ‘enablers’ of Appreciative Inquiry?

How about you, with your positive core: which of your inner strengths can support your (further) development of your AI competencies?

¹ All information can be found in the book *Spiral Dynamics* by Don Beck and Chris Cowan

#031 Longing for Change?

Is there something you really would like to see happen in your environment?

Would you like to initiate this change?

How can Appreciative Inquiry help you?

Perhaps the aforementioned three questions are sufficient to invite you to a bit of daydreaming.

Perhaps you are also interested in the ‘change and development goals’ of others who considered embracing Appreciative Inquiry.

The young student Gerwin worked as a buddy for autistic children and chose to study AI particularly for refining his conversational skills.

Learning consultant Monique experienced some personal struggles during the AI-program. She graduated successfully on the comparison between AI and the Socratic conversation.

Quality manager Angelique advised her organization (in mental health support) to celebrate the ten-year anniversary of the company in a large AI summit together with 250 stakeholders. She applied her AI knowledge in all stages of organizing the summit.

Self employed conflict mediator Alexandra used her AI skills to open up her own proposition to others, enabling the co-creation of a much richer social enterprise.

Senior organizational consultant Jonny initiated change within the social affairs department of a large city council, together with colleagues who also followed the AI learning program. The team managed to change attitudes amongst the employment support professionals into an appreciative approach of their clients. (From ‘job searchers’ to ‘job finders’.)

Eight participants of our last AI learning journey decided, besides their own case study, to organize a collective masterpiece: a public AI summit about the way volunteer workers are appreciated in their organizations, compared to paid co-workers.

Which of these examples inspired you the most?

Why would you take up AI?

#032 My Connectivity Ratio

Some years ago I was co-founder of the “Dutch Society for Connecting Leadership”. That sounds a lot bigger than it was: a bunch of friends trying to create a movement that would invite ‘hard core spread sheet managers’ to convert them into ‘connective leaders’. Our meetings and events were constructive and full of joy. The people that came to our events, subscribed to our ideals. We never saw members of our target group... So much for our marketing communication :-)

Where our ‘society’ isn’t so active anymore, our ideas and ideals of connective leadership are still alive. Part of our inheritance is still in use. We call it the Connective Leadership Mirror. It’s a practical mini assessment to find out your ‘connectivity ratio’, compared to the image of the utmost connective leader. I would suggest you don’t take it all too seriously. But I’m using it regularly amongst teams and groups, to provide them with some personal insight about their ability to co-create, and to give them a ‘vocabulary’ for further conversation.

Although the actual instrument is an internet tool, the experiment for this book is to enable the reader to perform the test without the use of a computer. I hope you’ll agree that the ability to connect is a personal strength, valuable to yourself and to others and you might feel the connectivity in the area of Appreciative Inquiry.

If you are interested in the mirror, please fill out the form below while imagining yourself in an organizational context. And no, you don’t need to be a manager to do this. To connect is a leadership quality in itself...

For each of the eight aspects, divide 10 points amongst the seven possible characteristics. The one that appeals most to you, gets the most points. The sum of your scores should be 10.

What is your association with “Organization”?

1. managing ...
2. communication ...
3. goals ...
4. whole ...
5. network ...
6. org. chart ...
7. vehicle ...

—
10

What is your association with “Work”?

8. contribution
9. production
10. team
11. conditional
12. customer
13. assignment
14. meaningful

What is your association with “Policy”?

15. culture
16. acceptance
17. command
18. integral
19. direction
20. dialogue
21. instruction

What is your association with “Improvement”?

22. brainstorm
23. topdown
24. impact
25. social
26. necessit
27. structured
28. valuable

What is your association with “Cooperation”?

29. agreements
30. effective
31. caring
32. learning
33. obvious
34. coordination
35. unconditional

What is your association with “Leadership”?

36. control
37. cohesion
38. inspiration
39. as usual
40. perspective
41. understanding
42. status

What is your association with “Result”?

43. monitoring
44. existence
45. breakthrough
46. win-win
47. success
48. sustainable
49. claim

What is your association with “Coworker”?

50. resource
51. clan
52. potential
53. moneymaker
54. linking pin
55. team
56. boss

How to calculate your Connectivity Ratio?

Add up the given scores according to the following formula's (“13” means that you add up the score you filled in at item 13).

$$P = (7+11+15+26+33+39+44+51) \div 80 \times 100\%$$

$$R = (1+13+17+23+34+42+49+56) \div 80 \times 100\%$$

$$P = (6+9+21+27+29+36+43+50) \div 80 \times 100\%$$

$$O = (3+12+19+24+30+40+47+53) \div 80 \times 100\%$$

$$G = (2+10+16+25+31+37+46+55) \div 80 \times 100\%$$

$$Y = (5+8+20+22+32+41+45+52) \div 80 \times 100\%$$

$$T = (4+14+18+28+35+38+48+54) \div 80 \times 100\%$$

What does this mean?

You may have guessed it already: the letters represent colours – Purple, Red, Blue, Orange, Green, Yellow and Turquoise. Please read section #030 for further explanation of the behavioral drivers they are addressing. So, your Connectivity Ratio turns out to be a sort of profile, inspired by the value systems of Clare Graves.

The Ultimate Connective Leader, and You

During the development of the ‘mirror’, with special acknowledgement to Marcel van Marrewijk, the Spiral Dynamics expert, we evaluated the test by approaching leaders that were – in our opinion – very connecting. (Unfortunately we weren’t able to ask Mahatma Gandhi, HH Dalai Lama or Nelson Mandela to fill in their Connectivity Mirror...). We formed the insight that the profile of our ideal connective leader is as follows:

Ultimate connective leader	Your personal profile	Comments
Purple 6%	Purple %	
Red 1%	Red %	
Blue 5%	Blue %	
Orange 19%	Orange %	
Green 20%	Green %	
Yellow 21%	Yellow %	
Turquoise 28%	Turquoise %	

So... what do you think about your ratio, compared to our suggested ideal?

Which aspects of your mirror appeals to you most?

What do you consider points of attention, points for improvement?

Risk Management?

Appreciative Inquiry is often seen as a positive movement. And yes, there's not much negativity to be found in practising AI. If you consider strength to be a positive quality, then the strength based method called AI can be seen as positive. If you like the idea that you can help people to develop further, then this really can be considered as a positive effect of AI.

In practising AI, we ask another person a lot of questions. Questions that invite the other to discover strong experiences, to dream of endless possibilities, to design new futures... If you look more precisely at the AI-questions, you will see that they're not specifically formulated as positive. They are merely 'generative': they enable growth, or action-oriented thinking.

So within the category of generic AI questions, positivity is not the main criteria. And that's why you, once approached in an AI way, can be confronted with such a thing as a 'provocative question'. (E.g. "If you really want this idea to have impact, what action are you going to take?") Perhaps the most provocative question one could ask within an AI context sounds like: "What is the risk you are willing to take?"

Back to you and your possible interest in AI. Does AI appeal to you? Can it help you to become a person that 'makes a difference'? What is the difference you want to see in the world?

How much effort, focus, compassion are you willing to put into your AI learning process?

How much 'training' does one need to become an AI practitioner? (Don't ask me. I don't know, I'm still learning.) Regarding compassion – like compassion for your fellow citizens H.H. Dalai Lama practises his compassionate meditations, addressing and embracing all of the 7 billion people on earth, for four hours, each and every day. And I guess we would consider him a 'natural'...

"What is the risk you are prepared to take?" It's a genuine AI question. Maybe, the risk of focussing on AI is that you pay less attention to other subjects. Maybe, at the end of your day, you will find out that you 'were AI' for only a short time (I often experience this in my reflections).

If you have more or less defined the risk of taking up AI as a development practice, and you found out that there really are some risks, then my question to you would be: What are the possible advantages to make the effort? Please give this question some minutes thought...

Everyone is an Independent Professional

My good friend Rudy Brouwer, great networker of the 3.0 kind, invited me to contribute to his book *Networking from the heart*¹. That was back in 2011. Four years have since passed. Time to re-appreciate his book. Here's my part, which appeared to be quite suitable for the purpose of the book you are reading now:

The unparalleled Dutch management trainer Joep Frantzen once said: "Nobody goes to work to make a mess of it." I can't agree more, so I fully assume that every co-worker in an organization is willing to contribute to the best of his abilities. And no, that doesn't necessarily require a detailed mission and vision statement. Most of the times it is obvious what the organization needs to run smoothly and make customers happy.

Imagine that anyone in an organization is able to be himself (or herself of course). Authenticity is an important prerequisite for people to contribute to their best abilities, don't you agree? Imagine managers providing the working circumstances in which everyone, irrespective of the 'cost centre' he is located in, is able to exploit his talents fully in support of the organization goals. Imagine co-creation between co-workers of different 'cost centres' – between people with complementary talents and insights. What could possibly happen to that organization? Perhaps the term 'cost centre' would vanish very soon...

As far as I can recall, it was in 2008 when the title Independent (self employed) Professional² entered the vocabulary. (Fortunately, no 'IP' had had the unpleasant idea to register the title as a trademark...) It marked a shift. Beforehand we already knew the abbreviation IWP – Independent Without Personnel. I consider this a pleonasm. What do you mean, independent and without staff? Isn't that very much the general idea when deciding to become independent, self employed? IWB would have been better: Independent Without a Boss. The built-in hierarchy between employer and employee is not a good concept in a world where equality and mutuality represent core values.

It should be IP, Independent Professional. Before I became an IP in 2005, I also experienced being an employee, but I always seem to have interpreted my job in an IP-way... So, to

¹ *Netwerken vanuit je hart* – Ruud Brouwer (only available in Dutch)

² In the Netherlands we were used to the title ZZP – Zelfstandige Zonder Personeel (Self Employed without Employees). In Society 3.0 we now use ZP Zelfstandig Professional (Self Employed / Independent Professional).

me it was obvious that the title Independent Professional was not something restricted to those who had found their way to the Chambers of Commerce. I experience(d) being an Independent Professional completely detached from being an employee, or not. What is more, regarding the concept called ‘organization’, I’m convinced that it’s not merely the ‘external’ IP that should enable the necessary social innovation; instead I think that preferably the ‘internal self employed’ should disassociate from the systems and the power plays and utterly become themselves; in togetherness, that is. One can only be an Independent Professional in relation to others. Independence is a reciprocal quality, as pointed out by Emmanuel Levinas in his book *Humanism of the Other*.

To what extend do you consider yourself an Independent Professional?

Over the years I’ve become very sensitive about congruent (and incongruent) behavior. Let’s study Gandhi’s brilliant “Be the change you want to see in the world”.

In the first years of this century I worked for a large international express & logistics company. I was assigned to look after the ‘people-side of change’. At some point, the corporate head office introduced the Seven Values. There’s nothing wrong with a fine set of key values to enable focus. They were introduced to the top-100 – no, not me – during an expensive trip to the hidden city of Beijing, China. Interesting place for the presentation of such things as Trust and Openness, wouldn’t you think? One of the attending senior managers told me afterwards that during that conference, four of the seven new values had already been violated... so much for role modelling.

A few weeks later at our Benelux head office I found our caretaker carrying a pile of posters, glueing them on walls and coffee machines. Being responsible for the people-side of change and having not been informed about this internal communication ‘campaign’, I asked the caretaker who had assigned him to distribute the wall posters. He answered: “No one; they were delivered to my office, with a written request to put those on our walls.” The least I could do at that point was to suggest the idea of hanging a marker next to the posters, inviting people to reflect on the values by writing comments or ideas on the posters. This was considered to be a bad idea. The board I reported to, made it clear that the posters should remain untouched.

One of the values said “We foster openness.” It occurred to me that this poster was glued on the window of the office of a board member. This particular senior management offices carried frosted glass. (To find out whether the manager was in his room, without disturbing him, you either had to lie down on your belly to look through the small strip of clear glass next to the floor, or you had to take a ladder to glance through the strip against the ceiling.) So, on that piece of dimmed glass window, the Value poster said “We foster openness.” You get it? Being a person of the educational kind and not afraid of parrèsia, I invited the manager to step out of his office and have a look at the poster. He didn’t see the irony of the situation; he wasn’t aware of the incongruence he was representing. He was even willing to have his picture taken.

Perhaps you are a parent. And maybe your beloved children make noise. And at some point you would like them to be more quiet. Would you scream “QUIET NOW!!!!”?

Of course not. You would whisper, “Please be quiet, because ...”. That would be very congruent of you.

Do you pay attention to (dis)congruence?

Can you imagine some examples, effective and ineffective ones?

In what aspect of your being would you like to behave very congruently?

6 MY NEXT AI SUMMIT

May I compare thee to a mid-summits dream?

Part of our postgraduate AI action learning program is a two day AI summit. Doing an AI summit within an AI study program goes with extra dimensions. Firstly, as a participant, you take part in an AI summit regarding a subject – an affirmative topic – associated with the study program. The result being a proposal or action that contributes to the group learning. Secondly, our students experience two days full of AI. This is not a lecture anymore, this is practice (meant to be a lesson). Thirdly, as a student, you are tempted to think about the process and procedures of an AI-summit; a sort of stepping out. And finally, by observing and experiencing the AI summit facilitator – our Flemish friend and role model Arno Vansichen – the students are made aware of their own possible future role as an AI facilitator. So there's a lot to learn over those two days.

With one of our last groups, we fulfilled our AI-summit in a nice villa surrounded by a beautiful park, just outside the city of The Hague. Our question to inquire sounded like, “How can we contribute to desired value transitions, personally or organizationally and in society?” For the sake of experiencing good group dynamics, we invited more people than just our students, so I want you to know that half of the attendees were new to each other. Therefore it is more impressive to find out what an AI summit can do with people, in terms of constructive atmosphere, friendliness and connectivity. During the two days a kind of loving warmth grew in the air... as a result of a group process called AI-summit. (And lots of credits to Arno.)

You will find out more about AI summits in the following chapters, so don't bother for now. Just imagine that at some point in the process, in the morning of day two, small groups presented their ‘dream propositions’ to each other, contributing to the central question. I recall one group – the rest were standing in a circle around them – switching on an iPod with beautiful music. On the floor was a large white sheet of paper. Colored pencils were scattered around. Everyone seemed to be waiting. It was a magical moment. And then, one of us – I don't even know whether he or she came from the small group or from the audience – knelt down, picked up a pencil and started to draw a picture. You can guess what happened: in a few moments, everyone of us was co-creating the drawing. We forgot time; we were strongly connected, and it felt as such. We experienced ‘wholeness’.

This stage in the AI summit process is called the Dream phase. One could say that the entire previous day was intended to create the circumstances for real dreaming; dreaming

about how we want the future to be. We need dreams to be able to design and realize a desired future.

Have you had dreams that came true?

Do you have more dreams?

What do you need to share your dreams?

#037

Intensity of the Intentions

Imagine 120 people, grouped around fifteen tables of eight people each. They were all stakeholders of the large Dutch national firefighters organization, all somehow connected to ‘transferring learning to working practice’. (The practical transfer is always important in learning, but it especially is for firemen.) Red tablecloths on the tables; lights are dimmed; small (electric!) candles on the tables. There were lots of relics on the table, such as firemen helmets, water hoses and specific rescue tools. Although all of these people are in a meeting room, the atmosphere is ‘practical’. They are practical people. Being representatives of an organization with tens of thousands of co-workers, the people in the room are mostly new to each other. (And if not, the table settings secure the maximum mix of people around every table.) I was very honored to be their AI-summit facilitator. We had the opportunity to spend a full day with each other.

It’s around eleven o’clock. We’re in the middle of the Discovery phase. In pairs, the attendees performed a mutual appreciative inquiry interview with each other, with the aim of ‘discovering’ strong experiences from the past, when the transfer of learning to practice went very well. After the pairs have returned to the plenary room and before they share their stories, I take the microphone, shop around the tables and ask individuals about their AI interview experiences. Some were really excited to hear about a good practice within another region of the organization. Others shared experiences about feeling very appreciated by another person listening to their stories. Some people were pleased to just have a good, warm and constructive conversation and wanted to share that they miss these kind of encounters at work...

What are the odds of two particular people ending up at one out of fifteen tables? And what are the odds that out of eight people, two of them form a couple for an AI interview? One of the participants took my microphone and shared that he was a study coach at one of the regional training institutes. He had supported a student-firefighter who had completed his training and assisted him getting into a work environment. He explained that at some point he received complaints about the (lack of) practical experience of the student.... The other participant of the pair was sitting next to him, and told him that he was the mentor of the team in which the student was placed. He explained that he was the one who made the complaints, but decided to focus on the student, but somehow this did not lead toward further investigation or discussion. At this point I’m not sure whether the study coach and the team mentor have had mail conversations, but I remember they were mutually not very happy about each others actions. And now, by pure coincidence they found each other in an Appreciative Inquiry Interview. As a result, they fully understood and appreciated each other’s situation and they had already come up with solutions for improvement. They had started a very fine professional relationship. This is what an AI summit can lead us to.

How many D's?

What is the purpose of an AI summit? It's to produce the best ideas to realize a desired future based upon a specific question – an affirmative topic. Where do these ideas come from? They stem from people's strongest experiences concerning the affirmative topic. What is needed for people to come up with their stories? First of all, to be with a variety of stakeholders, often called 'the whole system in the room'. Secondly, a 'friendly' meeting environment. Thirdly, time to meet and get acquainted. Fourthly, 'safe' circumstances in which personal stories can be shared. Fifth, a guideline or summit script to enable several forms of communication and co-creation; interviews in pairs, roundtable dialogues and small group presentations.

What can happen? At the end of the day there is a selection of 'best ideas' including suggestions for first next steps into realization. Moreover, many co-owners of these best ideas are willing to put energy in the realization. Why are they co-owners of the action plans? It's because they were the co-producers. If these sustained ideas and proposals are to be regarded as 'output' of the AI summit, there's also a lot of extra 'outcome'. People experience high quality communication, lots of new connections and working relationships. There's a feeling of really being part of the organization (again), there's a sense of pride on behalf of the organization, for its capability to organize an AI summit. There's a reassurance that working together can be fun as well as productive...This particular Firefighter-Summit was a very effective one, due to the focus placed upon following up on the outcome process: out of eight proposals, three 'best practices' have been selected, described as attractive stories, and presented to the 25 regions of the organization. The process of improving the 'transfer of learning' within the organization is still going on.

This is all thanks to someone who was inspired by Appreciative Inquiry and suggested a summit to support her project objectives. Thank you Marianne, senior advisor of the Academy for Talent and Leadership for the Dutch Safety Regions. Dear Marianne, co-creation with you is like a nice walk along the beach, with a good friend, in the midst of summer!

What would you consider as your strongest experience in partaking in a conference?

Can you recall a (business) conference that lead to a sustainable follow-up?

Regarding the next meeting you are in, what would be your desired outcome?

When you google Appreciative Inquiry, most times – especially when you google for pictures – you find a four-step process: Discover, Dream, Design and Destiny. Simply summarized:

- Discover strong, helpful, positive experiences in the past.
- Dream of a future in which those strong experiences happen all the time.
- Design actions, starting now, that help us build that future.
- Make it your Destiny to realize those actions.

The ideal AI summit takes up to four days to cover the four D's. In my experience, the maximum time an organization could spend was two days. Most of the summits I was invited to co-design and co-facilitate, took place in one day. I always try to stretch the duration, but I often have to agree with practical restrictions. The AI summit event may take one or two days, but the entire process involving preparation and follow-ups can take a year.

In my experience, working in a country where 'efficiency' has priority, the summit event itself normally covers three D's: Discover, Dream, Design. The Destiny phase, also called Delivery, has to be taken care of in the follow-up of the group meeting and its advisory to schedule this upfront.

Of course there is preparation, a large part of which regarding Definition; definition of the central question to be inquired into, definition of the target audience, definition of the support team and definition of the summit-scenario.

Sometimes a summit I was facilitating did not reach the Design phase. The Discovery took more time than we (I) thought, and so we ended up Dreaming. (Nothing wrong with sharing Dreams in an organizational context.) Sometimes Discovering is the only activity we do: AI interviews in pairs and sharing the strong stories in table groups. The result being a shared understanding, a collective feeling of what is already good and an experience of high quality communication.

So, out of how many D's does a 'proper' AI summit consist? Please find out for yourself. If you can contribute to a constructive meeting, put in an AI element; it doesn't always have to be a full summit, but perhaps this can develop into one.

How affirmative can a topic be?

Five/six D's? Definition-Discovery-Dream-Design-Destiny/Delivery? In my experience of valuable prerequisites, let me suggest another D, or maybe two.

I think that – no matter how short our time frame is – we can ‘strip’ some of the D's, but we should always give the people invited space to get acquainted. When you join a table group, you want to get to know the others and of course that can be done in an appreciative way. But let's never skip this step and jump into the Discovery. So let me introduce an extra D for ‘Dating’.

If we regard the ‘essential AI interview in pairs’ as the dance, let's not forget the concept of ‘inviting someone to dance’. It takes the ability to be present, to address a person, to make eye contact, to smile, to approach and to make the beginning of a connection. Let me call this ‘Dating’ (so we can add it to the row of D's). In my opinion an essential step in the Appreciative Inquiry process.

Please always include ‘Dating’ in your conference, whether it's a business meeting or an AI summit. It might take some (extra) time, but you will gain from it during the rest of the meeting. You might even see some Dancing between the meeting members. Conversational dancing, that is.

My ideal AI-process?

Define – Date – Dance – Discover – Dream – Design – Deliver/Destiny

The next time you are chairing or organizing a meeting, please allocate one hour for the attendants to properly meet each other and discuss the agenda before they start the formal discussion. Would you at least try this once?

Let me tell you about an AI summit with MBA students in a Master of Change program. The program manager of this MoC wanted to show his pupils alternative change methods, such as Appreciative Inquiry. Because he is a friend of a friend, and because I'm always willing to practice my AI-skills, I offered to co-prepare and facilitate a small summit. (Small, that is five hours, being a lot more than the usual ‘span of attention’. But in this ‘long lesson’ there were no energy leaks.)

Would you believe that formulating the ‘affirmative topic’ (AT) of this summit took at least ten textual revisions during its co-creation? Consider this as an example of how secure I think we should be in formulating the core text that will guide a whole group of people through the AI-process. It's all about using our language properly (#027).

To give you an impression; the program manager suggested to use the summit for inquiring into ‘ethics’. My first reaction to that – apart from being enthusiastic about this theme – was that I found no ‘ethics’ in the curriculum of the MoC. In my opinion, an affirmative topic should be recognized as ‘logical’ by the attendees of a summit and I was not sure whether the introduction of ‘ethics’ would resonate. At the same time, ‘ethics’ seemed a very relevant subject to students in a Masters of Change. One of the first AT-suggestions sounded like this: “How can my moral professional behavior contribute to ethical learning processes of other professionals, and cause a raise of personal effectiveness as well as conscious growth in the development of the self steering organization?”

In a constructive feedback session I suggested that this sentence was a very long one, and I could raise a lot of new questions instead of unleashing the desire to inquire... How would you interpret this statement?

After some mail discussion, my contact came up with a revised and shortened alternative: “How can the self-organizing skill contribute to the conscious ethical actions of professionals?”

During the weeks this (mail and Skype) co-creation took place, the insight proved that not only the MoC students should attend the summit, but also – within the perspective of the whole system in the room – teachers, apprentice coaches, representatives of organizations where students performed practical assignments. Therefore, our AT had to address more diverse participants than just students. And that's perhaps the reason why the words ‘I’ and ‘we’ were left out of it. I thought this AT-version still needed refinement.

Between four hours and four days... (1)

We decided to present our concept AT during one of the classes of our student-participants and found out (what we knew of course) that a good affirmative topic is ‘straight, simple and appealing’. After some more revisions we finally agreed on a text that would be printed and presented on the cover of the AI summit guide. I’m glad we started this process eight weeks before the summit!

To give you the full ‘AT-picture’; the AI-summit script or guideline is a booklet that the participants find on their chairs the moment they enter the meeting room. The booklet contains the schedule of activities, sometimes background information about Appreciative Inquiry, and most of all; practical guidelines for performing the different activities. The affirmative topic is usually presented in three different ways.

First of all, the ‘slogan’ on the cover. This was our ‘best shot’:

“Attention to Ethics! How do we embed ethical action into our profession?”

Second, the AT is integrated in the welcome message:

“Welcome! Dear co-makers of today’s summit. Inspired by our Masters of Change students, we are going to inquire – appreciatively – our ethical understanding and translate our findings to strong action proposals which hopefully contribute to the development, preferably embedding, of ethical behavior in our (daily or future) professional practice. We thank you in advance for co-creating this summit!”

Third, the AT is used in the introductory text of the summit phase, in which pairs perform mutual appreciative inquiry interviews. Before they start the first question, they are asked to read the third rephrase of the affirmative topic out loud:

“Imagine that we, in performing our professional jobs, at any time take into account every stakeholder that is ‘touched’ by our (business) activities. Imagine us appreciating all of our stakeholders. Imagine that we don’t just achieve our (business) objectives, but that we in that achievement support our own interest as well as the interests of our stakeholders. Imagine that we strongly connect our personal and professional well-being to the well-being of our stakeholders and fellow citizens...”

How affirmative can a topic be? How much attention and co-creation is needed to produce an adequate formulation of a guiding question? And this is not just for AI-summits...

Do you remember writing a short text that took you a very long time?

What is it that made you revise and revise the text again?

How would you compare this to you writing an ‘ordinary’ e-mail?

Consider the quality of language in your next (e-mail) message.

There’s no registered trademark for an AI summit (as far as I know). Instead of copyright, AI grants you – and even implies – the right to copy. Perhaps the ‘ideal summit’ takes four days, but again what is ideal? In this chapter you will be shown a few time schedules of AI-gatherings I co-facilitated. This serves two purposes. Firstly, it gives you an impression of the general proceedings of an AI group process. Secondly, it might inspire you to design your own meeting, based on some or more AI ingredients. Although the ‘please try this at home’ statement on this book front also can be considered as ‘please try it at the office’, you are warmly invited to find out how AI can be fitted into family events.

Sometimes I facilitated one of the ‘parallel workshops’ in a larger meeting, usually within a time frame of approximately 75 minutes. Plenty of time to offer the participants an AI experience! Here’s a possible scenario for a group of around twelve people. (The figures between brackets are minutes.)

Welcome (5)

- Please have a seat (of course arranged in a circle; no table necessary).

AI mini interviews (15)

- Choose a partner and do a little interview in seven minutes (and then change roles).
- Invite the other to talk, you just listen; listen so well that you’ll be able to recall it afterwards.
- Ask the other’s name, and the strongest take away of this conference so far.
- Ask the other to tell you what – or who – it is, he or she is the most proud of.

Plenary introductions (30)

- Back in the circle.
- Everyone takes 2 to 3 minutes to introduce his or her conversation partner, giving a resume of the ‘interview’.

Reflections (15-30)

- Besides the content of the mutual mini interviews, what about the quality of the conversation?
- Anyone felt appreciated?
- Short introduction to the steps¹ in an AI interview – starting with an energy question.

¹ See chapter #066

- Few headlines about AI as ‘change method’, as ‘high quality conversation’, as ‘ground state’.
- Last questions.

Remember: only with half the knowledge or less, you are very well invited to facilitate a session as described; would you please give this a try somewhere, sometime?

#041

Between four hours and four days... (2)

Last year I was invited to facilitate a ‘master class’ on the subject of ‘appreciative leadership’. (Studying the wisdom and experience of Joep de Jong¹ helped me a lot in my preparations.) There were eighteen participants representing executive roles in their organizations. The time slot was between 16:00 and 20:00, including dinner. Below in short is our scenario, just to broaden your view on the possible proceedings of AI group sessions. The figures between brackets represent minutes.

Introduction (10)

- Please have a seat
(of course arranged in a circle; tables only at the walls of the room).
- A master class is about having masters as participants, let’s regard ourselves this way.
- The expectations: encounter with Appreciative Inquiry, focusing on leadership.
- What is the learning you want to take away?
- Mastery takes continuous ‘exercising’; are you willing to just follow my ‘instructions’?

Coming to our senses (10)

- Close your eyes and listen to Arvo Pärt².
- In the first few minutes, focus on your breathing.
- In the next few minutes, think about your learning question, and let it go...
- In the following few minutes, open your eyes, look around, and think about possible learning questions of the other participants; who would you like to meet and interview?

Mini AI interviews (15)

- Think about how you would ask someone to dance with you...
- Walk through the room and invite a conversation partner.
- Do a short interview: “Can you recall a heroic action in your team or organization?”
- Afterwards, rethink your learning question a make notes.

¹ See chapter #081

² See chapter #007

Between four hours and four days... (3)

Round of mutual introductions (30)

- Everyone gets back in the circle of chairs.
- Every participant introduces the other in one minute.
- There are 18 heroic situations flowing into the room.
- Connectivity is rising.

Dreaming about leadership (30)

- Watch a video of an orchestra³ that has a leader, but also leads itself, and involves the public...
- Intuitively choose a book from large collection that I have placed on the side tables.
- Gather in small groups, feel inspired by the video, the book title and the ‘masters’ around you.
- Co-create desirable futures around your teams and organizations, and how to enable this.
- Rethink your individual learning question and rephrase it as it suits you.

Plenary dreams (25)

- Random reflections out of the small groups.
- Suggestions for improving the quality of organizational life.
- For those feeling free: share your ‘dreamt’ learning question in the circle (we can all learn from it).
- One of the strongest AI questions: “What is the risk you dare to take in realizing your dream?”

Culinary reflections (60)

- Dinner, without a scenario of course.

Final reflections (60)

- Back in the meeting room, time for questions.
- Some background on Appreciative Inquiry.
- Takeaways: what is it you appreciated in this master class?
- Finally: the beautiful poem ⁴ “Live your Questions” by Rainer Maria Rilke.

So this was a four hour AI group session. Did it occur to you that we completely skipped the ‘official’ Discovery phase? Every ingredient of an AI process is a constructive one, like a piece of Lego. You can always build something out of it. So please, assemble your own ‘social construct’.

³ “Sorry” by Kytteman’s HipHop Orchestra (find it on YouTube)

⁴ See chapter #056

The purpose of this book ‘Appreciative Inquiries’ is to share my experiences of practicing AI. No large case studies; no academic analyses; not too much ‘theoretical stuff’... I hope you appreciate my attempts to make AI as accessible as possible for you. I hope you feel invited to explore some of the ‘inquiries’ yourself. Therefore I like the chapters in this book to be small. The less room I take, the more room you have for your personal interpretation.

In this chapter, I take the liberty of filling a few more pages. I’d like you to present the full content of an AI Summit Guideline, as it is handed out to the participants. You will believe me by now, that there are a lot of possible variations on this guideline, depending on the affirmative topic, the timeline and the participants. However, there’s also a lot of generic content in an summit guideline. You will probably notice this when reading the following example, of which I think that 80% is more or less ‘standard’ text.

Please remember, the following guideline has been translated from Dutch. The text may have been translated, but not the culture... What this summit was about, you will find out by reading it. What you also should know, is that at every table there’s one participant, informed and prepared to perform a small role as table facilitator.

<front>

The best place to learn is our working environment How do we make the best of it?

AI Summit “Learning at work”

8 october 2014 – Papendal Congress Venue

An initiative by: Dutch Firefighters Education – Re-enforcement Programme

<2>

It’s obvious that our education system focuses on getting us to perform our jobs as effectively and as safely as possible. As of 2005 we are building a dualistic education process: formal education and training – at a regional institute, where we help our students develop the basic skills. Subsequently, these skills can be further developed at the workplace. Workplace related training – during and after the education – is an immense

valuable prerequisite for the professional development of our co-workers. The workplace is a tough workplace, where there's a lot to do and a lot to learn. How do we assure that the workplace becomes and stays the source of learning opportunities?

OUR FOCUS TODAY:

Picture and design initiatives that practically contribute to the effectiveness of workplace learning.

<3>

Our provisional schedule

09h30 Welcome, coffee, and get seated around the tables
10h00 Opening – sharing a first experience from the work floor
10h15 Table groups do a round of introduction

DISCOVERY: existing strengths and new ideas
10h30 Appreciative Inquiry interviews in pairs
11h30 Table dialogue: listening to and deepening each other's stories
12h30 Sharing the discoveries between the table groups
13h00 Lunch / explore new insights of other people

DREAM: co-create ideas about possibilities to get further
13h45 Table dialog: assemble and connect ideas
14h45 Gallery of ideas to be subscribed by everyone

DESIGN: co-produce concrete action plans
15h30 In (new) teams, translate dream ideas into action plans
16h30 Plenary presentation and appreciating of 'dreamt' proposals

Wrap up
17h00 Reflection, summary and follow up appointments
17h30 We did it together!

<4>

Warming-up = "Un-must" = Become inclusive = Essential

INTRODUCTION ROUND with an energy question (15 minutes)

Please use your 'talking stick', the owner of which speaks; the others listen.

Please answer (in < 2 minutes) the following questions :
"Tell us your name, and your role in the field of training and development?"
"Which person or event has inspired you to change or innovate?"

<room for notes>

<5/6/7>

Mutually appreciative inquiry interviews in pairs
CO-CREATING A FOUNDATION for discovering and dreaming (50 minutes)

On the following two pages you'll find a guideline for inquiring after a strong experience regarding 'work place learning'. Your interviews take place, one after the other. (It's not a conversation.)

When interviewing, try and help the other to make his or her story as clear and as understandable as possible.

- Together you'll have 50 minutes. That is 25 minutes per interview. Keep track of time.
- Cover both questions 1 and 2 in the available 25 minutes.
- As the interviewer, read the questions out loud.
- Listen with an open mind and continue asking until you see the experience before you.
- Try to clearly understand the other person's story, experiences and vision
- Listen so intensely that afterwards you will be able to tell the story of the other yourself. The purpose of your interview is to appreciate and strengthen your conversational partner.

Read the following text out loud before starting the interview.

Imagine. We are two years ahead from now. Our organization as a whole is completely focused on learning and developing. Our learning attitude is present and visible. We don't miss a chance to share knowledge; to acquire new experiences in a safe and controlled manner. 'Old foxes' offer the 'newbees' all the space and opportunities they need to learn and they learn from it themselves. The nature of our work demands that we are prepared well, whilst every new situation can and will show surprises. At such moments not only our knowledge and experience prove to be valuable, but also our attitude 'in the moment'. To be able to learn 'in the moment' with each other and from each other: that is what we

call the ultimate individual and collective craftsmanship. This is enabled by our learning organization. Just imagine.

QUESTION 1: Discovery of strong ‘on-the-job learning experiences’: read out loud.

Do you recall a powerful, essential learning experience at your work? Something that made you stronger? Would you like to tell me about it? What exactly happened?

Supporting questions:

When and where did this happen? Describe the circumstances. Who else was involved? What was the value of this event? Why did (or do) you consider this such a crucial experience? What was the contribution of others? What was your contribution? Finally: Who or what do you value the most in this experience?

<space for notes>

Please directly proceed with question 2 on the next page

QUESTION 2: Dreaming about the future

Transpose your experience into 2016 when your organization is in the habit of effectively learning. What does the ideal ‘dual learning system’ look like? How does the learning connect to the workplace? Why is this an attractive image? What at that time is significantly different from nowadays? What has been done and what has been necessary to accomplish this new situation?

(Tell the story as if it were happening before your eyes. Dream, built on the strong experience you recalled. Tell the story by using sentences like: ‘I see ... happening’, ‘people tell me that ...’, ‘we behave in such a way that...’ etcetera.)

Finally: Could you describe the next step towards this dreamt future? What could be your contribution to this step? What are you going to do tomorrow?

<space for notes>

Thank you very much for this interview!

What do you need for the following table group dialogue? Perhaps your notes (if any), and probably your visionary memory...

<8>

Discovery – in table groups

DISCOVER AND APPRECIATE existing, powerful learning experiences ‘on the job’

To do list for the coming 45 minutes:

1. Agree on who:

- will facilitate and monitor the conversation
- will take notes

2. Share the findings regarding Question 1

- The interviewer shares a summary of the story of his or her interview partner • Stick to the essence. Check whether your conversation partner is okay with it • Others can ask questions for the purpose of clarification
- The ‘note taker’ puts down keywords on a large sheet • Complete the whole round

3. When all the stories have been shared, study the notes together. What comes up? Which strengths are active? What potential arises from the stories? Co-create a ‘poster sheet’ with insights that are important to the table Group, and you are willing to share with the other participants in the summit. What is the essence of your discovery?

What do you need for the next step?

- Your poster sheet with the essences of your discoveries
- Be prepared to share and explain your poster sheet to other groups.

<9>

Dreaming – in table groups

Table session: DREAM IDEAS to empower future workplace learning (45 minutes)

Assignment

1. Agree on who:

- will facilitate and monitor the conversation
- notes down the incoming ideas
- is available to give explanations in the plenary session

2. Exchange the outcomes of interview Question 2 : ideas to enrich, empower, anchor and sustain ‘workplace-learning’

- In a first round, each gives a summary of their insights from the AI interview

- Stick to the essence and leave space for further dreaming
- New ideas are very welcome
- The ‘stranger’ the better
- The ‘note=takers’ do their job and share with the table group
- Go on brainstorming until there are sufficient ideas on the table

3. Choose the strongest idea: the one that appeals most and requires the input of energy.

Fill a large paper sheet (attractively) with:

- A short, powerful message telling the essence of the idea
- A sketch, image, drawing, logo that visualizes the idea
- The name of the one willing to give extra information

What do you need for the next step?

- The above mentioned as well as a clear and understandable, poster
- This sheet being hung on the right spot on the gallery wall
- Someone to give explanation, who will stay in the vicinity of the poster

<10>

DESIGN – in newly formed teams

Team work: design a creative as well as practical action proposition (time: 60 minutes)

All team members subscribe to this specific dream idea. Your team objective is to translate that idea into a practical, accessible and realistic action plan.

Assignment

If needed, agree on a team facilitator and a timekeeper.

1. First, explain to each other why you subscribed to this idea. What do you consider important, and how would you connect this to our focus theme How to make the best learning space of our workspace?

2. Describe a provisional ambition in one or two powerful sentences.

3. Discuss this first draft. Are there better alternatives? Can it be formulated even more powerfully? Each member should write tips and tops on PostIts and add it to the draft text. The whole team then discusses the possible revisions.

4. Produce the team’s final ambition formulated in an action proposal. This should be the answer to the question: “What does our team suggest to optimize workplace learning?” Formulated in the best two sentences you ever produced.

Until now, the team has spent 40 minutes

5. Send out some of the team members to scout and explore the proceedings in other teams.

What new inspiration do they bring back? The rest works on point 6.

6. Finally – and use all kinds of materials available – illustrate your action proposal with a visualization.

The action proposal poster should show:

- a) the two-liner
- b) the visual
- c) the names of all the team members

<11/12>

About Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry aims at further development of people and organizations with their strengths as starting points; it postpones possible roadblocks on that journey.

Appreciative Inquiry covers:

- A method for (organizational) change
- High quality interpersonal engagement
- Reflecting on your ‘appreciative’ basic values

Find a lot of AI information on the website of the 2012 World AI Conference in Ghent: www.2012waic.org. More info about today’s facilitator see www.ceeshoogendijk.nl.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR CO-CREATING THIS SUMMIT!

That’s all folks! An unusually long chapter. Thank you for your patience! Please let me add to this specific AI-summit that the follow-up was wonderful as well, and still has its constructive effects in the organization.

#043

Variations on a Summit

Does an AI Summit always have to be based on a strategic issue of an organization?

Even the firefighter summit, as described in chapter #037 and #042, addressed a relatively small topic – workplace learning – for such a huge organization. It was the responsible project group that decided to organize a large scale multi-stakeholder event to appreciatively inquire into the matter.

At Business School Netherlands, instead of teaching a class of MBA-students about AI, I invite the group to experience several aspects of an AI-summit. The affirmative topic is pre-defined and meant to be relevant to all students: “The Appreciation of the Manager”. In three and a half hours we – about 35 people – perform the following steps:

- Short introduction into AI / creating max-mix groups (15 minutes)
- Mini welcoming interviews in pairs based on the question “tell me about a high energy moment” (15 minutes)
- Round of welcome at the table group (15 minutes)
- Real AI-interviews in (same) pairs, based on the affirmative topic (45 minutes)
- Discovery of ‘good management experiences’ within the table groups (45 minutes)
- Share experiences and insight between table groups (15 minutes)
- Short round of dreaming of brainstorming into ‘good management practices’ (30 minutes)
- Gathered in a circle, reflection of the (full four) steps in an AI summit; each participant in the circle shares a take-away insight or personal action. (30 minutes)

Somewhat more time was available for an AI Summit organized by a Dutch movement called ‘We Thorbecke’ (named after a historic statesman) around the affirmative topic ‘We are our Society’. The idea was to inquire into possible ‘bottom up’ alternatives for the existing political system. The agenda in the summit guideline showed as follows:

- | | |
|-------|--|
| 12:00 | Entrée. Coffee-tea-sandwich. Mingle. Take your seat at the right table.
Find a conversation partner and have a welcoming interview. |
| 13:00 | Official opening by Mr. Thorbecke himself (the chair, dressed as such); intro to the summit |

DISCOVERY

- | | |
|-------|------------------------|
| 13:30 | AI interviews in pairs |
| 14:30 | Table group dialogues |

DREAM

- | | |
|-------|--|
| 16:00 | Table Group co-creation of ideas and proposals |
| 17:00 | Collecting a mind map with the best possible ideas |

DESIGN

- | | |
|-------|---|
| 18:00 | Subscribe to one of the ideas on the mind map and form a new team |
| 18:30 | Dinner is served. Co-produce an action proposal |
| 19:30 | Plenary team presentations and feedback |
| 20:30 | Follow up proposals and ‘after party’ |

In 2014 a set of AI100-students, towards the end of the action learning program, suggested to collectively perform an extra task: organizing an open AI summit around the question “Do you appreciate your work and does your work appreciate you?” The idea was to invite both paid as well as voluntary co-workers of organizations, and inquire into their perceptions of doing their jobs. Our AI100 students, being future AI-practitioners experienced the preparations as very valuable. They really had to design the whole process themselves.

You have read about four variations on an AI summit.

- stakeholders of learning within a national organization of firefighters
- MBA students getting an introduction to AI
- non-political movement gathering to redesign democracy
- masterpiece “Appreciation Works” by our AI100-students

I think the possibilities and combinations are endless.

If you take a further look, you will see that in all these ‘summits’ there was time to meet, there were AI-interviews, there was discovery in table groups and there was (a kind of) dreaming. Within AI communities it is said (and proven) that change already takes place when people start talking about the ‘affirmative topic’. So, if there’s not enough time for a complete ‘four D’, it’s very okay to choose a selection of AI interventions and you can still make it a valuable activity.

In your dreams, what would be a topic and a ‘target group’ to perform an AI-summit?

Considering the possibilities, what variation would you prefer as a scenario?

The Whole System in the Room

In business meetings there are often a few people – the management team – and many agenda items. Because they are managers, they assume that they represent their employees – some of them really do – so they might consider the management team as ‘the whole system in the room’. In that kind of meeting they probably mention stakeholders (or shareholders...). That’s one perspective.

Within AI Summits – or variations – there’s usually one (affirmative) topic, and many different people present. All have been invited for their specific relationship with the topic. And if you look at it from that wider perspective, a management team is only a tiny part of ‘the whole system’. For example, if the affirmative topic is about ‘better education’, then we would like to see teachers, students, parents of students, educational managers, local government, school inspectors, educational scientists and neighbours of the school building in the room. And if you think again, you might come up with even more different stakeholders.

Whereas in the ordinary management team usually only one member is officially related to a specific agenda item, in an AI summit everyone in the room has experiences around the subject. So if you really want a topic to be studied well, ask yourself which participants you need to add to the ‘whole picture’.

Apart from the roles that people in the room may represent, they also differ in age, gender, background, belief system etcetera. From an AI Summit point of view, we like the table group setting to be Max-Mix: maximum mixture. This diversity is one of the clues to an event that is completely filled with telling and listening and still never has a dull moment. (Another clue of course is the quality of the conversation.)

How to achieve the Max-Mix? You will recognize that people entering a conference room tend to share tables with acquaintances. And of course, within more structured situations, a prepared table setting (including name tags or colors or numbers) effectively enables the participants to ‘spread out’. It’s much more fun to ask the participants, already seated and having shaken hands with their table mates, to stand up, say goodbye to their friends and peers and find a new table. The assignment being: “Contribute to the max-mix.” Just imagine this process of re-arrangement. And if you are to be the facilitator of this, remember to organize a good audio system and play The Beatles’ Magical Mystery Tour. Why not start a conference with confusion and diffusion – Dating and Dancing?

However, is it a problem when two friends decide to stay each other’s neighbors at a specific table? Our Dutch Loesje¹ says: “I know you already for quite a time, but you probably have new ideas today.” We’re not going to demand people to change seats of course, if they like to stay put.

Think of a specific question that’s on your mind. Who would you like to invite for advice?

¹ See chapters #006 and #064

#045

"Where are the keynote speakers?", she asked

We were in the midst of preparing quite a large summit expecting about 150 participants. For practical and geographical reasons, a professional conference venue was chosen. The preliminary meetings with the venue representatives went well. They arranged for the right location, table setting, registration desk, sound and light as well as food and drinks. We felt supported in a highly professional way. These people enabled and facilitated events every day.

I asked for the audio engineer to be present the whole day, because of specific music requirements. No problem. We asked for colored table cloths, drawing and presentation materials, sweets on the tables, wall posters, dimmed lights and some more stuff to enable a positive atmosphere. Perfectly managed.

At some point, the event organizer asked how many speakers she could expect, in order to organize a welcome, glass of water, arrangement of the Powerpoint slides, special requests and so on. I answered: we will have 150 keynote speakers that day. That was a quite confusing answer. I explained that all our participants were to share their stories and that all those stories would be listened to. Of course, I explained some more about the AI principles. And she was amazed.

What she told me then, amazed me. She said that all the events she supported were variations of the same framework; welcome, introduction by the host, speaker one, coffee break, speaker two, sometimes room for questions, lunch, parallel sessions in the afternoon... An AI Summit like ours was new to her.

Which of the conferences you attended was most memorable, and why?

If you are to prepare a meeting or conference, small or large, how 'atypical' is it allowed to become?

#046

Flow

Have you ever experienced 'flow'?

Working together in a team, and everything seems to fit, seems to work out fluently. Everyone in the team does the right thing. Synchronicity¹ is in the air. The team is performing as 'one body'. From my experience, an AI Summit is an ideal circumstance for 'flow' to happen.

Imagine 100 pairs, mutually asking their conversation partner the same question, like "Tell me about a situation in your hospital when you thought 'this is exactly why I chose this job'." Or: "Tell me about your strongest learning experience." Considering these interviews take place in a friendly, constructive and inclusive environment, could these 200 'parallel narratives' form a starting point of 'flow'?

There has been a lot of scientific research on 'flow' in groups of people. The general findings are somewhat like "flow can happen, but we're not very sure when and how; it's like the weather". But that is too simple. What we are dealing with here is 'coherence' and 'emergence' rising out of 'complexity'.

Once we address flow, or synchronicity, or emergence, or coherence, we enter a field called 'social complexity'. A very large field, I dare say. Of which I carry less than half² the knowledge. And also very associated with the sources of Appreciative Inquiry. Would you like to explore that field of social complexity? A recent book³ can help you all the way. The final words of the book refer to the sometimes miraculous outcomes of social processes.

¹ You might want to read the book *Synchronicity* by Joseph Jaworski. It offers you a beautiful personal story, an appealing insight and suggestions for your personal development.

² This refers to the preface of this book and the saying by H.H. Dalai Lama

³ *Coherence in the Midst of Complexity* by Hugo Letiche, Michael Lissack and Ron Schultz

Great effects of a coincidental mini summit

“Did We Explain Miracles?”

No. We just explained why they often seem like such a surprise when they occur. The same can be said for nasty surprises. If emergent coherence means anything, it entails having the confidence to take next actions. If the coherence is solid and the affordances are right, miracles may happen. So too do nasty surprises. If coherence is absent ... anything can happen. The financial crisis and the housing bubble are examples of just that.

Our managerial takeaways are simple: dialogue, not category; experience, not ascription; sagacity, not checklist.

Experienced emergent coherence will bring you into genuine contact with yourself and circumstance. That is a miracle enough. One thing about miracles and nasty surprises – they lend themselves to great narratives. That storytelling can lead to dialogue and to emergent coherence.”

(From: Coherence in the Midst of Complexity – 2011)

We’re heading towards our fourth AI action learning program. Four participants registered. We are still in the need of eight or ten more candidates to start the program. The successful approach of prelude sessions¹ is taking place. The four candidates, and Marcel and I are in the second prelude meeting, explaining the principles of an AI Summit. Instead of talking about it, we decide to improvise and prepare for a mini summit with the six of us. The affirmative topic looks like; ‘What is needed to successfully kick off the official AI learning program?’

We did the AI-interviews in (three) pairs. The discovery question was: “Tell me about an event you once had to organize, that still needed participants and eventually became a success.” We found out that all six of us could recall such experiences. After sharing these discoveries in our plenary round, we felt confident and the subsequent dreaming was easy and rich.

Our ideas covered modern ‘3.0’ alternatives for financing the training fees. Everyone of us felt co-owner of approaching our personal networks to attract possible participants. We decided to suggest a workshop for 2015WAIC, the upcoming world AI conference at that time. Marcel and I discovered that our social enterprise around the AI program once counted four partners, now it’s just ‘him and me’. Our dream was to grow to four again and it didn’t take long before Loubna and Alice joined us. With their additional experience and energy, we ‘wrapped’ the title *Appreciative Inquiry Academy* around our AI-activities and boosted progress. Furthermore, we appreciated the willingness of Joep de Jong and² Ronald van den Hoff to support the social enterprise with their wisdom.

Four weeks later at the next prelude meeting, we weren’t six anymore; we were eleven, with additional participants to be expected. This was all created by a six-person mini summit!

Once you are in a meeting and someone suggests a good thing to do, would you consider to do it at once?

Do you practice what you preach?

Are you the change you want to see happening?

¹ See chapters #001

² Read the introductions of both in the section *Welcome*

#048

Ready for Next Level?

- 1 – Welcome
- 2 – Before the beginning starts to begin
- 3 – Sources of Appreciative Inquiry
- 4 – Social constructionism
- 5 – My next AI summit
- 6 – Who am I to appreciate

Considering the fact that this book has been structured along the lines of an AI learning course, the former six chapters represent the basic modules. Don't get me wrong, it's not about 'this was the theory, now let's practise'. Look at it as a foundation; in these six chapters there's already lots and lots to practice.

Think of the starting tennis player who doesn't care about the specifics of his racket, and the advanced player, who even feels the difference between a 24 or a 25 kilo string tension. And compare this to learning and developing and improving in general. There's always a point in your development, some time past the moment you said 'I get it', where you know for sure that there is more to learn, develop, improve. Once you reached that point, others will regard you as quite experienced and well skilled. But you know for sure, the real learning journey has just started.

It is very pretentious to assume that our learning course – let alone this book – brings you to that point (of no return?). But there's undoubtedly a certain break between the former six chapters and the next four... And I'd love to know whether or not you would agree with this assumption. Apart from the introductory sections, until now you hopefully appreciated 47 'appreciative inquiries'.

Which of the 47 appeals the most to you?

And what do you hope to find out in the rest of this book?

Okay, another 58 appreciative inquiries are waiting for you in the next four chapters:

- 7 – Appreciate yourself
- 8 – The art of inquiry
- 9 – CFO in appreciation
- 10 – Encountering complexity

Thank you for staying with me.

7 APPRECIATE YOUR SELF

How am I becoming?

When we designed and developed our AI100 learning journey, we wanted to pay equal attention to our three main threads; AI as an organizational change method, AI as high quality relational practice and AI as a basic belief system. After providing the basic picture of all this, we would proceed with the course on four advanced modules, focussing on ‘mastery’ of the ‘I’, the ‘You’, the ‘We’ and the ‘They’.

You just entered the chapter around mastering the self; ‘your self’ that is. The ancient Greeks already told us that we should get to know ‘our self’. This is not always so obvious, according to the following example. The founders of a Dutch initiative called CRKL.nl, aiming to provide a ‘safe intervention haven’ for professionals in the public sector, invited me to facilitate one of the CRKL-series. The general subject was Talent Management. My suggestion to follow the steps of AI was embraced and during the first group meeting, we co-created a suitable ‘affirmative topic’. In the second Discovery session, a few weeks later, I asked the participants to share a specific talent, or personal strength. At some point, one of the participants asked me why we were presenting our own talents. Referring to the subject Talent Management, she expected to discuss the ‘how to’ regarding the talents in her own organization. I understood that I failed to explain the why behind our exercise and I told her that it was my assumption that if we are to ‘manage talents’, it would be a good idea to experience how it feels when our own talents are being ‘assessed’. She fully agreed. Everyone agreed to proceed with the meeting accordingly.

In the process of learning, especially in social skills development, we often encounter a paradox; we want to develop social skills to ‘apply’ to others, but we have to make sure we ‘apply’ them first to ourselves to experience the possible effects. (But practising a skill on yourself is not the same as practising it on somebody else.) Within the category of learning objectives, practising Appreciative Inquiry is of a special nature. According to the above, we have to ‘apply’ AI to ‘our selves’. And if we do – for AI is a strength developing approach – we will develop.

The rhetorical question sounds like this: “Can we study, can we inquire our self? Because, by all means, when we inquire our self, this inquiry is performed by our self.”

Furthermore, considering the fact that we change all the time – and therefore develop constantly – we must conclude that we are already in the process of becoming. The question could be: “How do we master this?” Another question could be: “Why bother?” In his book *The Craftsman*, Richard Sennett describes craftsmanship as ‘doing things well, just for the sake of it’. Would that be a satisfying answer?

*Are you interested in investigating your inner belief system, your ground state?
What do you know already about yourself and what would you like to develop, if possible?
Would you be so kind to rely on your positive core?*

#050 Vitarka Mudra

To what extent are we AI practitioners?

You will agree that AI is more than a ‘change support method’ – although a well organized AI summit can initiate significant organizational construction, progression and happiness. Moreover, AI represents the art of high quality relational activity – according to professor René Bouwen: “AI is not something between the ears; AI arises between the noses.”

And then there’s something called ‘personal fundamental AI attitude’. Imagine every question coming out of your mouth to be a generative one, enabling the other to feel appreciated. Where is that question coming from? And if – sporadically – your approach would be less appreciative than you wish, what to do?

Such a question arose within the group of participants of our Dutch AI100 learning program, aiming at deep learning, experiencing and generating the appreciative approach. During a two day summit – imagine how many layers were active in that co-creation – the idea of a gesture came up. A specific sign, used in situations when the verbal expression deserves a better, more appreciative alternative. A sign, carefully used, to suspend the conversation in order to invite all participants to reflect upon what was said and perceived and to think about more appreciative alternatives. We suggested one of Buddha’s gestures (Mudra’s). The Vitarka Mudra is used in Buddha’s lectures specifically to invite students to reflect and discuss. It was gratefully adopted by our AI students and now it is an enrichment to our learning processes.

Wouldn’t you agree that our lives as we live it is in fact a learning environment, inviting us to practice the art of high quality relational craftsmanship? May I invite you all to use – where suitable – the Vitarka Mudra, when you feel that opportunities for deep learning are present?



#051

Building up ground state

Twenty years ago, my wife and I sat in the audience of an opera recital, organized by the company I was working for at that time. It occurred to me that the opera singer had some funny gestures and they never left my memory. Although I've long forgotten what she sang, or how beautiful her voice was, I can still recollect her gestures.

Twenty years later I'm getting an idea of what she was doing, consciously or unconsciously. It had to do with preparation before starting to sing. When it was not her turn, she would stand on the podium, not being very present. And then at some point when the music invited her to sing, she straightened her body, produced a big smile and raised her eyebrows. This all happened more or less in one movement, along with her filling her chest with air.

My interpretation of her movements – and I know this is pure speculation – is that she had trained herself to unleash a state of pure appreciation, enabling the best of her sounds and words, just by stretching some specific body parts for this specific performance.

Can you imagine this kind of preparation? Do you see the high eyebrows and the big smile, just before she starts to sing?

How do you prepare for a 'performance', for example a good conversation? What parts of your body and mind can bring you into a 'ground state' for optimal performance?

Or maybe, putting a big smile upon your face will already do the job?

#052

The Art of Living

If you would ask me now, I would say that the art of living lies somewhere between self-ish and self-less. And probably nearer to -less than to -ish...

Some twelve years ago, working for quite a large corporate company, I was invited for a two-day 'change management course'. I appreciated the trainer/facilitator for focussing on the human part of the change. At some point we did an exercise. All participants were asked to write down the first thing to do when the company would encounter a sudden, total crisis, causing customers to leave, and jobs to vanish. I remember writing down something like 'perhaps I can support a less fortunate colleague'. The trainer picked me out because I seemed to be the only one out of thirty participants that thought of giving attention to another person other than oneself. I felt proud and was astonished at the same time. For me, this hypothetical 'crisis' was not like a real crisis. So far so good.

Only a few years ago, my wife and I were so lucky that we could share a week holiday in Barcelona with all of our six kids present. Considering the children's ages ranged between 16 and 26, it was long ago that we were 'a complete family' during a Holiday. One night, we took the funicular to Tibidabo mountain, to enjoy the magical view and to visit the theme park. Friends of our kids had suggested a haunting attraction called Hotel Kruger. There was a long queue, the waiting time was 90 minutes, and at first we considered skipping it. Then we saw people coming out of the exit door, screaming and very terrified. Hotel Kruger seemed to be quite a challenge, and we decided to join the line. They admitted groups of eight to ten people, and there was a ten minute delay every round. At some point we noticed that less people came through the exit door compared to the amount of people we had seen entering the hotel. And we wondered... Only one group in front of us; it was nearly our turn. Then a sign was presented: "25 minutes break". Okay, we granted the people in there their coffee break. At last, we entered. And it really was a scary experience. Hotel Kruger was crowded with very realistic actors. Half way our path through the building, we could choose to leave through the back door, or to proceed the haunting journey. Some of us were in doubt, but we decided to stay and go on. And a few minutes later we also ran through the exit door, screaming and very terrified. The shivering conclusion? We all, including myself, we went for ourselves, and we didn't try to help out our family members... Of course, we knew it was not real, but it was realistic. I felt quite ashamed about my poor parenting skills...

So, what is the art of living? Isn't it about raising children and hoping they will make the world a better place? For parents, this means being a role model, especially when it matters. That would be the generative thing to do. And I'm still figuring it out for myself, somewhere between selfish and selfless... My hope for you is first of all that your

A Practical Profound Mind

challenges stay between the experiences of an amusement park and the insecurity of being an employee. And secondly, I wish you the courage to stay the helping, generative, role model, even when times are tough. You really would make a change, and you would really contribute to the wellness of society in general.

What is your opinion about being generative?

How would you like to contribute to the wellness of society?

Educating your Heart, by Training your Mind. This is the title of part two of HHDL's book *Beyond Religion*. It would be too much of an honour to call me a Buddhist. This would suggest that I studied and meditated a lot more than I actually do. I'm more of a humanist. What I read in the ideas of Buddhism appeals to me a lot, especially the practices and that is what 'part two' is all about. It suggests that we live an ethical life. The most important is not to know what that is, but to do it, to practice it. In fact, there are three subsequent levels of development (or personal mastery as you could call it).

First of all is the ethic of restraint; restrain from harming others.

Second is the ethic of virtue; cultivate our inner values and positive behaviour.

Third is the ethic of altruism; to dedicate our live in favour of the wellness of others.

Preferably, the three levels reflect in all of our behaviour. That is: our visible actions (body), our language (speech), and even our thoughts and intentions (mind). And because our mind is the source of all what we say and do, the mind is the most important part that needs attention, and training.

In addition, HHDL quotes six principles, founded in the second century:

1. Stay away from drugs that influence your behaviour
2. Stick to the principle of an ethical way of living
3. See to it that your body, speech and mind are non-violent
4. Treat others with respect
5. Appreciate those who deserve to be honored, like parents, teachers and the kind-hearted
6. Be friendly

So... if this seems to you the right thing to do (or to be), where do you start? Here are the three basic 'tools' we need to train our minds and educate our hearts; cautiousness, mindfulness and awareness.

- Be cautious before you do something. This is based on former knowledge and advice about what is good and less good. (Like when a doctor has told you to take less sugar.)
- Being mindful means to reflect on what happened and on what is, by 'jogging through your memory' from time to time and inviting all good and bad experiences.
- Be aware of your self, and of your behaviour, by observing it as if you were in a second level of attention.

Coherence of the Heart

Applying and exercising these three ‘tools’ may require some effort, but if you are a healthy human being, you will be able to train to quite an extent. It invites you to make active connections between your thinking, your talking and your physical actions. You can apply the training every moment of the day. And the reward is always nearby: the better you train, the more beauty and pleasure will await you.

When would be a suitable moment for you to start or resume your training?

Erna Kraak (Inside Out Healing) integrates physiotherapy, acupuncture, yoga and heart coherence to help restore the inner balance of individuals and groups. Within our AI100 learning program she teaches our participants to influence their heart coherence. Being a certified Heartmath consultant, Erna’s insights have a scientific¹ foundation.

Our heart coherence has to do with the stability of our heartbeats over a period of time. When your heartbeats stay within a certain margin and don’t peak too much, this is designated as high coherence. A sound heart coherence contributes to one’s physical and mental health. What has all of this to do with Appreciative Inquiry? There seems to be a mutual relationship, and you yourself can find out what.

The idea – it’s in fact more than just an idea – is that having a stable heart coherence allows your body to produce substances that influence your brain activity in a positive way. It makes you feel better. And if you often succeed in having a sound heart coherence, this good feeling tends to last longer in your system. (The opposite is also true: unstable coherence produces substances that causes negative brain activity. The good news is that the longer you are able to stay in positive anguish, the more the negative will be neglected.) So in fact, by enabling your body to build up high heart coherence, you can bring yourself in a state of mildness, friendliness, a state of being appreciative: a great enabler for a constructive conversation (or a successful speech, or a perfect golf swing, or ...).

By the way, scientific experiments point towards the conclusion that brain cells not only are found within our head, but also in our heart and in our ‘gutter’. So maybe ‘gut feeling’ and ‘intuition’ are manifestations of our intelligence. It is also said that our heart sends electromagnetic signals and therefore can influence behaviour of another. This puts the word ‘connectivity’ in an interesting perspective, wouldn’t you say?

So, improving your heart coherence increases your level of appreciation. And this is how you can try to practice it yourself. First of all, remember the quote by William James “It’s our basic nature to long for appreciation.” And second, listen to Erna Kraak: “It’s the nature of the heart to appreciate.” And now for the practice. Focus on your breathing, in and out. Try to breath within your chest, across your heart. Especially when breathing in, you might feel some light pressure, around your heart. Try to combine this specific kind of

¹ Please Google ‘heart coherence’ or ‘intelligence of the heart’ or ‘gut feeling’ if you want more information

breathing with thoughts of appreciation. Think of someone or something you really like, and makes you smile. Only ten minutes of this exercise² a day can help you to unleash your positive core (or a bit further than it already was).

Which of your activities could benefit from an ‘appreciative state of mind’?

In what part of your daily schedule would those ten minutes fit in smoothly?

What person, animal or item puts a smile upon your face when you think of it?

² And if you need extra feedback on your exercises, refer to Heartmath Institute for supporting ‘tools’

#055 Parrèsia

How does your positive core speak?

A wise man once said, “Even if the majority say you are wrong, you still can be right.”

Parrèsia, in more correct English parrhesia, is a classical term for ‘speaking freely, speaking truly, speaking by the heart’. Another very wise man, the French philosopher Michel Foucault¹ included this ancient Greek concept in his research into discourse and truth making. He says:

“So you see, the parrhesiastes is someone who takes a risk. Of course, this risk is not always a risk of life. When, for example, you see a friend doing something wrong and you risk incurring his anger by telling him he is wrong, you are acting as a parrhesiastes. In such a case, you do not risk your life, but you may hurt him by your remarks, and your friendship may consequently suffer for it. If, in a political debate, an orator risks losing his popularity because his opinions are contrary to the majority’s opinion, or his opinions may usher in a political scandal, he uses parrhesia. Parrhesia, then, is linked to courage in the face of danger: it demands the courage to speak the truth in spite of some danger.”

You might wonder what harming another person can possibly have to do with appreciative inquiry. You know already that appreciative inquiry can enforce the other to live to his or her full potential, to do the things she or he thinks are right, that generate constructive action. To enable this, you might have been using provocative questions like “If you really want this, what would be the first step here and now?” or even “What is the risk you are willing to take?”

Parrhesia has to do with your own positive core. You could see parrhesia as a result of appreciative inquiry, applied to your self; possibly resulting in very coherent behaviour. That is; you being coherent with your positive core. And that sometimes is not appreciated much by others, by your boss, by other political parties.

In Dutch we use the word ‘oprecht’ for being truthful. (It refers more to standing than to sitting...) Looking for an english translation I found a lot: genuine – straight – serious

¹ Further reading see Discourse and truth. *The problematization of Parrèsia.*

– open – fair – sincere – true – frank – honest – upright (!) – plain – straightforward – heartfelt(!) ... If we have that many words for practicing parrhesia, shouldn't we practise it as often as possible?

Can you recall a situation when your positive core spoke up?

- *What was your message, what did you want to happen?*
- *What was your (physical) behaviour during your 'speech'?*
- *Which of your gestures really illustrated, empowered your words?*

What is it that you really need say to someone, and how and when will you do it?

#056

Live your questions

...I would like to beg you dear Sir,

as well as I can,

to have patience with everything unresolved in your heart

and to try to love the questions themselves

as if they were locked rooms or books written in a very foreign language.

Don't search for the answers,

which could not be given to you now,

because you would not be able to live them.

And the point is to live everything.

Live the questions now.

Perhaps then, someday far in the future,

you will gradually, without even noticing it,

live your way into the answer.

Rainer Maria Rilke, 1903
in: *Letters to a Young Poet*

Attention causes Growth

It's a typical, valuable AI motto: "Everything that you give attention to, will grow." If you focus on a problem, the problem gets bigger. If you focus on what's going well already, this good behaviour will grow. It's sort of an underlying rule of Appreciative Inquiry.

So I was pretty curious when I was asked by a master student to be interviewed for his research called "Can Appreciative Inquiry become a Hype in The Netherlands?" Besides the nice conversations we had, I was glad to be able to introduce him to a few organizations with some AI experience.

The Netherlands seems to be famous for their 'consulting culture'. The good thing is that new methods are adopted fast, and can be experimented on an appropriate scale. Maybe we are somewhat too enthusiastic, for example when the leaders of organizations jump too fast into a new method: "Last year we did Spiral Dynamics, now we are into Lean, and next year we will implement Appreciative Inquiry." I'm exaggerating, or aren't I?

So, how about Appreciative Inquiry and possible hyping? AI is said to be a generative approach, so it has the potential to spread itself. Could that be called a hype? Was the master student really focussing on hype, with the risk of causing a hype, by his master thesis? Or was he merely focussing on the application of AI in Dutch organizations, causing them to re-focus or to re-member? After having read the final thesis, I am happy to conclude that the student himself – who already was interested in AI, had grown his knowledge of AI. He also had brought AI into the university discourse, which can be considered a valuable intervention.

Rethinking the process, I guess that AI is not something that follows the lines of the ordinary hype, which nowadays has to do with a lot of marketing. AI performs its own marketing, and is very coherent in that perspective. Attention causes growth, especially with respect to Appreciative Inquiry! Let it become a hype, so we can redesign the principle of a hype...

What is it that you would like to give your full attention to?

How would you like to 'master' Appreciative Inquiry?

Disturbance in the Ecocathedral

Is it appreciation that really drives you? Is inquiry your first reaction to changing circumstances? How do you find out about your own inner system?

Once placed in very surprising, or unknown surroundings, we are not so sure about our first responses to the new situation. Perhaps this is a way to get to know your self... With this idea in mind, we always invite our AI-students to visit the Ecocathedral¹ in the north of The Netherlands.

Imagine a quiet lane in a rural environment. Some houses, farmers equipment, a few cows in the fields, pieces of woodland. At some point – you can easily miss it – there's a kind of an entrance into the woods, marked by intriguing piles of stones and other pieces of street furniture. Small paths lead you into a sort of an old park, where lots and lots of stone-made structures are being built. It feels like this has been here for years, and that is very true. The Ecocathedral is 45 years young, and is planned to be 'ready' in the year 3000. Depending on the season, there is more or less green in the woods, and subsequently, more or less shadow. Some structures are almost ten meters high. Very massive, but if you look carefully, they are built without scaffolding, just by piling stones. At the same time, everything fits very well. All these structures together form an impressive sight, and make you wonder who or what is happening here. And yes, you can imagine a cathedral being constructed in this place. That is, in reciprocity with nature, because no effort is put in changing the way the plants and trees are growing. Stone structures entangled in a forest environment, growing into each other, neglecting time... It takes you a few hours to explore the area. Actually, the terrain has marked tracks so you cannot officially get lost. But you can still get lost in the Ecocathedral. Lost in your mind. Some visitors get angry, others insecure. Some get a feeling of happiness, others break into tears. How would you respond to this unseen, unthinkable environment? And what does that tell you about your self?

After an explanation by our guide, everyone will highly appreciate the ideas behind this 'structure not being a building' and will fully admire the work of the late Louis Le Roy who initiated this. But besides this mindset of appreciation, there may have been preceding mindsets... this is where the study of the self can be applied.

¹ Just Google 'ecocathedral' and you'll get access to lots of information and beautiful pictures

It's not that easy to put yourself in a disturbing environment. Once you have found such a place to visit, you are somehow a bit prepared. But you can enable others to have a disturbing experience. Invite some friends for a lunch, preferably in a restaurant. And invite also, without telling the rest, a total stranger (at least to your friends). When you and your friends are sitting round the lunch table, and starting the first course, all of a sudden, the 'stranger' gets an extra chair and joins you, asking "Do you mind?". You yourself will give the stranger a welcome, and that will prevent the others from refusing him. But they all will have their personal feelings regarding the situation. Preferably after lunch, when the stranger has left, you could explain your 'experiment'... And in receiving the feedback of your friends you could find out something about yourself... Would you be willing to give this a try?

Is it appreciation and/or inquiry that drives your primary responses?

In May 2014, H.H. Dalai Lama visited The Netherlands. His lectures were attended by more than 10.000 people. I was invited to work as one of the 160 volunteers to support the conference logistics.

One of the main themes of the day is described in HHDL's book *Beyond Religion*, a plea for a 'global system of secular ethics'. The Dalai Lama told attendees that a new global ethical code would be of benefit to everyone, including people who don't follow any particular religion. He said that the new ethics should incorporate the diverse set of values that people of various beliefs hold in common. He based these statements on dialogues with scientists, "It has been proven that being compassionate and kind-hearted is not specifically connected to religion."

Although being with so many people in the conference centre, and as far as I could follow the proceedings when not working at the reception desk, the atmosphere was very intimate, especially in the afternoon, when HHDL answered questions from the public.

I remember one person asking a question that sounded like this: "Being a Christian, and after having read your book *Beyond Religion*, I don't really understand your invitation to study other religions, and I find it hard to let loose my own religion. Could you explain some more about this?" The Dalai Lama answered: "Please read the book again. Next question."

If you are the main and only engine to make a better self of your self, how are you going to proceed?

Practice in Practice (count your blessings)

“It’s certainly possible to get by in life without dedication. The craftsman represents the special human condition of being engaged.” (Richard Sennett¹, philosopher.)

“The better your technique, the longer you can rehearse without becoming bored.” (Isaac Stern, violinist.)

At what point are you ‘good’ at something? It is said that we have to practice for at least 10.000 hours, to conquer the specific skill we want to master. While writing this book, it’s seven years ago that Appreciative Inquiry crossed my path. I wrote a few chapters and blogs about it (50), followed a four-day course (60), attended network meetings (40), had long conversations with AI-practitioners (20), co-initiated a social enterprise to spread AI (100), co-produced an extended AI learning program (80), attended the world AI conference (100), co-organized several AI-events (40), followed ‘my own’ learning program completely for three times (480), facilitated tens of mini-AI-workshops (30) and designed and facilitated about twenty AI-summits (1000). This may seem impressive. Counting the hours of learning-by-doing in that past seven years, they add up to 2000 hours... In the past two years, AI was with me almost every day, with an average awareness of two hours a day; that raises my exercise time to 2700 hours. O, and let’s not forget the writing of this book, until now reaching 300. That makes 3000 hours of practicing Appreciative Inquiry so far...

The idea that I was really going to do this 10.000 hour test, excited me. This is the first time I counted hours of studying something. The 3000 feel okay. If the theory is right, still 7000 to go. I love to practise AI. And I’m still getting better, that is: in practising. When I jog my memory to find out where the real click for me turned up, I guess this was during the World AI Conference in 2012 in Ghent, Belgium. That was a five-day total immersion of AI. Based on a rough calculation and a progressive hour consumption during the seven years, my ‘tipping point’ may have been after a 1000 hours of giving sustainable attention to AI. Nice!

Working in the field of sustainable organization development, incorporating AI in my activities is not only beneficial in my private life; it helps me to become more successful as a social entrepreneur.

¹ Quoted from his book *The Craftsman*

Let’s be realistic to you: both to the ordinary and extraordinary human being who follows the suggestion on the cover of this book, and to the person who is going to try AI at home (and hopefully beyond). How long would it take you to complete the magical 1000 hours tipping point? I’m just wondering...

What practises would you choose, to ‘try AI at home’?

How would you assure that practising stays fruitful and rewarding?

And will you promise me not to count your hours in the first seven years?

#061

I'm a Strange Loop

You may have heard of a book called *Gödel, Escher, Bach*, by Douglas Hofstadter. It's a book about AI – Artificial Intelligence. Of all the things you can learn about it, I would recall the idea of recurrent patterns. A triangle made of triangles. The pattern of a snowflake built up by the same but smaller patterns. Fractals. Dreaming about dreaming. Do you get the picture? If not, admire the work of the graphical artist M.C. Escher. Recursive is the word.

Thirty years later, Hofstadter wrote *I am a strange loop*. This is more about personal development, about the way we think, about the way we develop ourselves. The conclusion you might take from this, is that we develop our identity in reciprocity with others. When I meet someone, we exchange all kinds of ideas, gestures, elementary particles... After that meeting, some residue of the other remains in me, in my memories, in my thinking, in my approach to the world. And vice versa. In other words: a little bit of me in you, and a little bit of you in me. And with every encounter this goes on and on. Just imagine.

At some point in his book, Hofstadter describes a funeral. Many friends, family, relatives are present to share their condolences. Someone says: "What a pity that he is not with us anymore." And someone else says: "Because we all carry a bit of him in us and since we are here together with so many beloved, I think the deceased is still with us."

Before reading this section, how did you think about 'personal development'?

And after reading the above, what do you think now?

Imagine your own identity, what do you see? Who else is present in you?

And after you thought about your identity, can it be possible that it has changed a little?

#062

To be is to be related

Jidda Krishnamurti | Ojai, California | 8th Public Talk 1945

"To be is to be related; there is no such thing as isolated being. Relationship is a conflict within and without; the inward conflict extended becomes world conflict. You and the world are not separate; your problem is the world's problem; you bear the world in you; without you it is not. There is no isolation and there is no object that is not related. This conflict must be understood not as a problem of the part but of the whole.

You are aware, are you not, of conflict in relationship, of the constant struggle between you and another, between you and the world? Why is there conflict in relationship? Does it not arise because of the interaction of dependency and conformity, of domination and possessiveness? We conform, we depend, we possess because of inward insufficiency which gives rise to fear. Do we not know this fear in intimate, close relationship? Relationship is a tension, and deep awareness is necessary to understand it."

To be is to be related, any questions?

May I invite you to the next chapter called "The Art of Inquiry"?

8

THE ART OF INQUIRY

High Quality Communication

How do we stay related?

How do we come further?

How do we mutually appreciate?

How do we contribute to a better living?

How to do things with words?

How to take part in the conversation?

How to think and act together?

How to become entangled?

How do your statements work out?

When do they count?

How about your questions?

When do they matter?

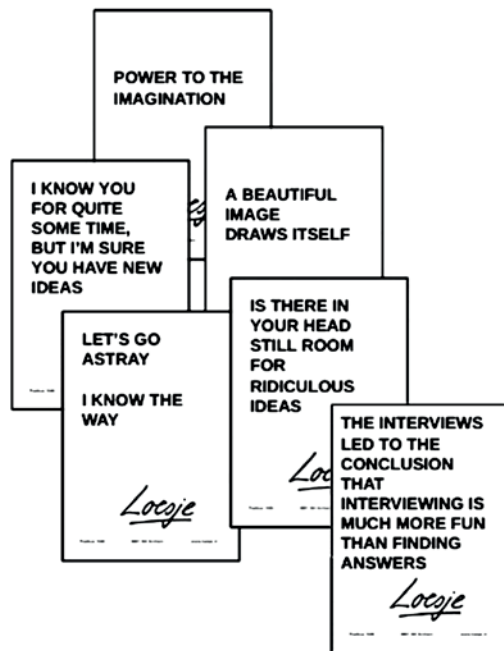
Welcome, you've just entered this book's section about the art of inquiry.
Hopefully you will find some answers.

#064

I know you for quite some time...

Loesje is a Dutch agile, social organization of which the core process consists of co-creating strong, short, beautiful slogans, with the aim of making the world a better place. They relate to actual themes and at the same time they are timeless. Examples (freely translated) are: “Imagine you are happy, but you are not aware of it.” and “Extremely moderate is also a bit suspicious.” You’ll find a complete archive on www.loesje.nl.

Loesje-posters are very nice to have in the room to enable an atmosphere of social construction...



What is your favorite Loesje poster?

What kind of 'furniture' can help you to make the setting more constructive?

#065

A memorable AI interview

The second cohort of our AI learning journey is in its early stages. Our participants Gerwin and Marjo are practicing mutual AI-interviews. There's no script available. They have to come up with an energy question and then proceed with a discovery question.

Gerwin is a young student, anxious to improve his skills in communicating with autistic children. Marjo is a quality consultant within an organization that provides housing and care for elderly people. Gerwin is the AI-interviewer. I'm the observer of the conversation.

Gerwin acts according to what he has learned. He is full of attention and shows active listening. His first question sounds like, “What makes you happy?”. His discovery question, “Tell me about a successful moment in your work.” The conversation seems to be gentle and smooth and mutual respect is visible. When the exercise is over, I ask them to reflect on it. Both thought it went quite well. Then I asked Marjo whether she felt appreciated, and she said: “No, not really.”

No? Gerwin was quite astonished, he had put all of his good intentions and all of his attention into the interview. Marjo said that she recognized that all right and that she appreciated Gerwin's efforts. But that was not the same as feeling appreciated. Perhaps the questions were asked very well, but were they the right questions?

In our further reflection we brainstormed about alternative questions. That turned out to be not very easy. At some point I suggested the following question, unconsciously addressing it to Marjo: “Do you remember a situation in your work, when you thought ‘this is why I do what I do’?” She answered that many years ago, when she worked as a nurse, such situations happened almost every day. And somehow, her tone of voice and the look in her eyes told us that she liked that former job, being in direct contact with the clients and patients, much more than her present one, which is quite detached from core activities. At the same time, she mentioned that she considered this thought a ‘wake-up call’ for the way she could do her job as an internal consultant today; with the utmost focus on elderly clients and patients of course! Marjo felt appreciated, and we all knew that the learning lane is quite a long stretch...

What an exercise! What a reflection! What an outcome! What an appreciation!

Think about the last conversations you had.

Did you feel appreciated afterwards?

Do you think the others felt appreciated afterwards?

Is it an idea to ask them nonetheless?

'Standard' AI interviewing

Sometimes, when I'm contributing to a conference, I'm happy to fill in my 'inactive gaps' by being available for an AI interview. That is, other participants of the conference can schedule me to be interviewed, just for the experience. Under such circumstances, my AI interview approach is very 'standard'. It may be the other person's first encounter with AI. Hopefully, this 'standard' can help you perform AI interviews yourself.

Before I proceed, you must be aware that Case Western University presents a website¹ called *Appreciative Inquiry Commons*, which in fact represents a huge archive of practical AI information. It contains a section Practice & Management > AI tools that gives you access to many specific AI interview guidelines; it's very worthwhile to explore.

Regarding the AI interview standard, there seems to be a backbone of building blocks, a central pattern. This is very much like the steps that build up an AI summit. Notice that the following is pure 'structure' which has to be enriched with your own words.

The standard AI interview starts with an Energy question. Even when the interview has a certain context or aim, the energy question can be independent of that. The purpose is to invite your interviewee to enter a positive state. Therefore, the energy question is like "What is it that makes you happy?", "What is your favorite music?", "Who inspired you when you were eighteen?", "What makes you tick?" and so on. And you are perfectly welcome to ask supporting questions like "Could you give a specific example of the experience you just mentioned?"

The second stage addresses Discovery: "Would you tell me about a situation when you were at your best?" Examples of supporting questions are: "When did this take place?" "How were the circumstances?" "Who else was present?" "What was your specific contribution?" "Which values played a role?" "What did you value the most in that situation?" etcetera. These questions help the other to re-live the strong experience, which can have a strengthening effect.

Now is the time to invite your interviewee to Dream. The line of inquiry is as follows: "Imagine yourself five years from now. (Or two, or ten.) Things have become great. What does that look like? What do you see? Who do you see? Why is everything working out so well? What do you really like about this future?"

¹ <http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu>

The fourth step is meant to turn the dreams into possible action. Supported by questions like: "If this dream situation has been reached in five years, what was the situation after two years?" "What were the possible steps that enabled the development?" "What could have been your part in that process?" "What would you like to contribute to such a worthwhile development?" "What could be your first step?" and "What could you do tomorrow to make a start?"

...

Reducing such a high quality relational practice to four steps, based on example questions, makes me feel as if I'm doing the richness of the AI interview an injustice. Although my specific questions may alter all the time, I'm very happy to 'confess' that this four step structure is still a welcome guide for me.

Would you consider to structure your next conversation along these four steps?

Can I trust that you will agree with me that there is always something 'before the first question'? (Date, Dance, see chapter #038)

Will you please remember to ask – somehow, sometime – you interviewee whether he or she felt appreciated by you?

#067

Inquiring into the Strength Within

Appreciative Inquiry is often introduced as a ‘strength-based approach’. I would even say that it can be seen as a strength *finding* approach. Let me invite you to regard the AI interview as a conversation, aiming to ‘empower’ the other.

So, is Appreciative Inquiry not always positive? That depends on how you look at it. It took me quite some time and a lot of AI interviews, to detect three levels.

In my early years, an AI interview was all about inquiring into a very positive, energetic, successful situation. The other person at his or her best. These conversations always had a positive signature. And the four-step interview did a good job.

Sometimes, my interviewee just could not recall such a ‘peak state’. Was that the end of the AI interview? Not at all. Later on, I found out that I better be cautious before inquiring after the ‘highest’. The person before me was already very much appreciative of the life he or she was living. And in his or her opinion, this was an ordinary, normal life. And you know what? Appreciative Inquiry can also be applied to ‘normal life’! One can easily inquire into something ‘normal’ that the other delivered, what happened just the other day. And maybe, because of the line of inquiry, this ‘ordinary achievement’ can help to discover certain qualities of your interviewee, of which he or she wasn’t aware of (anymore).

Being asked when you ‘were at your best’, you might focus on positive circumstances. But perhaps you were at full strength when things were going not so well. Maybe you lost a loved one; perhaps you once suffered from a severe illness; or you have had hard times with your partner. And now, having this conversation, you are still there, sound and healthy! Apparently you have learned to live with your loss; you did overcome the pain; you and your partner succeeded to repair the relationship. Things may have even gotten even better; you have become stronger. How did you do that? What forces in you were unleashed at the time you were in the slump? What are the specifics of your ‘life-giving potential’? And how have these talents of yours developed over time? How can they help you into a desired future?

Three ‘levels’ of AI interviewing. One approach to strength finding. It’s not always positive, but definitely appreciative. Someone told me that Buddhism suggests three virtues. In my words: co-suffering, co-living and co-enjoying. The third one is said to be the most difficult...

Are you more of the co-living kind, the co-suffering kind, or the co-enjoying kind?

What do you think of the word ‘extraordinary’?

What could be your biggest strength, considering the problems you have overcome?

The Art of Clean Language

If you would ask me, I consider Appreciative Inquiry to be a form of art, in which one can improve endlessly. From this 'artistic' perspective it might be a wise thing to study AI-related forms of art; gaining some knowledge about Clean Language could be very valuable. That's why we included a learning experience around Clean Language in our AI100 learning journey.

In my beginner's definition, Clean Language has to do with 'minimal questions' and 'maximal freedom for the other'. Why is it valuable to (up and coming) AI-practitioners? First of all, because both AI and Clean Language make specific use of language, and every new 'language exercise' can help improve our conversation skills. But there's a more significant reason.

If you think about it, performing Appreciative Inquiry makes use of questions that invite the other to think in certain directions. You could also call it a form of positive discrimination of ideas... If you look at it carefully, there is only a thin line between appreciation, influencing, directing, manipulation... Assuming that your appreciative intentions are okay, you still can get carried away whilst AI interviewing and maybe your questions become 'stronger'. Can you imagine what I'm trying to address?

Clean Language is a conversational practice based on the utmost neutral usage of language. As a method it has been developed by therapist David Grove, and in 1997 Penny Tompkins and James Lawley wrote the first official publication about it: Less is More ... *The Art of Clean Language*¹.

So, let me recall that Clean Language is not the same as Appreciative Inquiry. However the ideas behind CL and the set of questions used in CL can be very helpful in practicing AI, because they can serve as a measure. They provide a 'frame of reference' for you to assess whether your AI-questions might be reaching beyond pure inquiry and appreciation. And of course, besides serving as a measure, the CL questions can be very useful in AI interviewing. To get a general idea, please read the following fragment of the article by Tompkins and Lawley.

[...] There are 9 basic Clean Language questions. Two questions request information about symbol's attributes and two ask for locational information. There are two questions which

reference the past and two which reference the future (from the client's perceptual present). This leaves the odd-one-out which offers the client the opportunity to make a lateral and therefore metaphorical shift in perception. The 9 basic Clean Language questions are:

[The dots (.....) refer to the exact words the interviewee has mentioned before.]

And is there anything else about?

And what kind of is that?

And where is?

And whereabouts?

And what happens next?

And then what happens?

And what happens just before?

And where does/could come from?

And that's like what? [...]

Please note that I am aware of taking a fragment of CL and relating it to AI. I fully respect the psychological therapy context in which Clean Language is positioned. In my view, the line between inquiry, consulting and therapy is a thin one. To both CL and AI practitioners I would still suggest: 'please try this at home', when relational being and human wholeness are your aspirations.

Can you recall a conversation you were a part of, and your language was mostly 'clean'?

What would you consider a preferable situation to prepare and practise clean language?

Can you think of other 'enablers' to provide maximum freedom for your conversation partner?

¹ This article is still considered to be the source of information about Clean Language.

Find the complete website at <http://www.cleanlanguage.co.uk>.

Oh so Precious

When doing AI in groups, the one-to-one AI interview is always a source of discovery. It's a very common AI practise that the interview pairs, having once returned to their table group, summarize the story of their conversation partner. Now first I'll show two fictitious examples of how this can be done.

"I would like to tell you the story I've just heard in the beautiful AI interview I just completed. My interviewee, a professional internal consultant in the financial sector, once had a client with a personal problem. I'd like to tell you how the problem was solved successfully, and how valuable I found the contribution of my interviewee. I appreciate it very much. This is the story I remember: ..."

"Hello everybody. I'd like you to introduce Peter. Peter, I feel really honored that you were my AI interviewee. The story you told me, really impressed me. I believe, you are to be admired for that. I hope I will be able to recall the essence and the strength of the experience you shared in the interview. Please jump in if you think I left something out. Peter, you told me about a period in your professional life when you were working as an HR development consultant in the Paris branch of this large financial institution. One day, the head of the mortgage department approached you and this was his first question: ..."

Did you notice any differences?

It's good practice to tell a story. We often tell our own stories and we also tell the stories of others. But we don't tell stories of others very often, when they are in the room sitting next to you. Except during AI practices, that is. (Or within the context of listening exercises.)

Can you imagine, or do you recognize, how precious it is to re-tell someone's story in his or hers presence?

What do you think about remembering and mentioning the name of the other person?

What can possibly happen between the other's reality and your interpretation of it?

If you would be the 'other', can you imagine what it's like to listen to your own story, in new words?

In that case, would you preferably be referred to as 'him/her' or as 'you'?

How about you as a storyteller?

And if the questions above aren't puzzling you already, let's take this a step further. What about truth? Is the story of the other the truth? Is your interpretation of the story the truth? Very often, in AI-dialogues, the interviewee both appreciated and wondered about the re-telling of the original story. The interviewer apparently saw other aspects of it as

valuable. And this re-interpretation turns out to be very helpful for the original 'owner' of the story. Are you still with me? If you like to be stretched to the full, let me refer to a great pragmatic philosopher called Richard Rorty. He states that 'truth' is something we build up during our conversations, and conversations are built up through continuous re-interpretations. He calls this the 'contingency of language'. According to Rorty¹, truth is what is convenient for society. Like vocabularies are made by humans, truth is also made by humans ...

¹ Quoted from his book *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity*.

Bowing for questions

In *Hello, is anybody there?* by Jostein Gaarder, Mika is a person from outer space, who has landed on our planet. Please enjoy the following excerpt...

[...] As soon as Mika had finished testing gravity, he got down on all fours and examined the grass. He smelt it, pulled up a few green tufts and put them in his mouth. He spat them out in a hurry.

'You shouldn't eat grass. It doesn't taste nice,' I said.

He spluttered several times and spat again. I felt a little sorry for him. If he'd come all the way from another planet, he must be hungry. So I ran to the apple tree and picked up an apple from the ground. I thought I ought to try to be a bit welcoming on behalf of the planet I lived on.

'Try an apple,' I said, offering him the green fruit.

I could tell he was looking at an apple for the very first time. At first he just sniffed it, then he ventured to take a small bite.

'Yum yum,' he said. He took a bigger bite.

'Do you like it?' I asked.

He made a deep bow.

'What did it taste like?' I asked. I wanted to know what it's like to eat your very first apple.

He bowed and bowed.

'Why are you bowing?' I asked.

'Where I come from we always bow when someone asks an interesting question,' Mika explained. 'And the deeper the question, the deeper we bow.'

This was one of the silliest things I'd ever heard. I couldn't see how a question was anything to bow about.

'So what do you do when you greet each other, then?' I asked.

'We try to think of a clever question,' he replied.

'Why?'

I'd asked another question, so he gave a quick bow. Then he said:

'We try to find something clever to ask so the other person has to bow.'

This answer impressed me so much that I gave the deepest bow I could. When I looked up again, Mika was sucking his thumb. There was a long pause before he took it out.

'Why did you bow?' he asked, sounding rather offended.

'Because you gave such a clever answer to my question,' I replied.

'But an answer is never worth bowing for,' said Mika. 'Even if it sounds clever and correct, you still shouldn't bow for it.'

I nodded, but I was sorry the moment I'd done it, in case Mika thought I was bowing for the answer he'd just given.

'When you bow, you give way,' continued Mika. You must never give way to an answer.'

'Why not?'

'An answer is always the stretch of road that's behind you. Only a question can point the way forward.'

His words sounded so wise that I had to stop myself bowing again. [...]

#071

The Generics

“People move in the direction of the questions they are being asked.” This undoubtedly often memorized, leading AI principle illustrates the ‘genericity’ of the inquiring approach. It is obvious that a question opens up the possibility of further action. So let us please try to include questions in our natural vocabulary. But what about the rest of our conversation, can that be generic as well?

The early appreciative inquiry #009 ‘Everything flows’ made clear that even a compliment can be a ‘conversation stopper’, just by the way it is formulated. In #023 ‘Are you a non-dog?’ we wondered about the word ‘deadline’ that is meant to be a point where a piece of text is not dying, but ready for the next step: publication. Maybe we do not easily notice that words in conversations can influence the flow of that same conversation. Words? Or do we better call them micro-practices?

Micro-practices? For example, you can use a word like ‘termination’ in your scientific conversation. You can put the word into your speech without any hesitation and it will be spoken that way. Nothing wrong with using the word ‘termination’ as such. I’m sure you would be a little bit more cautious in saying ‘termination’ when you are at a funeral ceremony, wouldn’t you? Because, maybe you could hurt someone, just by using this ‘wrong word at the wrong time’. It could cause an awkward silence, and there would be need for repair. If you would be conscious, at the moment the word is coming up in your brain, and you would restrain from using it, that already would be a micro-practice in your language.

It seems that you can interweave all kinds of micro-practices into your conversation. Moreover, you will be doing that already. A specific kind of micro-practices can further help the conversation as well as your conversation partners. Like the dots at the end of a sentence; they give room for more...

Which micro-practices are the best if you aim for genericity in your conversations? This question raises a next question. If you came up with a very good micro-practise, and you would use it in every sentence you spoke, would it keep on doing its generic job? Or could this cause the opposite effect?

Perhaps this interweaving of micro-practices – to help the conversation to become or to stay generic – has more to do with your ‘generic’ intentions than with the specific words. However, these intentions of yours can help to refine or redefine the language you speak. And maybe it turns into a nice play...

Once, during an AI conference, I sat in the audience and my friend Arno was sitting a few rows behind me. Inspired by the speaker – Diana Whitney – who talked about a ‘cool idea’, Arno sent me a text message saying “A Cool idea? What about a Warm idea?” I replied: “Idea, I dear, You dear, We dear ... What about a Wedea instead of an Idea?” Arno’s reply: “Windeed!”

Do you like to play with language?

What are your favorite micro-practises, when you come to think of it?

Imagine you are having a conversation with somebody, and you are in Appreciative Inquiry mode. Your 'line of questioning' invited the other to share his story regarding a strong, valuable experience. At some point he finds out, or makes clear, that his father plays a significant role in his life. To be more specific; his late father, who passed away some months ago. It's quite understandable that your interviewee gets emotional, tears appear in his eyes...

Now what? Your appreciation invited him to speak freely. Nothing wrong with sharing emotions. But now you entered this sensitive subject, is it appropriate to proceed with your appreciative inquiry? You are at least partly responsible for bringing up the emotion. You are not a therapist, you are practising AI. You might not have reached your Dream-question, but is that an objective? It could be very valuable to him. But are you the one to decide? What would you do in this case?

Here are some elementary principles you could follow.

First of all, remember that you might be interviewing, but you're not a journalist. This is the moment to share that insight with him, although this should be no news. Tell him that it was appreciative inquiry that brought the both of you to this point in the conversation and that this information will stay between you, until you decide to share some elements with others.

Secondly, as an interviewer you seem to be taking the lead. Because the aim of your inquiry is to appreciate the other, in fact the other is taking the lead. So what you could or should do is; stop, and ask your interviewee how he is doing. Be cautious; any question can be regarded as 'the next question' in your inquiry and all you want to do is to make clear that you should take a break.

Finally, be prepared that anything can happen, as a result of the following, specific 'pause question' I would suggest: "What is it that you really want to do now?" (Do you agree that this is a better question than "What do you think is the best we can do now?" or "How should we proceed from here?" or ... (fill in for yourself?)) Imagine the possible answers that your interviewee can give. Wait and listen. And proceed from there.

What do you need to be able to create such a necessary and valuable move in the conversation?

"In a dialogue, nobody is trying to win. Everybody wins if anybody wins." It's almost like a definition, these words by David Bohm in his book *On Dialogue*.

Isn't it somewhat odd? Even if we sometimes would like to have a constructive conversation, like a dialogue, on a subject, we often say: "Let's discuss this." However, the word discussion really means 'breaking things up'. May I suggest to add "Let's dialogue this." to our vocabulary?

Bohm reminds us that the origin of the word dialogue is to be found in the Greek word *dialogos*. Considering that *logos* means 'the word' – or meaning of the word – and *dia* means 'through' – and not 'two' – Bohm makes clear that a dialogue can be among any number of people. What it takes is a 'spirit of dialogue'. In his words: [...] "The picture of image that [this interpretation of the word] dialogue suggests is of a stream of meaning flowing among, and through us and between us. This will make possible a flow of meaning in the whole group, out of which may emerge some new understanding. It's something new, which may not have been in the starting point at all. It's something creative. And this shared meaning is the glue or cement that holds people and societies together." [...]

According to Bohm, one of the most important skills for partaking in a dialogue is 'suspending'. In my interpretation he points toward the act of bringing forward your deepest conviction in a way that it cannot offend others in the dialogue and that others can really get to know your intentions. You send your words into the group, but at the same time you see to it that your words do not 'cross the table' to convince others. What you said stays on the part of the table in front of you, waiting to contribute to the emerging collective meaning...

Perhaps one difference between the Bohmian dialogue and a group AI process is the starting point. For AI that is the 'affirmative topic'. For the dialogue the starting point is: people with dialogue spirit. Perhaps the Date, Dance and Discovery in Appreciative Inquiry can serve as a mechanism to raise the spirit of dialogue. And perhaps, during the Dream and Design stages of an AI process, things are going to resemble real dialogue. My wishful interpretation, that is...

Can you remember discussions, that would have been better as dialogues?

For what purpose can a discussion be a useful approach?

Have you ever been in a conversation, without a certain starting point that developed into collective meaning? Can you recall what happened and why it happened?

What makes you a potential contributor of dialogue?

Let's dialogue 'asynchronous reciprocity'!

Before you read any further, please consider re-reading #025 titled Society 3.0.

Ronald van den Hoff hasn't just written the book *Society 3.0* about co-creating the interdependent society; he also created a fast growing international network of physical locations, called Seats2meet¹, that enables meeting, sharing and co-creating in a sustainable way. One of the features is that you – whether you are a 'knowmad' or a 'regular citizen' – can book a working space in return for social capital, that is: sharing your name, knowledge and availability to meet someone else in the location. All this is handled by a digital dashboard, visible on screens (or your notebook) in the Seats2meet location. Subsequent research into the Seats2meet 'magic' led to a book called *The Serendipity Machine*, referring to the 'intelligence' of this dashboard to suggest relevant connections between people present.

This dashboard has been developed further into a cloud application, which can be applied to any location in the world, whether it be a restaurant, a corporate head office, a sports venue, a square or a pop concert. Anyone can activate Seats2meet Connect² on the spot where he or she is present. And by this, and by others to check in, you can start building a community, perhaps a social enterprise... You wouldn't be the first.

The 'connect' software is under continuous construction. At the time I'm writing this, users fill out a personal profile with specific tags, can ask questions to the larger community, and can find locations where certain skills or knowledge are dominantly present. A S2MConnect users conference held in The Netherlands in the spring of 2015, gave rise to new possible functionality like the tag cloud to become updated and enriched by recommendations and endorsements of others. Very nice.

Personally, I would love to see the following update in the already beautiful application. S2M Connect asks you, besides completing your tag cloud, to say what you are working on at the time of your check-in. It's obvious that this can help the system to suggest relevant connections. Remember the principles of the Bohmian Dialogue, which in my opinion is also a kind of 'serendipity machine', I think that S2M Connect could gain from extra input about the 'spirit of dialogue' of the user. Because, maybe it's not the content of the tag cloud that enables new connections and subsequent social enterprises; maybe

¹ <http://seats2meet.com>

² <http://connect.seats2meet.com>

it's purely the mix of appreciative intentions and dialogue competences that will bring the coincidental meetings to a success. The question of course is, how to enable the S2M Connect community in acquiring this personal mix?

What does all this tell you about meeting new people and making new connections?

Do you recall a coincidental meeting that turned out to be very relevant? What were the successful ingredients in the early stages of the meeting process?

What kind of knowledge, competences and/or intentions would you like to come into contact with?

Niels Schuddeboom (@shakingtree) is a young Dutch self employed social entrepreneur with a beautiful mind. He's a very enthusiastic student of our 2015 cohort of the AI100 learning journey. Unfortunately, nature has provided Niels with huge physical discomfort; he is very disabled and needs a lot of support to be able to just live a life. I really admire him for the strength and optimism he is showing and we love to have him in our AI learning group. The kickoff of the learning program took place in Leuven and that meant too much travel and trouble for Niels. Fortunately, our partner Seats2meet provided a telepresence robot. Imagine the wheels of a Segway, one vertical stick of about one and a half meter, and on top of it a microphone, a loudspeaker and an iPad. While Niels was at home in his bed, his face and voice were present in our classroom in Leuven! In fact, Niels was very present in the group. The robot waggles a little, to stay in balanced; it's like breathing, there's some life in it. It can move – guided by Niels – across the room, join conversations, turn its face towards anyone. On the iPad screen there's the full face of Niels. And the sound is very natural. This was really a great experience, not only for Niels but for all of the other students. Afterwards, Niels wrote a clear and comprehensive blog¹ about it.

Andries Baart is a Dutch multi-scientist who published an extensive study around 'the Theory of being Present'. This study was based on years and years of pastoral work with people on the edge of society: homeless, jobless and addicted. I'm very disrespectful in bringing back his 1000 pages theory to 'a state of being, pure and only present, with the other; not wanting something for, or by the other, not advising what's good or bad, just being there'. Isn't that pure appreciation? Completely respecting their situation without any tiny bit of judgement? This kind of 'being present' has everything to do with personal attention and interest, but not too much, and not too little, exactly 'neutral'. I'm going to stop now with trying to find the right words... Being present like Baart supposes, represents beautiful human artwork.

In the summer of 2004, I read *Presence*² (it was a present from a friend). It gave (and still gives) me so much inspiration with regard to personal and organizational development. It must have planted sufficient AI seeds already, although it was only in 2008 that AI

¹ <http://society30.com/telepresence-robot-will-radically-change-way-work/>

² the famous book by Peter Senge, Joseph Jaworski, Betty Sue Flowers and Claus Otto Shärmer

Bell gave us a wake-up call

officially crossed my path. This book, fully titled *Presence, human purpose and the field of the future*, introduces the U-curve which developed into *Theory U*, the famous work by Sharmar. The U-curve is about a specific form of listening; listening very deep, listening highly entangled with environment, listening to what is wanting to emerge, listening to the future. And acting accordingly. On the website of The Presencing Institute³ the following text can be found:

[...] “In contrast, level 4 listening, called presencing, represents a state of the social field in which the circle of attention widens and a new reality enters the horizon and comes into being. In this state, listening originates outside the world of our preconceived notions. We feel as if we are connected to and operating from a widening surrounding sphere. As the presence of this heightened state of attention deepens, time seems to slow down, space seems to open up, and the experience of the self morphs from a single point (ego) to a heightened presence and stronger connection to the surrounding sphere (eco).” [...]

How does this sound to you?

In case you got carried away: take a break. You're in a book called Appreciative Inquiries of the 3.0 Kind. The chapter you are reading is part of a section called The Art of Inquiry. In my view, Appreciative Inquiry has to do with questions; it certainly has to do with *listening*; and it definitely has to do with *connectedness*. I thought you should be informed about telepresence, being present and presencing. I hope you appreciated it.

Speaking of levels of listening, what are you thinking?

What is awaiting you?

³ <https://www.presencing.com/>

Bell? Wake-up call? Are we referring to Alexander Graham Bell who invented the telephone in 1876? No, I'd like you to know about John Stewart Bell who 'invented' the entangled quantum pairs, in 1964. Imagine two elementary particles A and B, with any distance in between. When something changes in the situation of particle A, at the very same time a similar change overcomes particle B. And by 'at the same time' I mean 'exactly the same time'. This implies that there was information exchange over a distance, within zero seconds. This information must have been travelling much faster than the speed of light. Did it travel? Or was this information at both positions somehow connected all the time? We are talking real science here. And real scientists will tell you that my explanation is 'a nice try'. That is, if they would be appreciative scientists...

How connected can connected be? How connected are we to each other? May I invite you to a thought experiment? (See also #016.) We are made of organs, organs are made of cells, cells are made of molecules, molecules are made of atoms, and atoms are made of elementary particles. Perhaps you have seen a drawing (a photograph is not really possible) of such an atomic configuration: a few small particles circling around with lots of nothing in between. Imagine you are flying, in your very tiny helicopter, through your own body, on this atomic level. Don't be afraid, the chances that you hit a particle are slim. There is really lots of space in between. Since you are flying across elementary particles, and since your body is made of elementary particles, and the space around you is made of elementary particles, and the person you are having a constructive conversation with, is made of elementary particles ... you wouldn't know anymore whether you would be flying within your body, or in the air between you and the other, or within the body of the other! The elementary particles of you, the other and the air between, can and in fact will easily exchange... And since a neuron, which helps your brain work, also is made of this elementary free flowing particles, is it likely that ideas like coherence, connectedness, flow, understanding make reading each other's minds a possibility?

Our friend Bell is even suggesting that particles don't have to travel from your body to mine, to have an instant connection...

Just a thought experiment... My thoughts? Or yours? Our thoughts perhaps? Or always present thoughts, that are just now reaching our antennas?

Let me leave you alone with your thoughts...

And please send me your ideas.

#077 Wit(h)ness¹

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

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

Witnessing Diana², 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

¹ Inspired by the connective atmosphere during the World AI Conference in Ghent, 2012

² Diana Whitney (see #081)

#078 Wablief?

How do you prepare for an interview with a celebrity? You'd better write down a list of questions, because you might become overwhelmed by your own worshipping... If you have to perform interviews to assemble answers for scientific statistical research, please see to it that you have a set of clear questions, preferably multiple choice, and that all of the interviewees will answer all the questions. How different this is from an AI interview. Maybe you could think of a suitable energy question... but what happens next, who knows? Do you prepare dancing the rumba by listing and planning all the footsteps before?

And still there are a lot of questions, or even an endless row, that are valuable to work with in Appreciative Inquiry. Thinking of it, I would like to share five of my favorites. They're not specifically energy questions, or discovery questions; they could turn up in every stage of AI interviewing.

"What is it that you really would like to happen?"

"How are you at your best?"

"What drives you in life?"

"What are you the most proud of?"

"Who do you admire?"

And please try and complete this tiny beginning of the endless list...

All this is based on the assumption that you as an AI practitioner are somehow in the lead, the initiator of the conversation. Now imagine this: you are leaving a business meeting, and in the hallway your boss takes you aside, saying: "Gosh, why were you that negative?". How do you respond?

Of course there are lots of possible responses, like "I wasn't negative." or "I rather think you were the negative one." etcetera. This very case was once presented to Arno Vansichen, our Belgian AI 'guru' who taught me a lot. And this is what he said: "When this 'personal attack' kind of situation happens to me, I know that I should respond by asking a question. Being an AI practitioner for years, it has even become part of my inner system to 'know' that a question should come out of my mouth. But I also know that the very right question for this situation is not at hand at that moment... Yes, even I, with all my AI experience, do not have this level of preparation. So the only thing I can do is to win time, to give myself the opportunity to think about the right question. In Belgium we have a very famous word – a question in itself – that really suits the situation. My first response to the 'attack' will be: 'Wablief?' And then I would wait..."

Wablief is like the ultra short for ‘what do you mean’, something like ‘Whayamean?’ The interesting effect of putting the Wablief? in, is that the other person now has to think about what he has said. And maybe the Wablief? is already an invitation to the other to rephrase his former attack, possibly into a milder version. That would really be nice. The other could also reply by “What do you mean, wablief?”. All of this has taken enough time for you to come up with the real question, to proceed with the conversation, for example “Was it perhaps the serious look on my face, where I was puzzled and required some deep thinking to attain a possible solution? The next time you see me doing that, could you please make me aware of it?”

What would be your variation of Wablief?

And how are you going to include that into your front-end response vocabulary?

9 CFO IN APPRECIATION

Chief Facilitating Officer

“In four months from now, we are organizing our annual YPP conference. Could you be one of the speakers and give a presentation on AI?”

YPP stands for young purchasing professionals. To their question I responded: “I can say a few or more words about Appreciative Inquiry, or I can enable the audience to experience AI, which I would prefer. Perhaps AI can help the whole conference to co-create ideas, instead of listening to speeches. What would your conference look like if it were to be the best conference ever?”

They hadn’t thought of it yet within such a challenging perspective.

Four months later, the conference is reaching the lunch break. What had happened so far? After a very constructive team process, we not only completely re-designed the conference into a coherent, lively, connecting and productive day; we also succeeded to involve the plenary speakers in such a way that they were willing to adjust their stories to our interactive scenario. Just before lunch, the facilitators of the afternoon workshops already met their participants to discuss the desired outcomes. The people who spoke most of the time, were the conference participants themselves...

All of this with me in the role of “CFO” – I’m not much of a chairman type person. In fact, all members of the organizing team acted as CFO’s. Like the speakers did, as did the workshop facilitators.

So, we are halfway through this conference. A young woman takes the microphone and asks: “Please tell me what the abbreviation CFO means.” As young purchasing professionals, reporting to their CPO’s – Chief Purchasing Officers – they are also quite familiar with the CFO: Chief Financial Officer. They were pretty sure that I was not that kind of CFO. And so I explained. I’m your Chief Facilitating Officer. And everybody laughed.

Within our AI100 learning course, designed to facilitate our participants in their development toward ‘AI practitioner’, one of the advanced modules is about ‘facilitating the AI process’. Of course, the AI Summit forms the ‘role model’ of a process to be facilitated. We also put the ‘CFO’ in a wider perspective; designer and facilitator of all thinkable co-creative group processes. In this chapter 9 – CFO in Appreciation, you’ll find another twelve ‘appreciative inquiries’ into your possible role as a ‘party organizer’. So hopefully you still feel invited to try some of it at home.

Think of the best conference you ever attended. What made it so good?

What about the most successful party or session you yourself once organized?

Are you facing an upcoming event to (co-)organize? What does success look like?

The Balls to Stand Naked

“Who am I to facilitate? Who are you to facilitate?”

I consider Joep de Jong a Master AI Facilitator and we are very pleased to have Joep guiding our AI100 advanced module on facilitating AI processes. His opening question “Who are you to facilitate?” is really intriguing for its layered interpretation:

- Who am I – it’s about the “I” (or You) and the skills and intentions you bring
- Who to facilitate – it’s about the audience you have to connect with

So, Joep is facilitating a group session about facilitating a group session. That means that we need to observe him in his performance to find out what he is teaching us. Agreed? I can’t reproduce Joep’s facilitating skills on this page, but I can produce a summary of one of the stories he uses to help us find answers to the question: “Who am I to facilitate?”.

The story is called “*The balls to stand naked*”. Find it on Youtube in a series called *Soul Biographies*. We see Dominic Miller, a session guitarist, who contributed to more than 150 music albums of very famous artists and bands. He played with Sting for example. In this six minute video, Dominic asks himself what to do when you reached the level where you always wanted to be. Because, as a famous guitar player, he can be considered very successful. First of all, he concludes that he’s still a normal human being, as he was before. Then he gives an example of what he thinks he has to do. He strikes a simple chord on his guitar. Then, by changing one finger, he strikes another chord. Then, by playing both slightly different chords, something peculiar happens; there’s tension, a song comes up, there’s a story to be told. “The relationship between the chords, starts a story,” Dominic says, “and it is my responsibility to do something with it. It all starts with allowing myself to ‘not know’. And to find yourself in a state of not knowing is like standing naked in a room full of people wearing clothes. This might feel embarrassing, but at the same time you are making a difference, a very powerful act.”

This is the story Joep de Jong refers to, when trying to explain what it is to be a facilitator. And thanks to Joep and Dominic, the following questions remain for you:

Are you courageous enough to live with the ‘not knowing’?

How naked are you prepared to be?

Are you willing to facilitate two different people in dialogue and will you take their story further?

Appreciative Leadership

In appreciative inquiry #041 you found a scenario for a ‘masterclass’ regarding Appreciative Leadership. To prepare this, I felt highly inspired by two articles in AI Practitioner’s special on Appreciative Leadership. Because I cannot tell it better than the authors, I’ve taken the liberty to quote and summarize them. I trust they will inspire you on your path to become a great ‘CFO’.

Joep de Jong wrote *The Daily Disciplines and Practices of an Appreciative Leader*. He mentions five, I selected some of his comments.

The practice of appreciating

[...] Truly appreciating what is and what is being offered by others, often requires me to put my ego aside, especially when I’m presented with a perspective that is different from the one I normally have. [...]

The practice of courage

[...] This way I enter the space of co-creation and expose myself to potentially strange, completely new ideas. [...]

The practice of humility

[...] Whenever I engage in a conversation [...] I bring my part to the table, but what others bring to the table is of equal importance. [...]

The practice of discipline

[...] For me this practice also means the challenge of realizing what is important to me and what is not. And in order to keep my mind clear I’ve developed a daily – weekdays, that is – discipline to do a series of activities (workout, yoga and meditation) that will help me ‘empty’ my mind. [...]

The practice of reflecting

[...] key to leading – today I talk about facilitating rather than leading – an organization is my ability to reflect on what is happening in our organization and the world around us. [...]

¹ AI Practitioner Volume 13 Number 1 ISBN 978-1-907549-04-5 February 2011 |

www.aipractitioner.com

Diana Whitney and Amanda Trosten-Bloom wrote *Five Strategies of Appreciative Leadership*. They refer to key areas of relational practice. This is what I carefully extracted. Please feel invited to read the whole article.

1. *The wisdom of inquiry – asking positively powerful questions.*

[...] Positive questions are keys to treasure troves of best practices, success stories and creativity. They unlock positive emotions essential to high performance such as acceptance, validation, job satisfaction, confidence and courage. [...]

2. *The art of illumination – bringing out the best of people and situations.*

[...] People's strengths, capabilities, hopes and dreams are a readily abundant yet frequently overlooked source of positive power. Unrecognized and very often underutilized, strengths are a deep well of potential waiting to be tapped. [...]

3. *The genius of inclusion – engaging with others to co-create the future.*

[...] In order for decisions and plans for the future to satisfy and serve diverse groups of people, all the people whose future it is must be invited into a relationship and included in the dialogue and decision-making. [...]

4. *The courage of inspiration – awakening the creative spirit.*

[...] Inspiration opens people to the source of life that moves through and among us all. It gives people hope and courage to shed habitual ways of living and working and move in new, innovative and more life-affirming directions. [...]

5. *The path of integrity – making choices for the good of the whole.*

[...] When you are on the path of integrity, people know it. They follow your ideas and ideals. [...] Integrity refers to a myriad of relational practices; honesty, transparency, moral and ethical conduct, speaking truth to power, making and keeping commitments, open communication, congruity of words and deeds, reconciliation, forgiveness and authenticity. All these notions point to the idea that integrity means wholeness. [...]

What are your top-3 practices to lead your life?

Most of the times when you hear someone shouting: “Music!”, there's a fair chance that the speaker also claps his hands. Do you get the picture? At some point in my development as an AI facilitator, I stopped clapping my hands and I started using music. How's that?

First let us consider the ‘ordinary’ presentation. In most cases, the chairman will introduce the speaker to the audience. He (or she) will ask for a polite applause and the speaker will start his (or her) talk. We are quite accustomed to that, aren't we?

Now, imagine an AI group process. There is no chairman, only the Chief Facilitating Officer. At regular intervals during the process, the CFO will invite the participants to have bilateral interviews or table dialogues. Because of the affirmative topic and the constructive atmosphere, people will start talking without any special effort from the CFO. And they will keep on talking. It turns out that it is much harder to bring the lively conversations to an end in order to proceed to the next stage of the AI process. In the beginning of my career as AI-CFO, I indeed clapped my hands to focus the attention of the participants back to me ... The words I used sounded like this: “Excuse me, dear participants, for disturbing your conversations. It looks like you could go on for hours, but we have some more steps to follow. Please forgive me clapping my hands. This is apparently the difference between leadership and management; leadership is inviting people into dialogue, while management is forcing people to follow the central message...”

Nowadays, when facilitating an AI process, I also recall this explanation about leadership and management. But now I'm telling the story to explain why and how I make use of music as a ‘conversation stopper’. Starting up music during the last minute of a dialogue session and raising the volume gently, is a gentle alternative for ‘clapping hands’. Please try it yourself.

As a matter of fact, I use plenty of music during an AI summit. There's suitable music for when the participants enter the room and look for their tables. And what about Lionel Richie's ‘Hello’ supporting the first encounters? Make sure that the main process of an AI session consists of conversation. So, music is to be used in a very modest way; in between conversations, a few fragments fading away to support the start of a new conversation and swelling up to indicate the end of an exercise.

Below you will find one of my Spotify playlists, especially designed for AI summits:

- Shine on You Crazy Diamond (Pink Floyd) – during the welcome coffee until the program begins
- Magical Mystery Tour (The Beatles) – when participants look for their seats in the room

The Whole System?

- Come Together (The Beatles) – when everyone is seated, enabling inclusiveness to start with
- Hello (Lionel Richie) – during the start of the energy dialogues
- My Friend (Groove Armada) – to mark the end of the hello-stage, into the first table dialogue
- Just the Two of Us (Grover Washington) – inviting pairs to their mutual AI interviews
- We'll be Together (Sting) – when the pairs re-enter the room and get back to their tables
- Happy Family (Racoon) – to support the start of the table dialogues in the Discovery phase
- It's Alright (Eurhythmics) – to indicate the end of the table dialogue
- Take Five (Dave Brubeck) – inviting participants to a coffee break
- Dream within a Dream (Propaganda) – stirring up the table groups toward the Dream phase
- Shut your eyes (Snow patrol) – a moment of personal reflection just before the round of Dreams
- Eternal Flame (The Bangles) – indicating the end of the Dream phase
- Contusion (Stevie Wonder) – rearranging chairs to share and collect the strongest dreams
- Acropolis Now (Joe Jackson) – stirring up the participants to subscribe to the dream of their choice
- Looking out for #1 (Bachman, Turner, Overdrive) – starting up the Design phase
- Hard Days Night (The Beatles) – wrapping up the Design phase
- Peter Gunn Theme (Emerson, Lake & Palmer) – introducing the Design presentations
- You do Something to me (Paul Weller) – thanking the presenters
- Circle of Life (Elton John) – wrapping up the summit process
- Happy (Pharrell Williams) – drinks and bye bye

What is your personal top-10 of favorite songs?

If you are considering music in preparing your next group session, which songs would you prefer?

Can you recall or imagine moments, when listening to music is to be preferred above talking?

What do you need to include music in your next 'event'?

It's a well known principle within AI summits; inclusiveness. It's the art of the CFO to make participants feel included in the process. Even when a participant unfortunately arrives later on in the process, the CFO sees to it that this newcomer will be taken care of and will be informed about the proceedings so far. But there's more to inclusiveness in organizing AI summits; it's called The Whole System in the Room. What we mean by that, is that we want to have as many stakeholders of the 'affirmative topic' as possible in the process. Read #044 too. Up to now you may have been visualizing 'people in the room'.

How about stakeholders that would like to attend the summit, but are not able to travel all the way to the venue? What about proper stakeholders of the affirmative topic, but are not known yet to the summit organization? The people in the room are the right people, we are used to saying. Does this principle exclude 'external' stakeholders? The answer is of course; No. Whether or not we can still include the externals, is a matter of modern technology...

The Seats2meet.com organization facilitates – in quite a unique way – knowledge sharing, co-working, meeting and co-creating. Covering more than sixty meeting locations in The Netherlands, they are a fast growing company and this growth has gone global. Within the Dutch Seats2meet organization, I was invited to facilitate a one day AI summit, called the Triple-S; Stakeholders Sharing Strengths. Considering the Seats2meet organization a master in applying social media, it was no surprise to me that the complete event could be followed on live stream. It became more than that; it was my first AI summit where a virtual table of external participants was 'included'.

Let's take a side step into the subject of 'digital intimacy'. To a certain extent, I was not a great fan of Skype. I always preferred the personal contact in a meeting. Until I attended a presentation on Conscious Capitalism. The speaker Marc Gafni surprised me with a refreshing view on the use of Skype. In fact, he gave five advantages of Skype communication above personal interaction, which made me appreciate Skype more than before. (1) when using Skype, both conversation partners are 'in the frame', so there's real mutual attention; (2) there's the possibility of changing perspective, e.g. I am able to see how the other sees me; (3) I can cover up the face of the other, and I can choose to switch between audio and video conversation; (4) one can easily make notes during the conversation and both can even share their writings; (5) for this one, use your own imagination! And because I got these new insights a few months before preparing the Triple-S Summit, you will understand that I was quite enthusiastic when someone proposed to set up the possibility of virtual participation.

Yes, an AI summit with 'the whole system' in the room is very inclusive and intimate,

How Performative an Affirmative topic can be

mainly caused by the personal contacts between the people present. Rethinking the Triple-S summit, my view has broadened. The four remote controlled cameras in each corner of the room weren't a disturbance at all. Using a microphone is common practise when facilitating larger summits. Of course it takes an experienced team of audio/video-specialist to ensure the streaming, the subtitles, the messages and the specific interactions with the external participants. But once the technology and the technicians are installed, I would say the proceedings are just like a 'normal' summit with only 'internals'. In fact, it was quite exciting to be connected with people 'out there'. And for the external participants it was exciting to be able to include their contributions into our process. This all seemed like quite a natural experience. And for you, dear (external) reader, there's the extra advantage that you can still view the video summary¹ on Youtube.

For me, being the CFO of this peculiar 'open' AI summit, the experience carried an extra dimension. Because of the need to inform the external audience about the exact time schedule of the summit, I was strictly directed by the video-producer. Sometimes I heard him in my earphone, telling me that I should position the microphone more carefully in front of the one I was interviewing. Furthermore, I was constantly being informed about how many minutes I had left until the next step. I really felt 'managed' and it felt surprisingly good. Opening up a summit to unknown externals can have an effect on the inclusiveness, as well as on the quality of the summit proceedings. Since then, when preparing a new summit, I always present the option of adding the external stakeholders. Of course, there's extra budget involved and not every affirmative topic is suitable for complete openness. But from now on, the challenge of having open AI summits through the social media, has become quite attainable. From there, it's a thin line between 'open summit' and 'real time democracy'. But that's another story...

Did you ever participate in a conference or course, or meeting, from behind your desktop?

What do you need to get a feeling of inclusiveness, being a remote participant?

Do you see opportunities for opening up an upcoming event you are to facilitate?

How are your Skyping skills and which ones would you like to improve?

¹ In YouTube, search for S2M A.I. summit – summary (english)

Sometimes the AI summit method is used as the 'kick-off' module of a management development program. You can imagine that the AI approach enables the relationship between the participants, and facilitates them to sharpen their learning objectives. I'm proud to be the facilitator of such a module for 'top talents' within the Dutch national organisation for safety. Just being restructured into 26 regions, the complete organization covers 25.000 hired and voluntary staff, most of them active in the field of rescuing, firefighting, civil health care and disaster response management.

In preparing the two-day summit process for the eighteen participants, we invited some of them to be part of our design team, mainly focussing on the design of a proper affirmative topic. The starting point was a visionary text by the head of the organisation, inviting management to look for their 'blind spots' and giving room to innovations, considering the new structure and the existing mission of assuring national safety. Not just the two representatives of the eighteen top talents, but in fact all of them gave their input to our affirmative topic design process. At some point during the preparations, our design team found itself reading all the supplied draft topics out loud. And at the end of the session we had organized the texts – that had been inspired by the same vision statement – into three main categories.

The first category consisted of suggestions saying that we should focus on the fact that the organization still lacked a proper strategy. Ideally, our summit would produce strong advice to top management on how to organize a process for building such a strategy.

The second category of draft affirmative topics also addressed the lack of an organizational strategy. But in this case, a draft organizational strategy should be the desired outcome of our summit.

The third category of responses from our co-creating participants said that we should acknowledge a certain strategy already being present (how could such a huge re-organization already have taken place without a strategy?). So considering the fact that it is the company's strategy to bring more safety among Dutch citizens, why not focus our summit on the specific actions to realize this strategy?

So, to summarize: we had three alternatives for preparing our affirmative topic. Advising management how to produce a sound organization strategy. Formulating the outline of

Three more D's to appreciate: Dip and Deep Dive

an organization strategy ourselves. Or, preparing concrete actions to contribute to the realization of the strategy as such.

Which of the three appealed to us the most? The third of course, because it ensures direct operational performance. Linguistic philosophers call this a 'performative' affirmative topic. For the participants of our MD-program it was an easy choice. (And some of them wondered why they initially had come up with the more indirect suggestions ending up in categories one and two. This was already a learning moment before the MD-program even had started.) Can you imagine that we all looked forward to our summit based on this specific 'performative topic'?

What is the best 'performative' proposal you have ever experienced (e.g. in your work)?

Do you remember proposals that could have been more 'performative' than they were?

Can you recall the most 'performative' proposal that you once presented?

What do you need to assure that upcoming proposals will be 'as performative as possible'?

It's the second day of our 'MD-summit' with these eighteen top talents. (See #084.) The inclusiveness is high and we're right on schedule. Beautiful dreams have been co-created, and we find ourselves admiring a Top-7 of dream proposals collected in a mind-map on the wall. They are really appealing, live-giving so to speak; they fully support our 'performative affirmative topic'. Imagine all of these seven dreams being realized in the coming years...

The next step for every participant is to subscribe to one of the seven dream proposals in the mind map. Although everyone 'can't choose', it takes only a little bit of time to re-group in new teams, entering our summit's Design stage and preparing to build SMART-action proposals for the selected dreams. Everything is set. Everyone knows what to do. And nothing happens ...

...

Fortunately, I was prepared for this situation. Based on similar experiences, I had reserved two extra hours in my private summit scenario, to overcome this "Dip" in the process. Dip? Let me give you some background. Although AI summits cause lots of constructive and relational effects, we are not always so sure about the exact proceedings of the Destiny (or Delivery) phase, which is meant to take place as a result of the summit. Daily organizational life can cause lots of disturbances... At Cleveland University, the AI home base, research has been done into successful Destiny stages. Some of their findings suggest that a high quality affirmative topic is one of the success criteria for a productive Destiny phase. Bearing this in the back of my mind, it occurred to me that this Dip within the Destiny already can be seen during the summit, especially between the Dream and the Design phase. And my idea was to appreciate that Dip and give it our full attention.

Back to the 'top talents'. They followed an ideal AI-process. They were very thrilled about their dream suggestion. They really wanted them to be realized. So why this collective hesitation? Why not just dive into the creative Design teamwork? I invited the participants to share a Circle Way exercise (see also #090). And we actually stood still at what was overcoming us. Our 'talking piece' went from one to another, the listening went with intent and the speaking was intentional; we all contributed to our collective wellness. And this was the picture that arose in between us. The participants felt insecure about their 'empowerment' to fulfill the actions. How would their bosses respond to their initiatives? Furthermore, some of the dream proposals implicated that safety would become the

Social Enterprises and Learning Communities

responsibility of every citizen, not only a product of the national safety organization. In fact, in the ideal future situation, our country wouldn't need a safety organisation at all. How would top management regard this 'self destroyal'? It took the reassurance – on behalf of top management – that our top talents really and definitely had been assigned to initiate organizational change, and that specific message helped them to take the Deep Dive... They never expected that they would be stuck in such a Dip under such creative circumstances and needed management support to take the Deep Dive.

(So, for the record, we now seem to have expanded the original four D's to Define, Date, Dance, Discover, Dream, Dip, Design, Deep Dive, Destiny and Delivery, and hopefully Dance again. My apologies for this Disturbance...)

And now I'm wondering about the quality of the Affirmative Topic compared to the effectiveness of the Destiny phase. Hopefully a high quality AT leads to magnificent dreams. And we all know that 'magnificent dreams' need some more effort to be realized, than 'appropriate dreams'... I fully agree that it's very effective for summits to produce actions that belong to the possible. But isn't it a real challenge for summits to enable the realization of the (supposed) impossible? Research into this area might be not very 'scientific' but it could be very valuable, considering that Appreciative Inquiry is more than 'science'... (Cleveland, give it your best shot. If anyone can do this, you are in the lead.)

What was your latest 'Deep Dive' – taking action, after you initially hesitated?

How do you assure that your dreams are translated into proper action?

How are you going to appreciate your next Dip, when it occurs to you?

Let us take Appreciative Inquiry a step further into Society 3.0. (Society 3.0? Please re-read appreciative inquiry #025.) In this co-creative world view by Ronald van den Hoff, global citizens co-create products and services in more or less temporary social enterprises. Social enterprises are constructed by people that share a specific mission. They invest mostly by time and social capital and contribute with the best of their strengths. Our Appreciative Inquiry Academy, built around the AI100 course, is a typical social enterprise. Obviously, the language among our academy partners is appreciative (at least for the sake of practising...). And because of our inquiring attitude, we continue to develop. In my perspective, lots of social enterprises are learning organizations, or they'd better be. That's why I often call Appreciative Inquiry 'the language of Society 3.0'.

What about learning communities? By that, I mean people representing or favouring a specific subject and willing to exchange their knowledge in a kind of club. I've seen learning communities that flourished and I've seen some that kept struggling with their existence. Looking further into this specific type of organization, I came to the conclusion that the flourishing ones did more than organizing knowledge exchange. Most of all, they showed specific constructive behaviour, a willing-to-learn attitude that constantly enabled the learning community to act according to its name; learning and developing. From what I have seen, the interpersonal behaviour was very similar to what we call Appreciative Inquiry. In that perspective, a learning community – of any kind – can become a proper social enterprise and may even be able to produce more than knowledge, if and when the internal behaviour is contributing to the collective learning and development process.

What about the AI summit? Does it have the potential of becoming a social enterprise? It definitely is a learning organization, at least during that inclusive period of time. What if it were a summit amongst a civil community, producing attractive and challenging action plans? Could those be the seeds of new social enterprises? Wouldn't that be exactly the building blocks of Society 3.0? And could this perspective turn out to be the ultimate invitation to initiate as much 'civil summits' as possible?

Are you involved in a group activity that behaves like a learning community?

What would you do first if you were asked to be the CFO of such a learning community?

What are the possibilities to further develop into a social enterprise, serving the wider community?

Are you eager to initiate an AI summit within your local community?

What do you need to be a successful CFO in your own neighbourhood?

Team Meetings at 50/50

You don't have to read a lot of words to appreciate the following theory, but it may take you some time to really implement it within daily organizational practice...

This is the concept I would like to suggest for business meetings in general and more specifically for management team meetings; spend the first half of the allocated meeting time on becoming inclusive. The other half of the time will prove to be sufficient for finishing the complete meeting agenda.

The idea behind this has to do with the word 'inclusive'. When inclusive, the members of a meeting are equal owners of the meeting objectives and subsequent agenda. And if they are equal owners, they can decide what points need serious attention and consideration and which points can be trusted to one of the team members.

It's all about trust. If there's complete trust in the organization, the team members might easily consider reducing their meetings to the first half...

And if you have found the time to appreciate all previous chapters of this book, you already know what it needs for people to become inclusive. Besides, we use the 50/50 concept already in most of our private meetings, won't you agree?

Does this 50/50 concept appeal to you?

What is needed to introduce the concept within your organization?

When do you foresee the first opportunity to experiment?

What would work for you and your team members to become inclusive?

How would it feel to be the CFO of such an effective team meeting?

AI the Montessori way

Does the educational method according to Maria Montessori sound familiar to you? It was founded more than a hundred years ago. The method is seen in specific so-called Montessori schools. But the principles behind it are seen in all kinds of regular education. The main principle is to *facilitate* the learning process, not to *manage* the content. The pupils and students – mostly children – are regarded self responsible and co-creative. They are stimulated and trusted to choose the learning subject that appeals to them at that specific moment. It's not a free exercise. In fact, learning objectives – that what has to be achieved at the end of the school year – are very clear. But the way they are realized, differs from student to student. The Montessori way creates classrooms where children work independently in a gentle atmosphere, with the teacher acting as 'chief facilitating officer'. The often heard Montessori-slogan is *Teach them to do it themselves*. How generative does that sound? How appreciative is that toward the children?

Perhaps you like the Montessori type of CFO? Allow me to share two recent experiences in this respect.

The quality improvement team of a small city council approached me to support their preparation for a workshop with the city council management team, in order to present their findings about opportunities for further improvement. The idea was to really involve the MT and invite them to accept co-ownership of the next steps. It was known that the chair of the MT was interested in Appreciative Inquiry. From the moment we started to work on this preparation, it was clear to us all that I wouldn't play any role within that upcoming workshop. So, my challenge was to prepare the quality team members themselves to be the 'appreciative CFO'. This turned out to be easier than I thought. Together we designed a workshop scenario according to the steps of a mini AI summit. Apparently, my AI style of supporting the team in this, seemed sufficient for them to 'copy' my behavior. As a team, they felt quite confident to facilitate the MT workshop. In fact, it became a very constructive and effective session, as I heard afterwards.

When we celebrated the opening of our social enterprise the Appreciative Inquiry Academy, our AI100-alumnus Jonny was one of the speakers. The way he introduced himself, by asking quiz questions about his own preferences, highly amused the audience. They also embraced Jonny's story about how Appreciative Inquiry had positively influenced the social workers within the large city council department where Jonny fulfilled an organization development role. He showed the maximum Montessori effect, when he told us that he, only few years previously an AI student himself, had developed an AI training within his organization and regularly performed as an AI trainer and facilitator.

A 6th Discipline?

Have you ever experienced the Montessori effect:

- a. in the sense that you once learned something and are now teaching the same to others?
- b. in the sense that you taught something to someone and he/she now is teaching that to others?

In your professional life, when asked to give a presentation or facilitate a workshop, did you ever consider enabling and facilitating others to do the job?

Which opportunities do you see, to 'embed Montessori' in your practices?

Dear mister Senge, I admire your work. After more than ten years, the book *Presence* which you co-created, is still in my top-10 list of most inspiring books. As a co-creator of learning organizations myself, I'm happy to have your bestseller *The 5th Discipline* on my bookshelf, including the field book. Because I think there is a strong relationship between Appreciative Inquiry and Learning Organizations, your five Learning Disciplines deserve to be memorized in this respect:

1. Shared Vision
2. Mental Models
3. Personal Mastery
4. Team Learning
5. Systems Thinking

For me, these five represent a powerful foundation for organizational learning. For quite some time now, the following question is puzzling me: "Are these five disciplines sufficient?"

What does it take for an organization to really show collective performance?
What would you think of a 6th Discipline called "Inclusive Doing"?

I'm just asking...

The Circle Way

Sometimes, it doesn't need more than an inspiring title to seduce me to participate in a training or workshop. Like *What Words Want*, a two day training I jumped into, and where I learned the word 'performative'. (The letters WAIC have a similar effect on me, I just have to go there...) When someone suggested I follow a four-day practicum called *The Circle Way*, at that very moment I knew that I would attend. And I'm still very happy with that intuitive decision.

Please consider reading this book: *The Circle Way, a Leader in Every Chair*. Besides being very accessible and having been 'performative' written, the authors Ann Linnea and Christina Baldwin really practice what they preach. I had the chance to experience and admire them as facilitators of this four-day practicum. From the moment I practiced the Circle principles I knew, that this could only enrich my AI practice.

What's the general idea of *The Circle Way*? Imagine ancient dark nights, a diversity of travellers, gathered around a campfire, staring at the flames and listening to each others' stories. Now, transfer this setting to our present situation. The speaking is intentionally, the listening is deep and every verbal and nonverbal contribution serves the wellbeing of all people present. There's a check-in, there's hosting and there's a guardian – in fact everyone is a guardian – to assure that the quality of the communication still serves the central purpose. A beautiful summary of *The Circle Way* principles can be found – in twenty languages – on www.peerspirit.com.

There's a leader in every chair. This is beyond CFO. Circle participants all become CFO's of the process, that is both inclusive and appreciative. AI practitioners should be aware of *The Circle Way* and vice versa. And hopefully, this chapter will contribute to that.

Now, imagine a certain Circle-activity called 'a round of appreciation'. Preferably this is situated at the end of a group session. It rests on the high level of trust and mutual understanding that *The Circle Way* is able to produce. Imagine you are in that circle. When someone stands up to speak, it's for sharing a sincere personal appreciation, through mentioning an admirable quality of you. One by one, your circle peers send their deepest reflections to you. Can you imagine how that would feel? And what would happen when during that round of appreciation, every circle participant is 'treated' the same way? Pure love. Yes, it will take quite some time to fulfill the complete circle with this intense exercise. Very valuable time, wouldn't you agree?

Do you want to be the CFO of Love?

Please try this at home and at work.

A Circling Experience

Through all the appreciative inquiries in this book until this one, we've come a long way. From a purely personal AI-approach towards practising AI within the organizational context. When you have the opportunity to serve as CFO in a group AI process, the desired and probable outcome is inclusiveness; the participants have grown closer to each other. This is the ideal moment for a finishing exercise in which everyone is invited to 'feel organization'. I'd like to thank Erik, founder of 'Touching the Community Soul', for he is the one who made me experience this for the first time.

Make sure the location you are working in, has sufficient room to form a complete circle of all participants. By now, you have reached the end of a fruitful, constructive event. Ask the participants to form a human circle. Explain that you would like the participants to 'experience organization' and for that, ask them to start a gentle 'rocking' (shifting their body weight from one foot to the other and back again). Because there's still some space between the participants, this rocking can be done without limitations, everyone is moving in his or her own private space. Being the CFO, you can suggest that this kind of moving together resembles the 'ordinary' organisation, where everybody moves, but the whole system lacks connectivity. Then you ask all circle members to step forward, further and further, until everyone stands literally shoulder-to-shoulder. After some additional CFO effort, there should no longer be any space between the participants. They are fully connected. Now ask them to start rocking again. This turns out to be more difficult. Suggest the participants to try and follow the general collective movement. How can they contribute to the whole? Have patience, CFO! Note that, for a smooth movement, the person on the opposite side of the circle moves to the right when you yourself move to the left. This suggestion might be helpful. At some point, the whole circle will be rocking completely coherently. This may be explained as an organization 'in sync'.

Ask the participants to keep on moving this way. It feels nice, it feels inclusive again. This is the time to invite the participants one by one to reflect in one word on the proceedings of the event..

Can you imagine such a final circle exercise?

Would you be the CFO of this synchronized circle?

What's your idea of a smooth performing organization?

What is in fact your view on 'organization'?

Are you ready for the last part of this book: Encountering Complexity?

10 ENCOUNTERING COMPLEXITY

The Organization as a Whole

I owe an apology to Ben Tiggelaar, a famous Dutch management consultant, speaker and writer of very successful management literature. He doesn't know me. A few years ago, he facilitated a conference called *MBA in one day, summarizing eight meters of management books*. In a small blog, I criticized him for being disrespectful to the complexity of management and organization. (Maybe I envied him for the thousands of participants he succeeded to sell a ticket to.) Nevertheless, if he knew I was facilitating a one day lecture called '*The Complexity of Organizational Interventions*', he would certainly be allowed to express the same criticism.

I'm referring to the last module of our AI100 course. For the sake of 'organizational awareness' – most of our AI-students perform their study project within an organization – it's my hope and desire that a few new insights can also help them to be a little bit more successful in their approach. In fact, this whole part *10 Encountering Complexity* is quite fragmentary, hoping to raise awareness, or curiosity about what organizations are about. And, quoting H.H. Dalai Lama, I too can only provide 'half the knowledge'.

To give you an impression of this one day lecture on the complexity of interventions, let me take you through the provisional agenda. It is based on the following questions.

- How am I doing today and how does that affect my behavior?
- Who am I to study this organization, or even try to change it?
- When I study the organization and write down my findings, are they 'real'?
- How do I approach the organization and step into their discourse?
- How do I train myself to look at an organization 'as a whole'?
- How do I observe what I see?
- What literature can be of additional help?

You are about to read the last series of appreciative inquiries in this book. They all refer to organizational context and organization development. Let me say this about it; perhaps you'd better not try these at home, but rather please try it at work.

How are you doing today, and how does that affect your behavior?

Who are you to study your organization, or even to try to change it?

When you would study your organization and write down your findings, are they 'real'?

How do you approach your organization, and step into their discourse?

How do you train yourself to look at an organization 'as a whole'?

How do you observe what you see?

What literature helps you further?

#093

Values of Organization

Marcel van Marrewijk is not only my friend, but also co-founder and one of the engines of our AI100 course. His scholarship combined with his constructive research capabilities, is an enrichment for our students. Within AI100, Marcel facilitates one of the fundamental modules regarding research and self-assessment. If we want to make a difference in organizations we have to be capable of reviewing ourselves as well as reviewing the effects of our interventions. For both subjects Marcel uses his profound knowledge of value systems as introduced by professor Clare Graves. See also #030.

From this point, Marcel invites our students to translate individual value systems into organizational value systems. Within the perspective of Appreciative Inquiry this of course acts as an instrument for organizational development, and aims for the AI-student to learn a language in order to understand the diversity in types of organization. Do you remember the colours? Please imagine: the purple Clan organization, the red Power driven organization, the blue Bureaucratic system, the orange Market driven business, the green Professional team, the yellow Learning network and the turquoise Holistic organization. A valuable set of spectacles when looking at organizations, wouldn't you agree?

In his masterpiece *The Cubrix*, Marcel redefines 'change management' into both a profound and practical method. Although the theory of value systems suggests transformational growth towards the next level, transformation as such is not always the right strategy for organizational development. It's just one of four strategies, only applicable when an organization is really ready for the next step. In some cases the organization has to be shaken up, back to normal procedure, back to 'as it should be'. This is what Marcel calls Vitalising. When the right things are happening, but not always in the right manner, the organization should be Optimized. You can imagine that interventions for Vitalising are quite different from interventions for Optimizing. Another change strategy is called Re-orienting, which is applicable when the organization is running well, but should focus on doing new things. So only one out of four change strategies, Transforming, is about stepping towards a complete next level. Whether it be students, or scholars or consultants, Marcel provides them with considerations that should be taken seriously when supporting organizations in their need or necessity to change. Please spread the word.

Back to the organism called yourself...

Are your signals suggesting you to focus on Vitalising?

Which of your activities deserve a bit of Optimizing?

Will you spare the time to Re-orientate yourself?

And what about Transformation, until which level are you willing to transform?

#094 Beyond Excellence

If we are to intervene into organizations, there's such a thing as 'organic growth' and there's such a thing as 'dream perspective'.

The following story is told. It's 18th July 1955. A party is going on. It's the official opening of the first Disneyland. The twenty attractions are magic. The large pink colored castle can be admired from every viewpoint. Mickey Mouse is busy shaking hands with everyone present. Next to Walt Disney's grandson, the journalist says: "What a pity that your late grandfather can't see all this." The grandson answers: "If my grandpa hadn't seen this, it wouldn't have been here."

Being an organizational idealist, I can only hope for a 3.0 kind of Appreciative Inquiry to be of any support for organizations and communities to further their development. I sincerely hope that '3.0 behaviour' can facilitate us to reach the 'level 4 listening' as mentioned in Appreciative Inquiry #075. Within the perspective of organizational development, there are few people already describing a next level that is possible to live up to and contribute to the dynamic challenges of our fast approaching future. Joseph Jaworski is one of them. By quoting a few parts of his book *Source*¹, I hope you'll get hungry to learn more about his profound views on 'emerging organizations'. The chapter I'm referring to, is titled *Scaffolding Stage 4 Organizations*.

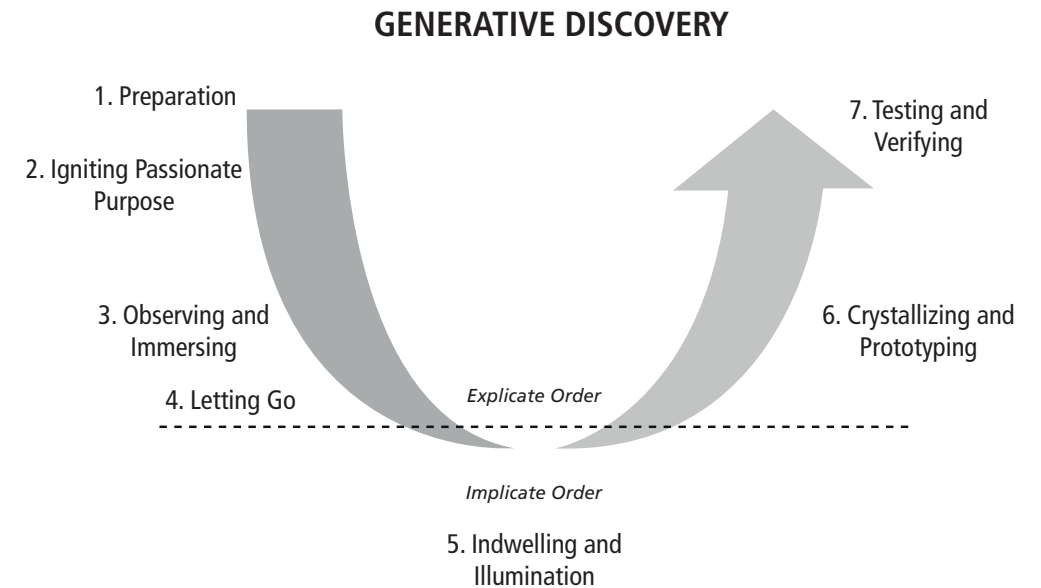
(Mentioning the Source where these quotes come from is quite easy, I would say...)

[...] Our institutions are facing profound change and rising complexity, accelerating at a scale, intensity, and speed never experienced before. [...]

[...] To succeed in this new environment, institutional leadership must pay attention to the tacit Source of Knowledge, the deep Source from which profound innovation occurs. Organizations led by people with this quality of knowing, from line leaders to the very top, will flourish in the decades to come. Because of their success, they will become 'living examples' of what is possible in the face of accelerating complexity and high turbulence. These Stage IV organizations will play a leading role in establishing a more comprehensive worldview, a belief system adequate for civilization to rise above the challenges of our time. [...]

¹ Source – *The Inner Path of Knowledge Creation* by Joseph Jaworski

[...] seven practices are key to the advancement of an organization to Stage IV as well as to the creation of knowledge that enables the enterprise to perform at exceptional levels [...] together forming the advanced version of the U-process, called Generative Discovery [...]



(Source: SOURCE)

What is your generative discovery after reading the aforementioned text?

#095

Focus Your Vision

How do you generally look at 'organization'? Do you experience a specific aspect? Is it possible for you to see 'the whole picture in perspective'? Warning: this appreciative inquiry can result in a strange, tiring effect on your eyes. The result of it however, can be marvellous.

Do you drive a car? Remember driving when you were practising to get your driver's licence? How did you look through the windscreen? Did you focus on other cars, traffic lights or people crossing the street? Are you an experienced driver today? Is it possible that you sometimes pass an intersection with traffic lights, and afterwards can't remember whether they were actually green? And does it still make you feel comfortable? That can very well be possible because of the fact that the way you look at the circumstances is like 'seeing the whole'. In doing that, you are actually not focussing on a specific object. Your eyes are pointing somewhere 'in between', seeing nothing in specific, and by that a lot more information – about the whole picture – can enter your brain. (When you do this on a lazy chair in the afternoon sun, this kind of seeing would be called 'staring' or 'gazing'.) Do you get the picture?

Many people advice you to focus. Managers ask their co-workers to focus. Focus on what? If you focus on one specific aspect, you will miss the rest, the circumstances, others, the perspective. Even the dentist should not be focused just on the drilling of one tooth. However you will feel more comfortable when the dentist's whole picture is not wider than you and you alone... My guess is that the real craftsmen¹ – who do things well because they can – are able to combine concentration on the work and eye for the circumstances, and would call that 'focus'.

And now for the exercise called 'stereoscopic 3D viewing'. Consider the two pictures below. Normally, your eyes focus on one of them and switch between the two, or you could focus on the bar between the pictures. I can promise you that if you succeed – and that might take some serious effort and strain your ocular muscles – you will be able to merge the two pictures into a really spectacular three dimensional view. Almost as if you really can look behind the corner of the street. The core technique is that the 'beams' of your eyes should not cross at this page, but somewhere before or somewhere behind this page... Put the picture in front of your eyes and try to free – to detach – both your eyes

¹ Further reading: *The Craftsman* by Richard Sennett

² <http://www.iris-digital.org/wordpress/?p=1076>

from focussing together. Try to direct your left eye to the picture on the left and the right eye to the picture on the right. Perhaps you'll see the big picture... For further exercises, please search the Internet for more practical guidelines².

Why am I telling you all this? Because organizations deserve to be viewed and reviewed as 'the whole picture'. Because we only can constructively work and live together when we are willing and able to see the larger picture. However strange this may seem, this is part of the lesson our AI100 students follow, to improve their skills regarding 'the complexity of organizational interventions'.



The title of this appreciative inquiry refers to a beautiful movie called *Focus Your Vision*. At the end of our tiresome exercises in 'seeing the whole picture', we sit down, relax and watch this 20 minute video. Dewitt Jones is a professional photographer who works for National Geographic. His preparations for making 'that one beautiful picture' are more than thorough. Het tells us how to look at the world, how to find a story and how to tell it in one picture. Dewitt Jones has an amazing way of seeing, viewing, looking and observing. First, it looks like the movie is explaining to you how to focus on a detail. Then, he makes clear that the details are in the preparation and observation process itself. The surprising insight at the end of the movie is that focussing has to do with zooming in and zooming out...

How do you look at the things and people around you?

What is the larger picture around your (professional) activities?

How could your organization profit from 'soft focus'?

If you see the 'whole picture' how do you invite others to do the same?

Did your 'stereoscopic efforts' result in the magnificent 3D-view I promised?

Entering the Discourse

So you're about to visit the organization you've been invited to. Invited to observe what they are doing and how they do it, and to perhaps think of some suggestions for improvement. Let's consider you are in a good mood and your mind is fresh. Ready for a fine bit of exploring.

Imagine doctor Livingstone, the man who travelled to the inner parts of Africa, a real explorer. Imagine hidden somewhere in the forest, a small village of people, doing their daily things. Following the sounds or rising smoke, doctor Livingstone, dressed in his typical white suit and a hat on his head, approaches the village very gently; he's naturally curious of course, because of the fact he is a researcher. He sticks his head through the trees and enters the village, being very friendly in his gestures and as a result receives a very warm welcome. He can stay within that community for some days. And afterwards Livingstone writes a detailed report.

What exactly does that report tell us?

Does it tell us what doctor Livingstone saw happening in that village?

Does it tell us what people in that village are used to do?

Does it give us the full objective picture?

Is this what research is all about?

Re-think these questions.

In my opinion Livingstone's report describes – in his vocabulary, influenced by his physical health and state of mind when writing – his personal view on how the people behave in their village ... when having a strange visitor in a white suit among them.

Remember appreciative inquiry #017 introducing Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle? Things tend to change when being observed, because of being observed. Could this also be the case with that village and with the 'objective' researcher doctor Livingstone? Could this also be a point of attention for you as a researcher entering this new client organization? Could it be the case that not only the organization changes its behaviour when you enter it, but that you are changing yourself when researching it? So, where does that take us?

Did you notice any possible change in your opinion by reading this appreciative inquiry?

Has this appreciative inquiry changed because you have read it?

Organizational Acupuncture

Starting about five years ago, I experienced three severe pulses of pain around my stomach and chest. The hospital emergency room and I first thought I had a heart attack. But after the diagnostic tests my heart turned out to be okay. The probable cause for my suffering was 'heavy dining' and subsequent stomach problems, causing the pain to spread all over the chest. When the pain had faded away the next day and tests had been done I was declared healthy again. After the third episode, the doctor suggested to look further and sent me out for an X-ray. And there it was: a serious stone in my gall bladder. So there was a relationship with heavy food, causing the bladder to produce extra gall, causing the stone to move and get stuck in the entrance channel of the bladder, causing this painful colic. After this diagnosis, the medical merry-go-round picked up speed. And before I knew it, I was three days before surgery; my gall bladder had to be removed. By chance, I had a conversation with my client and good friend Nico Broersen, founder of People4Earth. And he said: "Cees, are you sure?"

Nico said: "I know people who have had their gallbladder removed, and they are still having problems. And I know people that have gone for alternative treatments, who still have gallstones, but without complaints." I cancelled the operation. I went to see the doctor, educated in western as well as eastern medicine, who already freed some of my children from the discomforts of hay fever, just by one acupuncture treatment. We talked for an hour about energy, mood, the effects of removing body parts – I had never spoken to a doctor for more than ten minutes – and afterwards I returned for two rounds of acupuncture. As a result of that, together with a somewhat healthier lifestyle, and with a daily spoon of curcuma in my morning coffee, I'm free of colics for already three years now. I don't even feel the stone anymore, and I sometimes get the impression that it has disappeared... There's more to this story. But it's sufficient as an introduction to my newly gained insight called 'complementary consultancy'.

Curious as I am, when sitting in my doctors chair with a lot of thin needles tickling me, I asked what acupuncture is all about. This is what I derived from her explanation. Modern western medicine focuses on the repair of broken parts, like organs. Eastern medicine sees the human system as a whole, and acknowledges that there is an in-between in which all organs rest, and by which all organs are connected through energy channels. When the energy between certain organs is not flowing like it should be, this causes an imbalance, and dysfunctionality. The remedy lies not within the organs, but in between. The needles are meant to stimulate the energy to flow again, thus bringing back the balance. I'm sure that my doctor would suggest some corrections in this interpretation, but my story is just for the sake of ... the organizational parallel that struck me.

Imagine an organization as a whole. Of course there are departments to distinguish. Sometimes 'modern consultancy' is assigned to optimize the productivity of one of those departments. Perhaps causing an imbalance in the relationships with other departments. Isn't it the main purpose of all parts of an organization to stay connected? If we were consultants to the organization, shouldn't our interventions be better focused on the energy between the departments? Dear potential client organization, please invite me to wander around your organization. Allow me to sense the quality of interactions between departments and co-workers, and to intervene where there's need for balancing the energy, for improving the quality of the interactions and for enabling the constructive dialogue. Let me help your organization improve as a whole, just by acting in the in-betweens. Your own co-workers are perfectly capable to do the rest. What would a consultancy practice along the lines of organizational acupuncture look like? Complementary medicine inspires complementary consultancy...

If any, what was the best organizational intervention you ever experienced?

What do you recall about the energy, the ownership, the communication, during that intervention?

Do you see the 'energy channels' in your organization? Is the energy flow in balance?

When improvement is needed, what is the best you can do to help?

Thanks to Eric Koenen, a profound management and organization expert and well known in the AI community, I was introduced to a peculiar piece of music called Canto Ostinato, composed by Simeon ten Holt. Most of the performances are played on four wing pianos. There's definitely a pattern behind this composition. At the same time, the duration of the performance can differ between one and sometimes six hours of play. Eric explained that the partiture doesn't give the exact notes to play, but is more like a general master plan, a guideline for the musicians to make their own story. And because there are usually four piano players, you can see them constantly observing each other to – wordlessly – communicate how and when to proceed. It's magnificent! I can listen to it for hours – it stimulates my brain. In fact, while writing this book, the Canto Ostinato is playing in the background. But others can get slightly anxious... so I've heard. Eric uses this in his workshops as a beautiful metaphor for co-creation, for leadership versus management, for empowerment of co-workers, for the way masterplans should be constructed, for the way teamwork can be like...

After some time it struck me that I was not listening to a metaphor of organization anymore; I was actually listening to organization itself. I heard different voices, sometimes in tune, sometimes loud, sometimes overwhelming, sometimes comforting and continuously producing. When I can, I ask my students to carefully listen to the first few minutes of the piece. You don't need to be a musical expert to hear a 'dissonant' presenting itself. Like a co-worker that is asking critical questions. You can hear a conversation taking place, followed by a discussion. There's always inclusiveness. The dissonant is not neglected, it seems more like the dissonant is still in connection; his or her voice is welcome within the whole of voices. And then, after a minute or two, there's a subtle change in the conversation. Discussion slides gently into dialogue. The dissonant has become part of the whole. The music feels more harmonic than before. A new situation has arisen, by the contribution of conversation partners that shared their voice, that suspended their point of view and that enabled collective meaning to emerge. Is this what music can do? Or is this what people are capable of, thereby inspiring a musical composer like Simeon ten Holt?

If you listen to the Canto Ostinato, what do you hear?

If you listen to the Canto Ostinato, what do you see?

If you listen to the Canto Ostinato, what do you feel?

If you listen to the Canto Ostinato, what do you imagine?

After you have listened to the Canto Ostinato, what are you going to do?

#099

The 'Quotes'

Thinking about the last World Appreciative Inquiry Conference, in Ghent in 2012, gives me warm feelings again. The motto of that conference was *Towards an 'Economy' of Connecting Strengths*. At that time, I wrote the following column.

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 for the 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 a member of the WAIC2012 Media Crew seemed a logical next step; above all it was a great honour and a pleasure for 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?" O 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 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?

Appreciative Inquiry is also about making language generic and constructive, guiding us in the 'constructive direction'. How precise are you, with respect to title descriptions (or the text in your Email subject line)? Do you agree that first lines (e.g. in invitations) can make a change and that therefore the quality has to be taken in consideration? Do you feel free to suggest alternative words or phrases, in the text of others? Please do, and do it gentle.

Do you recall a situation in which you really showed an 'eye for detail'?
What does a headline or motto or title need in order for it to be powerful?
How do you prefer to share your 'criticisms' regarding a suggested text?

Sometimes you hear colleagues speak about their organization in terms of “they should” or “they won’t”. Do you recognize this kind of ‘detachment’? Apparently, these people do not feel very included in their own organization, for whatever reason that may be. It would be much better for both the person and his or her organization, if he or she would speak in terms of “We”. My guess is that some people really have forgotten that they are a part or a co-maker of their organizations. Is it possible to do anything to help them remember this? To remember that there’s a difference between being a spectator, a participant and a partaker? And that anyone can choose to accept one of those roles?

When such a situation occurs to me – and when I feel that it is a good moment to comment on it – the Dutch vocabulary is very helpful. On a whiteboard I wrote the following sentence:

“Ik (b)en mijn organisatie.” or “Ik *en* mijn organisatie / Ik *ben* mijn organisatie.”

Translated into English, it says “I *and* my organization / I *am* my organization”. (It’s good to replace ‘my organization’ by the actual ‘name of the organization’.)

In my experience, these few subtle words can start a fruitful conversation...

How about you and your organization?

When and how were you a spectator?

When and how were you a participant?

When and how were you a partaker?

How are you going to be within your organization?

How do you encounter, or even enter, an organization where you are asked to make a difference, but where they want you to be the same as they are? How do you say the words you want to say, and speak as if another person is speaking? I gratefully memorized a master of language, Michel Foucault, and used to read the following text with my students when we were studying ‘the complexity of organizational interventions’. These are the first words that Foucault spoke, during his inaugural lecture at the Collège de France, 2 December 1970. I hope you will appreciate this...

“I wish I could have slipped surreptitiously into the discourse which I must present today, and into the ones I shall have to give here, perhaps for many years to come. I should have preferred to be enveloped by speech, and carried away well beyond all possible beginnings, rather than have to begin it myself. I should have preferred to become aware that a nameless voice was already speaking long before me, so that I should only have needed to join in, to continue the sentence it had started and lodge myself, without really being noticed, in its interstices, as if it had signalled to me by pausing, for an instant, in suspense. Thus there would be no beginning, and instead of being the one from whom discourse proceeded, I should be at the mercy of its chance unfolding, a slender gap, the point of its possible disappearance.

I should have liked there to be a voice behind me which had begun to speak a very long time before, doubling in advance everything I am going to say, a voice which would say: ‘You must go on, I can’t go on, you must go on, I’ll go on, you must say words, as long as there are any, until they find me, until they say to me, strange pain, strange sin, you must go on, perhaps it’s done already, perhaps they have said to me already, perhaps they have carried me to the threshold of my story, before the door that opens on my story, that would surprise me, if it opens.’

I think a good many people have a similar desire to be freed from the obligation to begin, a similar desire to be on the other side of discourse from the outset, without having to consider from the outside what might be strange, frightening, and perhaps maleficent about it. To this very common wish, the institution’s reply is ironic, since it solemnises beginnings, surrounds them with a circle of attention and silence, and imposes ritualised forms on them, as if to make them more easily recognisable from a distance.

Desire says: ‘I should not like to have to enter this risky order of discourse; I should not like to be involved in its peremptoriness and decisiveness; I should like it to be

Organizations are People

all around me like a calm, deep transparency, infinitely open, where others would fit in with my expectations, and from which truths would emerge one by one; I should only have to let myself be carried, within it and by it, like a happy wreck.’ The institution replies: ‘You should not be afraid of beginnings; we are all here in order to show you that discourse belongs to the order of laws, that we have long been looking after its appearances; that a place has been made ready for it, a place which honours it but disarms it; and that if discourse may sometimes have power, nevertheless it is from us and us alone that it gets it.’

But perhaps this institution and this desire are nothing but two contrary replies to the same anxiety; anxiety about what discourse is in its material reality as a thing pronounced or written; anxiety about this transitory existence which admittedly is destined to be effaced, but according to a time-scale which is not ours; anxiety at feeling beneath this activity (despite its greyness and ordinariness) powers and dangers that are hard to imagine; anxiety at suspecting the struggles, victories, injuries, dominations and enslavements, through so many words even though long usage has worn away their roughness.

What, then, is so perilous in the fact that people speak, and that their discourse proliferates to infinity? Where is the danger in that?

Here is the hypothesis which I would like to put forward tonight in order to fix the terrain – or perhaps the very provisional theatre – of the work I am doing: that in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality. [...] ”

So... how would you choose your words when your aim is to facilitate a critical audience to reflect on their daily behaviour, to becoming open to self-development?

Normally songs are about people
This is a song about organizations
But the thing is, how we see it:
Organizations are People!

The shareholder's calling, you'd better pick up
It is your last warning, the price must go up
He wants a decision, without any doubt
Six hundred to fire, and there's no way out

You must keep it simple, it's all about focus
So you get it done soon, without hocus pocus
And that's how you manage, with slight hesitation
Just try to forget it, on your next long vacation

Hey big C.E.O.
Come follow your heart
(and) manage the whole
instead of the parts

But focus is narrow, and the business complex
So much for the planning, you don't know what's next
It's all about people, and panoptical gaze
Communication; you will be amazed

Search for coherence, it sometimes exists
Words are much clearer compared to your fist
Make co-workers happy, because in the end
The firm runs itself, without management

Hey big C.E.O.
Come follow your heart
(and) manage the whole
instead of the parts

Learning as a Primary Process

Search for coherence, it sometimes exists
Words are much clearer compared to your fist
Make co-workers happy, because in the end
The firm runs itself, without management

Hey big C.E.O.
Come follow your heart
(and) manage the whole
instead of the parts

Please feel free to add music to these lyrics and turn it into a real song...

Besides being a fan of Appreciative Inquiry, I am a fan of learning organizations. More specifically, I contribute to the further professional development of in-company academies. The idea is that an in-house academy can perfectly fulfil a role as a ‘partner in organization development’, and that implies a significant number of further steps than being a local training department.

In that perspective, a very acceptable question is: “Why should we upgrade our training department into an academy?” When asked this question, I take the liberty to suggest a quite controversial theorem, when I say: “Because the most important process of your company, of any company, is its learning process. That’s why learning and development needs the intense attention and support by an in-company academy.”

During management presentations I tend to introduce my theorem by asking the audience: “What do you consider your most important process?” When they represent a hospital, they answer: “Caring for our patients.”. When they are managing a shoe factory, they say: “Producing shoes.” And again I will produce this strange statement: “Thanks for your answers, but there’s a process still more important: the learning process. And, being a mathematician, I even can prove this to you.” Because a theorem wants to be proven. Here it comes.

“Today’s delivery of the right products and services is of course for today the most important process. Therefore, delivery of tomorrow’s right products and services will for tomorrow be the most important process. At a certain moment in time, the products and services of tomorrow will have been innovated compared to the products and services of today. Therefore, it’s important for an organization to be able to provide the innovation power to assure that tomorrow’s products and services will suit the right demands. This is more important than to suit the demands of today, because when it’s tomorrow, today’s process isn’t important anymore. So, the process that assures that the products and services of tomorrow will be better or different than today’s ones – we call this the organizational learning process – is more important than today’s production process. And if it’s the case that for today the learning process is more important than the supposed primary process, then tomorrow this is also the case. In my opinion this proves that the learning process in an organization is at least as important as its primary process and needs at least the same amount of attention.”

What does your organization consider its primary or most important processes?

What amount of attention goes towards learning and developing?

What do you consider your own most important process?

Humanization of Organization

It happened at the intimate opening of the Appreciative Inquiry Academy, including the pre-presentation of this book for a Dutch audience. Afterwards we had a nice dinner and I found myself sitting next to Erik, one of the participants of our fourth AI100 cohort. We talked about the organizational circumstances within the assurance company he works for. Being an information management consultant, he faced a complete restructuring of the division. He asked himself how his developing of AI-competencies could already be of help, where the change was only a month away. We fully agreed that this only would represent the new structure, giving enough room for AI-practices to support the further development. At some point in our conversation Erik shared his concern about how the new departments were going to be called; in Dutch 'zuil' (meaning 'pillar') what could be translated best into 'silo'. We both felt that only the use of that title could cause fragmentation between 'silo's' instead of co-operation (which was the general idea behind the restructuring). Do you share our concern?

Happily, we went creative – and perhaps the wine helped us a little. We brainstormed about alternatives for 'department' or 'silo' or 'pillar'; alternatives that would contribute to the co-operation. First we came up with 'jigsaw piece', 'bridge', 'node' etcetera. We regarded those too 'artificial'. Suddenly, the word 'sail' fell in our laps. (Sail translated to Dutch is Zeil.) My association was that if you call a department a 'sail' then you can speak of 'wind in the sails' and 'the ship under full sail'. When Erik added that his company was the official sponsor of sailing competitions, sponsored an olympic yacht team, and that the whole building was decorated with sailing gear, we – at that dining table – were convinced that altering the Silo into Sail (in Dutch: Zuil – Zeil) could represent a success factor for the restructuring project. Erik took it as his personal mission to introduce this idea to the responsible persons and he knew that he had to act very cautiously.

While writing this chapter, I sincerely hope that Erik succeeded, and that his company embraced this new constructive vocabulary. For me this small conversation about the subtleties of organizational vocabulary is exemplary for my mission *Humanization of Organization*. If we are able to change our language we are able to change our organizations, and ourselves.

*Do you recall a small change in your vocabulary that had a great effect?
Where do you see chances for new vocabulary that can make a difference?
Will you please try this at home and at work?*

Much appreciated!

My first encounter with the company called Shuberg Philis was when their CEO held an impressive keynote speech at the WAIC2012 in Ghent. I remember that I appreciated their slogan *a company based on love* and that I wondered why I had never heard of this constructive and successful Dutch IT-company before.

Three years later our AI100 partner Loubna, apparently a friend of the Shuberg Philis crew, had invited two representatives Arthur and Mark, to attend our AI Academy launch party. I had constructive conversations and a personal click with both and we planned to inquire about forms of co-creation between their and our activities.

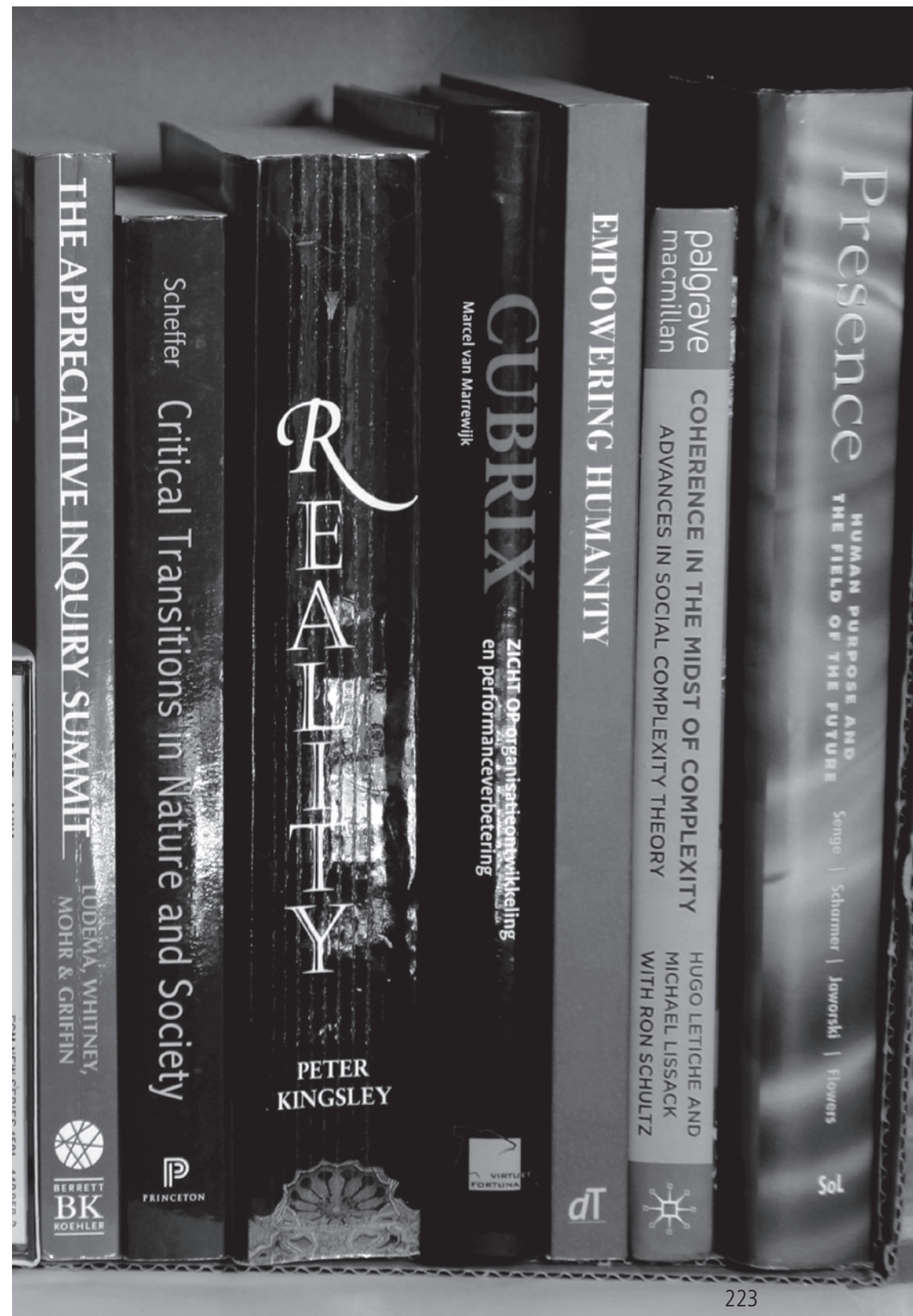
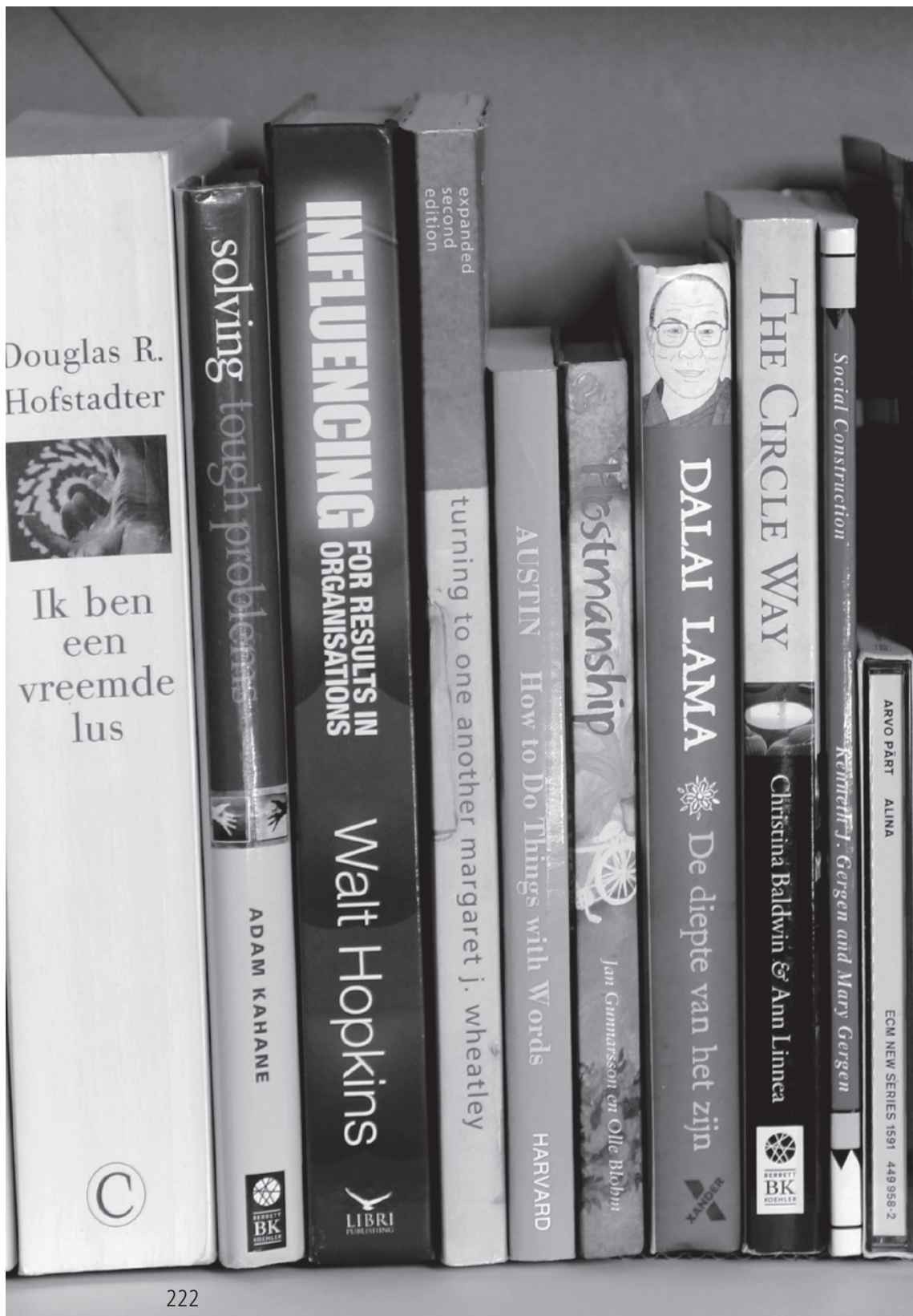
After having received constructive reflections on the preview sections of this book, I was still floating on my pink AI-cloud. In circumstances like this, it's quite easy to stay constructive and appreciative. Mark's insight brought my feet back on the ground in a way that made us laugh out loud. And I promised Mark that his wisdom would feed the last appreciative inquiry of my book. Here comes Marks lesson: "Please also embrace the IA." (And fill the I-A in with the sound a donkey makes.)

What Mark tried to explain is that we are not always as appreciative as we like to be. (I can confirm that.) In the best cases, you'll remember at the end of the day that you might have said something to someone, that probably harmed him or her. That was the I-A. Please acknowledge that you are sometimes IA and not AI. Don't blame yourself for not being perfect. You are human, aren't you? So, embrace those IA-reflections. Because, if they occur, that means that you are taking AI very seriously. Remember that there is always a next encounter, where you can turn your former IA into a generative AI. Much appreciated, Mark!

11

FURTHER READING





12 HAS PRESENCING A FUTURE?

My Book Review

Has Presencing a Future?

Peter Senge, C. Otto Scharmer, Joseph Jaworski, Betty Sue Flowers.

Presence, Human Purpose and the Field of the Future

Cambridge (USA): The Society for Organizational Learning, Inc., 2004.

ISBN 0-9742390-1-1, x + 289 pp.

Reviewed by Cees Hoogendijk, University of Humanistics, Utrecht, NL

Introduction

Asking a philosophy student to be critical is somewhat like asking a football player to hit the ball with the feet, wouldn't you agree? But asking the footballer to "read the match" (and take appropriate action) is really something. Wouldn't that be the right question for us students? With all due respect, my interpretation of the original assignment "write a critical book review" is as follows: "Read a book in such a state of openness that you actually read it (and then share your comments with us)". It is likely that our honorable professor deliberately used the word 'critical' in an attempt to shift our assumed subjectivity to assumed objectivity. But this is at least suggestive and it might end up being contra-productive. If criticism is to be our focus, then there would be less room for openness. Sometimes one word can give powerful direction, but sometimes too much direction. Within the context of this assignment I tend to consider 'critical review' a pleonasm! So, I prefer 'My book review'.

Since the subject of this review is amongst other qualifications to be categorized as 'a management book' – because managers should read it – we entered the field of CMS, Critical Management Studies. And yes, here is our pleonasm again! I need only to introduce the term "Non-Critical Management Studies" to make my point clear. What do managers produce? Instead of using one powerful word to create direction, most of the managers, especially in large organizations, together are responsible for the spread of loads of multi-diverse information packages. Instead of preparing their employees adequately for their respective jobs, they merely confuse the people. (What an interesting contradiction: Confucius and confused! Answering the question "What would you do when you were asked to rule the country?" Confucius said: "I would use the language correctly.") Less is more, more is less. Perhaps the non-message of the contemporary information-overload enables people in organizations to become more objective, more creative, more critical, more independent and more themselves. Why this reflection on Management Studies? It has everything to do with my preparation for this book review.

As I said, I don't need the word 'critical' in this book review assignment. Attending the one week PhD/DBA workshop already did the job, given its diversity of insights and

sources of knowledge. It urged me furthermore to study the history of insights, of grasping knowledge, of looking for truth, and of the quest towards human sense. My first action was re-reading – no, in fact spelling out – Jostein Gaarders *Sophies World*. And after that, I thought I had a storyline on philosophy across the centuries. But greater than any large company's intranet was the Internet, with its innumerable links to all philosophers. It did not only provide more background, it also gave more storylines. More views, more philosophers time tables, more philosophy subcategories, more philosophical themes. How about confusing? For now, I'm holding a sort of average view – let's say my average view – of the line along which the science of thinking and the thinking of science evolved. All this info was supposed to be helpful for me in interpreting the book that I chose. But alas. The book is whether or not scientific, according to which epistemologist one chooses. The book addresses rationalism as well as naturalism, so there are lots of philosophers to quote before or against. And last but not least, science is involved, of course with the appropriate scientists on the inside of the book. The authors don't find themselves quoting too much thinkers, so why should I in reviewing the book? Maybe, just maybe, the overload of philosophy data I consumed during the past weeks has brought me into a state of 'knowing nothing' which might allow me to be open and critical at the same time. I like what Jostein Gaarder said about philosophers: "They have to be always critical, but at the same time open to phenomena they hadn't thought of yet." This is where my review takes off. Before actually going into reviewing, first a summary of the book content to give an impression of what it is about.

About Parts and Wholes and Presencing within – Content and Story line

"Learning from the future as it emerges."

"Shift in awareness."

"A profound opening of the heart, carried into action."

"Essential quieting of the mind."

"To feel linked to ones highest future possibility and destiny."

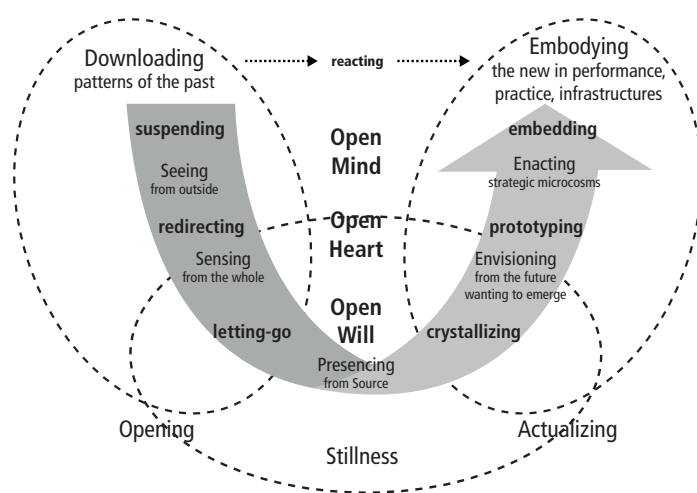


Figure 1: Theory U: Seven States and Capacities, Three Movements, One Process (from Otto Scharmer: *Theory U: Leading from the Emerging Future*, forthcoming: www.ottoscharmer.com)

These are some descriptions of 'presencing', or what happens at the bottom of Claus Otto Scharmers "U". (See figure 1.)

Scharmers 'Theory U', a learning curve going much deeper than the conventional known learning paths, forms both subject and object in the book.

Considering large organizations as new species, as living institutions, the introductory question is posed whether this deeper learning could become manifest as a collective phenomenon, bringing coherence amongst groups of people, which could be a way to influence global cultural and ecological improvement.

Part one "Learning to See" is about the left-side-down part of the U, the Sensing. It sometimes needs a requiem scenario, a confrontation with upcoming disaster, to start the learning curve. 'Seeing our seeing' is step one: our capacity to stop our habitual way of thinking and perceiving. David Bohm (*Wholeness and the Implicate Order*) called this "to hang your assumptions in front of you". This already takes courage, because it is anti-mainstream. 'Seeing from the whole' concerns the shift from the detached, outside view, to looking from the inside. This is seeing the process behind our seeing, giving focus on the source rather than the object. It brings you to seeing an organization as a living phenomenon, of which you are an indissoluble part. At the moment you see the parts out of the whole (instead of what we normally do: seeing the whole out of the parts) you feel that the whole has to make the shift. Examples are given of situations where this kind of synchronous awareness happened amongst teams in organizations. When Sensing, you are reaching a state of concentration, mindfulness, stillness. You are getting to a "don't know mind". It is also described as 'seeing with the heart'. The main questions are: "How can seeing the system in which we are trapped be empowering?" and "How can we learn to see from the whole?" Bringing together groups of people, committed to solve a 'tough problem', has shown Sensing experiences, as well as close encounters with nature have.

Part two "Into the Silence" deals with the bottom area of the U, the Presencing. First, the scenario story is posed as a powerful instrument for teams and organizations in preparing for their future. Examples are given from Shell (where Jaworski has been responsible for the strategic scenarios during the 1990's) and from leadership workshops in South Africa at the time apartheid was to be replaced by a new societal system. Scenarios in global corporations not only can prepare their manager to react more quickly on developments; they could perhaps even help shaping the future. At the time the collective stillness happened in groups, it was like martial arts, the inner knowing of what's the right thing to do. "There is an emerging future that depends on us." After Sensing, becoming one with the situation, comes Presencing, allowing the inner knowledge to emerge, in a state of totally forgetting oneself, to acknowledge being a servant, a change agent. This is where the shift really takes place, and after which the Realizing can begin: bringing something new – although it might have been there already – into reality, in a conviction that the self and the environment are interconnected. Letting go and letting come, it is like things start to happen by themselves. Like in the detailed example of the healthcare situation in a Frankfurt region, where patients and doctors started a dialogue (facilitated by Scharmer): the community came to the conclusion that they *were* the system. Patients started to help

the doctors to become unleashed from their constraints. Afterwards, when Scharmer tried to find out what happened at the collective shift, people told it was like a wedding, a feeling of deep connectedness.

Part three “Becoming a Force of Nature” goes into the right-side-up area of the U, the Realizing. “How do we get a ‘contract’ with our environment in realizing this highest future potential?” Senge and Jaworski recall a leadership convention, where deep coherence arose, resulting in a statement called the Marblehead Letter. (See text frame.)

THE MARBLEHEAD LETTER

A natural agenda of issues is shaping the future, especially for corporations with global scope

- **The social divide:** the everwidening gap between those participating in the increasingly interdependent global economy and those not. *How long can 15% of the people get 85% of the benefits of globalization?*
- **Redefining growth:** economic growth based on ever increasing material use and discard is inconsistent with a finite world. *How long can we keep piling up more junk in the same box?*
- **Variety and inclusiveness:** developing inclusion as a core competence in increasingly multi-cultural organizations. *Who is the “we”?*
- **Attracting talented people and realizing their potential:** developing commitment in a world of “free agents” and “volunteer” talent. *What are we committed to, really?*
- **The role of the corporation:** extending the traditional role of the corporation, especially the global corporation, to be more commensurate with its impact. *Just how accountable will society expect us to be?*
- **The system seeing itself:** the challenges of coordination and coherence in social systems. *How can we stop going faster while our ability to see further ahead is decreasing?*

June 2001

Scharmer and Flowers also recalled conferences where the group didn’t reach the state of presencing. They agree that the venue of the convention and the toughness of the problem are important enablers for the process. Out of his interviews with 150 acknowledged world leaders and thinkers, Scharmer distilled something he calls ‘crystallizing intent’, a very clear (laser) focus which causes people to do things because they can’t not do it. It’s not about doing great things; it’s about doing small things with great love. This takes what Scharmer calls “to sacrifice ones unfree will to ones Grand Will”. The Realizing process is a learning process, an improvement process. It’s prototyping but – in the living system

we’re in – with ourselves as prototypes. We must be the change we seek to create (Ghandi). For organizations it becomes a strategic priority to stay connected to the corporate grand will, the core purpose. In groups, realizing according to this higher purpose, beyond the economic drivers, connected to environment, to nature, a synchronicity is perceived, like being in resonance with a larger field (that was already there). It is leadership of course that should enable such processes to arise. From a philosophical point of view, one could say that the past 200 years of building ‘modern’ organizations, was just the prototyping of the really democratic organizations we are looking for.

Part four “Meeting our Future” is basically a multi-view analysis of the U-theory. A link is made to Confucius ‘The Great Learning’ which describes the seven capacities of leadership: awareness – stopping – calmness – stillness – peace – true thinking – attachment, in great resemblance to the U-characteristics. According to Confucius, becoming a leader is becoming a ‘real human being’, which takes a lifetime of study and contemplation. Another link is made to science, especially to fill the growing gap between technological power and wisdom. New science should integrate knowledge and wisdom. Connectedness should be the organizing principle of the new world view. References are made to David Bohm’s implicate order and Bell’s theorem, leading to the statement “separation without separateness is the natural state of the human world”. According to Bohm fragmentation is the basic problem, not in the least seen in the rigid academic divisions. What we found out during our history of science is that going more into the details doesn’t necessary give more assurance on reality. The subatomic world is ruled by probability. And it is the atomic thinking that shapes almost all management actions. A link is made with measurement, especially the loss of balance between valuing what can be measured and what cannot. It is what Demming called ‘management by fear’. A plea is made for acknowledgment of the Unbroken Wholeness, with links to the non-local features of particles, and to the Cartesian split (res extensa versus res cogens) between manifest and mental phenomena, causing a blind spot. Capra, Maturana, Varela, Prigogine, Sheldrake, Jung, Bohm and even Goethe (“every object well contemplated opens up a new organ within us”) are mentioned in relationship with the need for more integral science. To overcome the ‘shifting the burden’ approach – just focusing on the symptoms – we should either limit the expansion of technology or strengthen our fundamental response to problems. A combination of the two would be ideal.

Three integrated capacities are to be built:

- a new capacity for observing that no longer fragments the observer from what is observed;
- a new capacity for stillness that no longer fragments who we really are from what is emerging;
- a new capacity for creating alternative realities that no longer fragment the wisdom of the head, heart and hand.

Practicing the U-curve skills – by meditation, study and commitment to serve – could help us to find our authentic self again. Key for that is the human capacity to choose.

Reflective or reflexive? About Form and Style

The book is in fact the transcript of a series of meetings held by the four authors between November 2000 and April 2002. In their conversations they shared views and experiences, mostly brought in by means of storytelling. The experiences came from research – like the 150 interviews Scharmer conducted, and like Senge’s professional activities – and they came from personal life experiences, like Jaworski’s wilderness retreat. It is not clear to me whether the dialogues have been rewritten, selected and shaped to fit the U theory, or that really a collective learning process took place, thereby enforcing the U theory. (But this is only a question for critical reviewers.) However, the “medium is the message” character of the books helps the reader in better understanding. Lots of references to scientist and thinkers are used, lots of alternative descriptions are given to explain or analyze the theory. Overall, this is useful because the steps in the U theory aren’t that self explaining. Fact is that this book doesn’t push the reader to adopt the theory; it merely opens it up to you, makes it attractive. Together with the narrative style, giving insight in the dialogues between the four authors, it is a very readable and agreeable book. It’s one of those you want to make notes in; one of those books that you will take out of your library from time to time; one that gives you something to think about, long after you’ve finished reading. Finally, ordering Presence gives you access to downloading The Presence Workbook, covering a set of group facilitating practices based on the Theory U.

Four of a kind? About the authors and their roles in the play

Peter Senge has become well known through his Fifth Discipline. I have it on my bookshelf, and I must confess I found it quite instrumental. I was probably the last one to predict that Senge would be co-author of something like Presence. In my view Senge can be seen as the facilitator of the dialogues, although he has had his contributions as well.

Betty Sue Flowers is professor in English language as well as poet, editor and business consultant. She was asked to put the Shell scenarios into good narrative. I think she can be held responsible for the accessibility and readability of Presence.

Claus Otto Scharmer is the founder of the Theory U, based on interviews he held in the 1980’s and 1990’s, and which becomes visible in his paper and lecture ‘Presencing: Learning from the Future as it Emerges’ (October 2000). From this perspective, the dialogues leading to Presence also served for challenging his theory, which is expected to be published separately in the near future.

Joseph Jaworski was a successful lawyer before he made a significant life shift, leading to the co foundation of the Global Leadership Initiative. He wrote about his personal development in his book Synchronicity (1996). Jaworski seems to be quite impressed by his conversations with David Bohm, whose ‘implicate order’ forms a major frame of reference in Presence.

The phenomenon I hadn’t thought of yet – the book and I

I’m not exaggerating when I say that reading Presence has played a major role for me in deciding to join the PhD/DBA program Humanization of Organization at the University of Humanistics. Being a consultant in management and organization development for quite some years, and at the moment responsible for organization transition support within a

large Benelux company preparing for a complex change and integration phase, I was early 2004 quite confused about the (in)effectiveness of my contribution. It seemed like our senior management didn’t want to change at all, although they were supposed to, and they were questioning my role as well. In the summer of 2004 a friend suggested Presence to me, at a time I found myself climbing out of this bottom of my own professional change curve. Climbing? It was more like being helped by several circumstances that seemed to point in the same direction. After having read the Presence Workbook I decided to order Solving Tough Problems (Kahane) and Synchronicity (Jaworski) as well. I kept the reading of Presence for dessert. And so it tasted. The way I see it, the book marks a transition area between on the input side the convergence of a broad series of insights, sciences, and experiences regarding ‘organizational humanization’ and on the output side the subsequent divergence of possible future actions, not just divergent but to be carried out in a state of consciousness of their interconnectedness. Performing my PhD/DBA-program, performing my job as change enabling consultant and performing my personal life have become more integrated and focused than ever.

Where the book can lead you – a larger context

Like Sophie’s World does, Presence ‘crystallizes’ you to a point from which you can and want to move forward. The books and other sources whereto reading and reviewing Presence lead me, and which I considered relevant in this respect, are listed – and briefly commented – below.

Gaarder, Jostein (2001). *De wereld van Sofie. Roman over de geschiedenis van de filosofie*. Oslo: H. Aschehoug & Co. See my comments in the introduction part of this review.

Harrison, David M. (1998) *The Feynman Double Slit*. Version 1.17, June 2003. Toronto: © David M. Harrison. The article gives an understandable description of the experiment which shows that electrons sometimes behave like particles, sometimes like waves. Very intriguing is the role of observation in the experiment. Simply stated: when there’s just enough light to see the electrons move, they behave like particles. Just when you can’t see them anymore (and experience their movements in an alternative way), they behave like waves. This leads to The Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle, which in general gives thought to how the researcher influences the researched.

Harrison, David M. (1998) *The Stern-Gerlach Experiment, Electron Spin, and Correlation Experiments*. Version 1.20, September 2004. Toronto: © David M. Harrison. A ‘reader friendly’ background on electron spin correlation, for the ones who want to dig deeper behind Bell’s Theorem.

Harrison, David M. (1999) *Bell’s Theorem*. Version 1.24, March 2004. Toronto: © David M. Harrison. Bell’s Theorem has been stated as “the most profound discovery of science” (Stapp, 1975). This article explores the theory about the ‘entangled quantum pairs’. From what Einstein called ‘the spooky action-at-a-distance’, via David Bohm’s search for hidden variables, to Bell’s inequality and back to Bohm’s quantum potential, responsible for all the non-local effects predicted by the theory. Heavy stuff!

Harrison, David M. (2003) *An Analogy to Bell's Theorem*. Version 1.2, November 2004. Toronto: © David M. Harrison. The analogy – to nature versus nurture issues in the development of people – is used to illustrate some of the key features of entangled pairs behavior.

Jaworski, Joseph (1996). *Synchronicity, The Inner Path of Leadership*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler. Referred to by The Presence Workbook, it is the perfect preparation for reading Presence, because it already gives some in-depth insight in themes such as 'the hero's journey' and David Bohm's 'implicate order. And it is nice reading.

Jaworski, Joseph, Adam Kahane & Claus Otto Scharmer (2004). *The Presence Workbook*. Version 1.0. Cambridge MA: Society for Organizational Learning. Although meant as a follow up of Presence, it's a very practical introduction to it at the same time.

Kahane, Adam (2004). *Solving Tough Problems*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler. Referred to by The Presence Workbook, it is really a perfect appetizer for Presence. It's not a coincidence that Kahane was member of Jaworski's scenario team at Shell.

Ogilvy, James (2003). "What Strategies can learn from Sartre". *Strategy & Business*. Issue 33, Winter 2003. Booz Allen & Hamilton. About existentialistic business strategy and scenario planning.

Scharmer, C. Otto (2002) "Presencing – A Social Technology of Freedom". Interview conducted by Werner A. Leeb. *Trigon Themen*. Vol. 2/2002. A brief acquaintance with Scharmer, in which he poses the 'pre-sensing of the future' and 'the grand will to realize'.

Scharmer, Claus Otto (2000). "Presencing: Learning from the Future as it Emerges. On the Tacit Dimension of Leading Revolutionary Change." *Conference on Knowledge and Innovation*. Helsinki School of Economics and MIT Sloan School of Management. The paper introduces the deeper learning curve, later to be known as the U-process and Theory U.

Scharmer, Claus Otto (2002). *Presencing: Illuminating the Blind Spot of Leadership. Foundations for a Social Technology of Freedom*. Introductory paper of a forthcoming book. Internet: www.ottoscharmer.com.

Schein, Edgar H. (1999). *Process Consultation Revisited, Building the Helping Relationship*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley. Referred to by The Presence Workbook, brought back into my remembrance, and made very relevant again.

Senge, Peter M. (2003). "Creating Desired Futures in a Global Society". *Reflections, The SoL Journal*. Volume 5, number 3. Cambridge: Society for Organizational Learning. To be considered a building block for Presence. It makes notice of the intriguing non-random behavior of the six Random Number Generators throughout the world, before, during and

after the 9/11 terrorist attack on Twin Towers, which only could have been caused by a 'field of world consciousness'.

Vincent, Hans (2002). "Een integraal wereldbeeld als basis voor maatschappelijke vernieuwing". *Theosofia*. Issue 103/6, december 2002. Based on insights similar to the ones used by the Presence authors, this Dutch article on wholeness and integral thinking, was produced by the secretary of the Erasmus Liga/Netherlands Association for the Club of Rome, by origin a culture-sociologist.

Wilber, Ken & Otto Scharmer. *Mapping the Integral U*. Transcript of a conversation. Undated (found via Google). Links are made between Wilbers Integral Psychology, the work of Varela, Scharmers Theory U and the higher leveled memes of Grave's spiral dynamics.

Finally, the following Google search words turned out to be very useful to access the Internet: Bell's Theorem, Claus Otto Scharmer, Coherence, David Bohm, Emergence, Francisco Varela, Humanization, Implicate Order, Presencing, Social Complexity, Spiral Dynamics and Wholeness.

Unexpected findings – some scientific remarks

A question that came to my mind was: "Could this book be a PhD thesis?" It poses a theory, based on 150 interviews, which often is regarded sufficient as a good fundament. There are the personal experiences of the authors. The views presented seem quite consistent and thorough, based on the insights and research of some respected scientists. Considering the workbook, there's even a semblance of falsifiability. However, I don't feel up to judging in this respect, nor am I accredited for this kind of decision.

There are physics, quantum physics and mathematics behind David Bohms implicate order. But there is no direct relation between on the one hand the quantum potential that entangles pairs of particles and on the other hand the processes that might play a role in the coherence of thoughts and behaviors of people. Even Bell's Theorem, a piece of jewelry in science, leaves some room for doubt. But which scientist will be right, looking back from the future? I think the supposed link between Bohms ideas and the suggested interconnectedness of people is highly intriguing and worth to be researched further.

Are there such things like morphic fields? Do they play a role in the process called autopoiesis? On his website, Rupert Sheldrake – mentioned in the book – invites people to perform certain tests concerning clairvoyance, and wants to gather statistics. Francisco Varela and his teacher Humberto Maturane are considered to be even more serious researchers in the area of neuro-psychology. They all have respected critics as well. But their projects are still alive.

Regarding the 'seeing from the heart': The Institute of HeartMath is said to having identified three major neuronal networks in the human body; the largest of course in the

brain, but two others in the intestinal track – ‘gut knowing’ – and in the cardiac sack – ‘knowing of the heart’. This seems to point towards more mind-body connections than one would think of.

And then – at the end of the book – there is the work of the Japanese professor Masaru Emoto. He studied, on a scientific basis, drops of frozen distilled water. Under normal circumstances there are no specific patterns in the ice crystals. But, after having the water confronted with music, the frozen drops show beautiful fractal patterns. Considering this ‘memory of water’ and the fact that we are water for more than 80%, gives room for thought about what external resonances or fields might do with us.

Okay. There is, so to speak, not more than some circumstantial evidence for a theory around presencing, coherence and ‘wholeness’. But should we be searching so assiduous for direct evidence at this moment?

My other question was: “Is it applicable, what is presented in the book?” This brings to mind again the existence of the Presence Workbook. It contains a scenario for selecting and enabling groups to perform a presencing activity. Bringing it into practice, or at least trying to do this, seems useful. Both book and workbook seem to ask for a prototyping effort!

Perhaps the real question should be: “If this is a theory about becoming connected to ones emerging future, is it possible to prove it at all?” The theory (U) has been made plausible, success criteria have been listed, but I’m afraid we will never be able to reach a proven methodology around such things as ‘connecting to emerging futures’. Unless we can overcome the recurrence involved...

And yet, to my opinion the book contains essential and fundamental lessons for leaders and for people in general.

So, scientific or not, all the characters and institutions involved seem to me serious and sensible in trying to find out what is emerging, in trying to enter a new area of what we now – stuck in our language constraints – use to call science.

My conclusion

I chose Presence for several reasons. It has everything to do with Humanization of Organization. I felt inspired by the contents. It provides links to a variety of interesting – whether or not scientific – sources. And I like the way it has been written. By my knowledge there is no book that I’ve studied as thoroughly as this one, including all the related sources mentioned before. And in general I keep on being enthusiastic about it. However, this review has helped me to combine my enthusiasm with a few critical comments.

The book starts with mentioning the desire to achieve a form of synchronous presencing, to follow the U curve collectively in organizations and institutions. But in fact, the Theory U

has to do with individual exercise. There is no transposition of the theory to organizations. There is only the application of the U for the leaders of those organizations. Of course, people in organizations might gain from ‘enlightened’ leadership, but characterizes this ‘the really democratic organization’ which seems to be strived for?

Theory U as an individual ‘learning curve’ is about personal competences (and a lot of practicing effort). Along this curve, the higher purpose one comes to feel connected to seems genuine and is likely to have nature as a frame of reference. Let’s hereby consider that nature is ‘good’. But collective presencing is a phenomenon that sometimes arises, which is not necessarily an accumulation of individual presencing exercises, and shows less resemblance to the complete U curve. In other words, where individual presencing is likely to be achieved by certain actions, collective presencing is more like a coincidence.

If however the Theory U is applicable to group behavior, let’s say to the core group of an organization, then we must be careful for the risk of manipulation. I fully subscribe to the idea that presencing produces a ‘grand will’ with ‘good’ intentions. But what if the exercise isn’t done properly and the group coherence is influenced by an alternative ‘grand will’, a mission that might not be that ‘good’, but that might seem right for the group at that moment? What is the role of the leader, the facilitator and the core group members? Might there be a chance of abuse?

The workbook suggests interviewing individuals to find out who are the best ones to select for a presencing workshop. This raises the question whether or not everybody is able to develop the necessary intentions and competences. Besides, does presencing make a person or a group more influential or is it an exercise recommended for influential people?

To conclude this review, I think that Theory U really adds something significant to the contemporary (western) ways of personal development. I’m convinced that presencing empowers people and helps them to attach to their higher purpose, which will be noticeable by others. In that respect I fully recommend presencing to organization leaders, who will hopefully broaden their perspectives, which are too often influenced by short term shareholder value. I would not directly recommend using the U curve as a board meeting exercise towards a new company mission and vision. The respective individual exercises should be sufficient. Hopefully, presencing would subsequently be seen spreading out over all the individuals in the organization, causing an organizational anguish, best described as ‘chaos with a purpose’. And if so, we would find ourselves beyond the post-modern organization – where democracy means that the majority rules over the minority – and experience the ‘really democratic post-future organization’, whatever that may look like.

Has presencing a future? Like dr. Jack Cohen said: “We’re only half way!”

Rijswijk, The Netherlands, 5 March 2005

With special gratitude from the author towards the Society 3.0 Foundation

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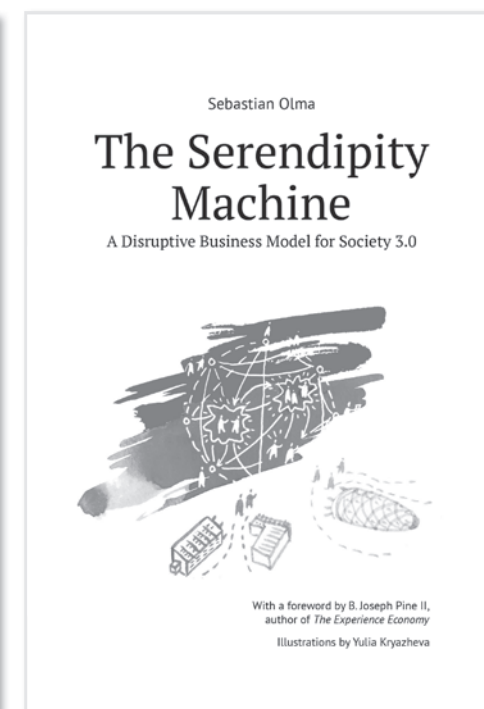
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Main projects involve dialogical development of practical plans to implement policy and strategy, cocreating advanced learning environments by enhancing the role of in-corporate academies, large scale management development infrastructures, bringing further vertical dialogue, appreciative inquiry and asynchronous reciprocity, thereby enabling senior managers to view their organization as emerging wholeness of people relations, and act accordingly as connectors.

Related to this, Cees produced numerous articles, lectures, blogs and tweets. Among his publications are the books *Kracht zonder Macht* (Power without authority – 2008) and *Krachtbron van een Lerende Organisatie* (The power source of learning organizations – 2010). Cees is happily married with Karin, together raising and facilitating their six children.

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