



Introduction

We welcome you to the 5th World Appreciative Inquiry Conference, that will be held in Ghent, Belgium from 25-28 April, 2012. In this call for proposals, we describe the general theme and subthemes of the conference, as well as the submission procedure and deadlines.

How can we scale up the generative power of Appreciative Inquiry towards the construction of an economy of connecting strengths? We want to explore this timely question from multiple angles and in a variety of ways. We look forward to a lively meeting with contributions in the form of paper presentations, workshops, symposia and poster showcases. Parallel breakout sessions will be complemented by keynotes and plenary conversations.

To make the conference truly interactive on a global scale, we plan to make ample use of social media, networks and live webstreaming of key contributions.

We thank you in advance for your interest and effort to help us make this global gathering a unique event in the history of AI.

On behalf of the organizing committee, the international advisory board and all conference partners. Inspired by David Cooperrider and Ron Fry.

Sincerely yours.

1. Conference theme: Towards an “economy” of connecting strengths. Scaling-up the generative power of AI

In this 5th world conference, we want to go back to the roots and fundamentals of Appreciative Inquiry and confront those with current experiences in order to imagine and discuss how its future practice and theory may look like. Since its introduction 25 years ago, Appreciative Inquiry has changed our view on change and development in fundamental ways. It shifted our attention from the world of people and organizations as “problems-to-be-solved,” to the world as a “connection of people and their strengths.” It invited us to engage in conversational inquiry practices through which we combine existing strengths and successfactors with future possibilities, aspirations, designs and activities. Managers, leaders, community members and consultants around the world have learned to embrace Appreciative Inquiry as a high quality relational practice.

Today’s financial, economic, and environmental crises in a context of growing cultural and social diversity, reveal the global struggle for relational processes toward effective societal decision making

and action. With this conference theme we deliberately challenge the current notions of economy. Can we reframe our current understandings of “economy” as good housekeeping activities that deal with the worldwide challenges in a connected way? Many ask “What’s next?” How can we interweave a micro focus on individuals, groups and organizations toward a macro perspective on multi-actor collaboration at the inter-organizational and societal level? How can we move toward a new global society as an economy of connecting strengths?

In this 2012 conference edition, we want to focus on the generative, *relational* nature of the appreciative interventions we make as leaders and facilitators of change. Could it be that connectivity and connectedness are the main thing to focus on? Could it be that the keys to open the doors to the global challenges we are all facing, are highly relational in nature? What is it that makes AI such a strong pathway for multi-party and whole scale change? How does AI help us in tapping into the global yearning for hope, sense and purpose? Could it be that connectedness is the true secret behind the thrilling examples of AI around the globe? What is it, that makes our relations truly generative? And how do we as AI practitioners and scholars contribute to this process of growth at all levels?

We envision the conference as a lively, relational space where stories, experiences and academic insights will be shared and inquired into. To maximize the diversity of the connections we can make during the conference, we are looking for contributions from all areas of business, social and public sectors and disciplines.

This conference wants to document appreciative practices from micro to macro levels as stepping stones to contribute to the enormous global challenges we are confronted with. We therefore welcome proposals from all over the globe that share practice and theory at all scales, going from personal, team, organizational to whole system change. We are interested to learn about the connective and generative capacity of your AI experiences. We especially welcome proposals in which a systemic, constructionist approach is combined with a generative, strengths based perspective on development and change.

We want to invite you to participate in this challenging 5th World AI Conference and to bring your questions into the arena. What generative question do you want to ask yourself, the conference participants and the larger world?

2. Themes and questions to be addressed

How we can scale up the generative practice of Appreciative Inquiry in order to move towards an economy of connecting strengths? What commonalities in our approaches and knowledge may we discover that can generate meaning and co-membership for global, sustainable collaboration?

To explore these questions, we invite participants to submit proposals that can be related to one or more of the following sub-themes:

- **Connecting across organisations and communities:** since we believe that the collective global challenges we face today ask for a multi-party and whole scale approach, our question is: what are examples of life giving cross-boundary connections? Proposals can address for

example: connections between business and society, cross-cultural connections, cross-faith connections etc.

- **Connecting within organisations and communities:** this is the domain where the AI approach emerged originally. We want to share and explore stories of connecting voices and taking AI to scale within an organisation and/or community.
- **Connecting self to others, from inner to outer:** the topic of generative connections goes beyond the question of scale. In fact it draws us back to the very personal questions of how an individual is connected to, shaped by and shaping the whole at the same time. What are examples of connections between a local/personal and a global perspective? How can we connect personal with collective hope, ambition and challenges? What are examples of how people work in their own vision of the good? Proposals can include examples of career counseling, appreciative coaching, and appreciative living.
- **Appreciative Inquiry as craftsmanship:** how do we generate conversations that leads a collective to a new vision of itself? In this fourth subtheme we are interested in several 'how to' questions linked to the conference theme of generative connections. Examples of questions are:
 - How much of a shared language do we need?
 - How can we create a new language in every encounter?
 - How can we connect different communities of understanding?
 - How can we truly be facilitators of generative connections?

3. Who should participate

This 5th World AI Conference is designed for anyone interested in sharing, exploring and exchanging practices, case stories, personal reflections and theoretical insights which demonstrate the connecting and generative power of AI. Fields of practice can be either your organizational, community, regional, business or personal life.

All are welcome as our firm intention is to create life giving connections between AI practitioners, researchers/scholars and organizational leaders in business and society.

4. Call for proposals - Four types of contributions

We cordially invite researchers, AI practitioners and organizational leaders to submit abstracts for papers, and proposals for symposia and workshops which explore and deepen the theme of the connecting and generative power of AI.

Submissions can be of the following types: 1) workshops, 2) symposia, 3) papers, and 4) poster showcases. See details for each below. Please indicate in the proposal submission tool which category your proposal belongs to. Only submissions via the online submission tool will be accepted.

4.1 Workshop proposals

A workshop is a highly interactive session of 90 minutes aimed at sharing expertise and best practices, and facilitating dialogue between workshop presenter(s) and participants. Workshops can also focus on the introduction of new tools or theory that can be valuable to AI practitioners and organizational leaders. Important for the workshop proposal is that you describe in what way you want to set up and facilitate action and interaction with and among the participants.

The word limit for workshop proposals is 500 words.

4.2 Symposia proposals

For a symposium proposal several presenters or members of a panel should join forces. Symposia proposals should focus on the conference theme and address a specific subtheme or question. We are looking for contributions and stories around a common theme but from different and complementary perspectives. Presenters are for example from different organisations or countries. A symposium may take the form of a collection of papers, an interactive discussion, or a panel discussion of 90 minutes. The aim is to provoke new lines of thought and debate that can promote new areas of research and practice. In the submission, one person is indicated as contact to the conference organizing committee.

The word limit for symposia proposals is 500 words.

4.3 Paper abstracts

The program foresees in two different types of papers.

Research-based papers report on studies and action research related to the conference theme as indicated above. Research rigor, interest to the international AI scholar community, and contribution to the literature are the primary criteria for evaluation.

Experience-based papers could be reports from the field and consulting cases. These are rich descriptions of an event, an issue or an organization with a discussion or lessons learned. We are looking for contemporary experiences that are particularly rich in providing lessons for practitioners and organizational leaders. The aim is to capture current concerns in the field that form the basis for development of consulting practice, class discussion or the starting point for more involved research studies.

The word limit for abstracts is 500 words and for full papers 6000 words. Deadline for the abstracts is November 14, 2011. Deadline for the full papers is March 15, 2012.

Papers in the Research track will be considered for review in a forthcoming issue of the Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, the premier scholarly journal in the field of Organization Development. With an impact score of 1.68, JABS is in the top third of management and psychology journals and has published most of the significant studies of appreciative inquiry in the past decade.

4.4 Poster showcase

These sessions will involve presenting a poster that summarizes a case, methodology or innovation in AI and/or strength based approaches. The poster will be shown in a dedicated area of the conference venue to spark discussion, inquiry and exploration.

The word limit for a poster proposal is 500 words.

5. Review timeframe and process

The deadline for submissions is **November 14, 2011**. You will be notified by January 1, 2012 as to whether your proposal has been accepted for the conference program.

The international Conference Organizing Committee will review all proposals (check the www.2012waic.org website to see who are the members of this committee). Acceptance will be based on an evaluation of the potential of each proposal, and your proposal's fit with the overall conference agenda.

6. How to submit

Please share the vision of your proposal with us by using our **online submission tool** to be found at the conference website www.2012waic.org.

7. Publication for conference program and conference proceedings

For the accepted contributions, the submitted summary will be used for publication in the conference program. Also publication in the conference proceedings is possible. Publication of these summaries can be either on line or papercopy.

8. Further contact information

If you have any questions about the submission process, please contact the conference secretary at info@2012waic.org.

For more information on the overall conference theme & agenda, please visit the conference website at www.2012waic.org or www.2012worldaiconference.org.

Finally, please feel free to send this Call for Proposals to people you know. We thank you in advance for your help in identifying the kind of work the whole world should hear about.

We look forward to hearing from you!

The organizing committee