



What can Cross-breeding Chickens Teach Us in the Strengths World?

The question: Do we as AI practitioners need to be more aggressive?

By Michelle Strutzenberger



Koen Vanmechelen

Ghent, Belgium -- It seems the cross-breeding of chickens can not only teach us about global diversity, but also new ways of thinking about Appreciative Inquiry (AI) and the strengths-based approach.

At the fifth World Appreciative Inquiry Conference on wednesday, internationally renowned chicken artist Koen Vanmechelen offered a quick snapshot of his scientific exploration into chicken cross-breeding and how he links that to promoting more cross-cultural connection.

His talk was injected with a provocative exchange with Axiom News CEO and executive editor Peter Pula, who put the question to Koen, given this is a strengths conference, what might we as AI and strengths-based practitioners also learn from Koen's cross-breeding practices?

Just as he must intervene to create his diverse chickens, is it possible that we as AI practitioners might need to take more of an intervening, possibly even aggressive approach in order to create the change at the scale of the whole our world so desperately needs?

In creating something new, can we always wait for nature to allow new things to emerge? Or must we provoke nature to do what we, and it, needs done, Peter asked.

And, following on that answer, what might be the implications for us as AI practitioners?

We must be awake to the signals, Koen proposed, and respond to those. Caution in that response against potential abuse is also important, he said.

What do you think? Feel free to comment on the [2012WAIC Facebook page](#), or ✉ michelle@axiomnews.ca.

Pre Conference Reflections of a Senior Participant

By Jac De bruyn



On Wednesday morning, David Cooperrider explained more about the central elements of Appreciative Inquiry. The art of the question is leading us into the process of change.

When preparing an AI process, 90 percent of the time is invested in the selection and choice of the right questions to start with. As an example, David shared about the first meetings leading to the creation of "URI: United Religions Initiatives". That is a network of Cooperative Circles bringing persons together of different convictions, faiths, spiritual traditions. He spend five days on finding the right question.

As a senior I was touched by this statement: "one could say a key task in life is to discover and define our life purpose, and then accomplish it to the best of our ability." Indeed this question was often in my mind, especially being educated in a school of a religious congregation. Personally I suggest all of us to deal with the question David was using in his first AI meeting with religious leaders: "Can you share a story of a moment, of the period of time, where clarity about life purpose emerged for you? A moment where your calling happened, where there was an important awakening or teaching, or where you received some guiding vision? Now, what do you sense you are supposed to do for the rest of your life?"

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

All of us could start a Cooperative Circle in the URI network. This is how: bring 7 persons together of different beliefs and traditions and start an inquiry into their strengths and common grounds. Being part of a URI Circle myself, it is my experience that this in-depth dialogue broadens our understandings of elements of the Mystery that is carrying the universe.

Contact – ✉ jac.debruyn@telenet.be

Cees Study

Vitarka Mudra



To what extent are we Appreciative Inquiry 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 the 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 a Dutch AI bachelor minor group, 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, 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). For instance the Vitarka Mudra is used in Buddha's lectures to invite students to reflect and discuss. It has been adopted gratefully by our AI students and now is an enrichment for our learning processes.

Wouldn't you agree that our WAIC 2012 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?

To contact Cees

✉ @CeesHoogendijk

✉ ch@panoptics.org



What's up...

I see Beautiful Things Happening.

By Koen Joly



People from over 45 countries are happy like small children to get an applause and say the words “geweldig” or “amai”.
People shake hands with the globe.
People are excited to meet old and new friends.
People are making beautiful mindmaps.
People are using all kinds of devices to record the ideas that go around the auditorium.

I would like to gather all of this.
People saying “geweldig” or “amai” in different languages.
People shaking hands.

People meeting, talking, questioning, ...
People's beautiful mindmaps.
All the content that's being produced this conference.

Invitation...

We're looking for all the beautiful mindmaps – analog and digital – that are being produced during the conference. Willing to share yours?

Come over to the media crew desk (left of the registration desk)

or post it to [#2012waic](#) [#mcrew](#). Thanks!

Contact [@kaajee](#) – koen.joly@voca.be

“If You can Guide Walmart into a Zero Emission Strategy...”

By Cees Hoogendijk

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

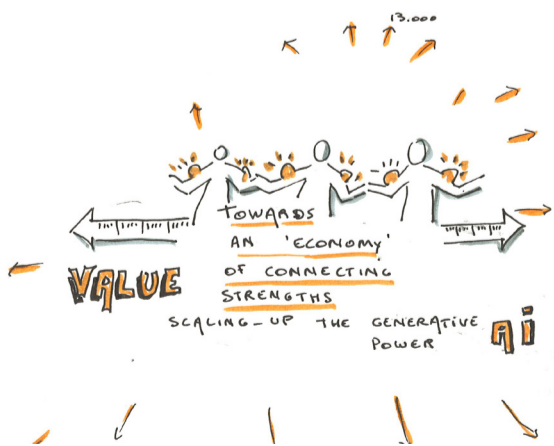
“In Europe we tend to see Walmart as the capitalistic, employee abusing supermarket, and maybe that was true. But nowadays, the same company has chosen for a sustainable approach, thanks to the (provocative?) interventions of David. Only for this piece of art, he has proven himself to be someone who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

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

[@CeesHoogendijk](#) - ch@panoptics.org

Open Space - Open Creation

By Griet Bouwen



The conference is a great opportunity to meet with the worldwide Appreciative Inquiry community and learn from experiences of others. If you have a challenge in using or implementing AI, you can use the open space on Friday between 16.30 and 18.30. You can invite participants to work together on a theme or a question you would like to dive into. You can announce your invitation on the whiteboard next to the registration desk. So, make your visit a great experience and go home with lots of ideas for your theme.

Also on Friday from 16:30 on, you can meet all the presenters of a poster. Posters are exhibited at the second floor for the whole time of the conference.

Contact: [@grietbouwen](#) - griet.bouwen@stebo.be

Welcome to Ghent

by Annelies Poppe



According to Lonely Planet travel guide, you are now in the 7th most beautiful city of the world.

I live in Ghent and I have to admit: it is true.

Telling you something about Ghent seems impossible, because I don't know where to start.

Let me start with a look at the social program. One of the historical buildings you will visit, is Het Groot Vleeshuis. It used to be a covert market for meat. Vlees is the Dutch word for meat, huis for house. The market was built to centralize the sale of meat, so it could be controlled better. Even in the Middle Ages, it was important to monitor that no rotten meat was sold. Home sale was forbidden. If you were a member of the butchers guild, you could rent a meat bank. This was a combination of a slaughter table and counter. Close your eyes and imagine the smell!

But don't worry. The smell is much better nowadays. Het Vleeshuis is now a center for regional products: Gandaham, Breydelham and much more. Mmm.

When I pass by Het Vleeshuis, I always think the façade looks a bit like a face. Look at the nose. It really is a statue of Holy Mary. When you look closer, you can see she is holding an ink pot. No one has figured out why she is holding it. Maybe you have an idea?

Let us know on

twitter [#2012waic](#).

Contact

[@anneliespoppe](#)

annelies@bermudaweb.be

A Warm Welcome to 50 Young Students

By Koen Joly

On Thursday and Friday 25 girls and boys 17-18 years old will attend the conference. They attend school at “De Wingerd” here in Ghent. So if you run into them, enjoy being interviewed.

As a final project for English they want to make video reports on various topics. Luk Dewulf of WAIC 2012 connected with Caroline Verhanneman – the English teacher of the students. How about if the students come to the conference and interview the participants?

So this is the plan: groups of five students will be here on Thursday and Friday searching for people to interview. The questions they will ask will focus on the world in general.

The movies will be used for their final project and on www.maks.be, a website for students who attend secondary school.

Contact [@kaajee](#) – koen.joly@voca.be