

Participants Portraits

BY SASKIA TJEPKEMA



Daniel

AI is taught at many different Schools and Universities. Daniel Richardsson from Sweden is a teacher at Mid Sweden University. His AI course runs at the Quality Department at the Faculty of Technical and Sustainable Development. He is also AI consultant and.... an athlete. What brings him here, to #2012WAIC?

Forest orienteering and AI

'In 2006 – I was working for an NGO back then – I was given the 'Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry' by my manager. He asked me to study it and see if it was anything we could use. I was so surprised when I read it. Because it gave words to a mindset that I already knew...'

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Rafael

Rafael Olemoon is a Masai from Tanzania. And one of the participants of #2012WAIC. What brought him here? 'I have been working with Leif Josefsson, for the past few years in Tanzania, where I live. Leif is doing a programme on AI, and he uses 'nature' as a metaphor for learning. I am a Masai, we are a nomadic people and live the pastoral, tribal life. With our herds. We derive a lot of our wisdom from nature.'

Familiar mindset

Though the cold is tough to get used to, Rafael thoroughly enjoys participating in the conference. 'Mostly because of all the people I meet here! Everyone looks for the positive in things, in people. That mindset is very familiar to me. It is how we think as Masai.' Being surrounded by others with a similar view is more than just 'nice'. 'It encourages me to go forward the way that I am doing now. It strengthens me in that sense. But it also gives me more words for something that I did not have words for. It comes naturally to me to look appreciatively. But now I can also explain it to others.'

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Shelagh

'The words we use construct the world we live in' is the tagline on Shelagh Aitken's business card. She works as an editor for AI Practitioner, the journal on AI practice and theory. What brings her here?

'Well, we have a stand here, with the journal. I am here to share information on it, to meet with the authors. And to remind people that participants can download a free copy before April 29th!' She laughs. 'Please put that in, it seems not everyone is aware of it.'

Meeting people

It is Shelagh's first AI conference ever. And that is very special. 'I am meeting people here that I have been working with for over 5 or 6 years, but have never seen before. We only 'meet' online. And now I see their faces, talk with them. That is great. I met Diana Whitney for instance, in the hotel lobby. She heard my name and immediately said: 'Oh, you are Shelagh!' That was such a great moment. And there are many more, also unexpected ones, like with Tim Slack from Appreciating People. We didn't know each other, but share a stand together and get along great.'

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Jean, Grace and Perla

Sitting at a table, taking a little break, are two participants from the Philippines, Jean Lapa and Grace Tyler. They are students at SAIDI School of Organisation Development. What brings them here? 'Well, very simple', Jean says, 'our Dean, Rosa Fuentes, presents a paper here, and we came to support her!' 'And to learn for ourselves!', Grace adds with a big smile. Both agree: 'You can only support something that you believe in yourself'. And it is clear that they are very enthusiastic about Appreciative Inquiry.

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