

FOREWORD



BY GRIET BOUWEN & ANNET VAN DE WETERING

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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